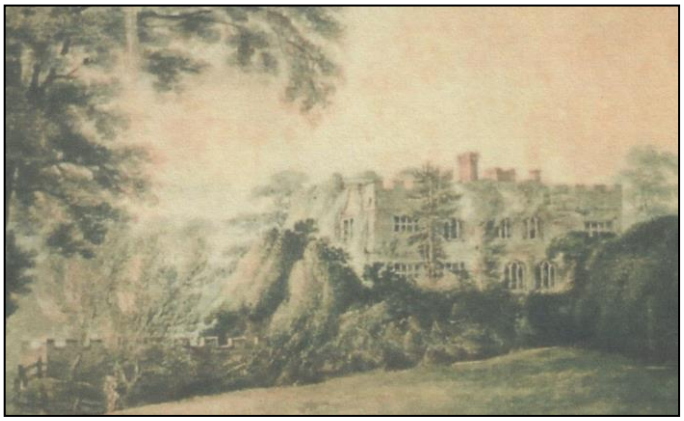
The Landmark Trust

ASTLEY CASTLE
History Album

Volume I: History



Written and compiled by Caroline Stanford
July 2012

BASIC DETAILS

Built:	13th – 21st century
Listed:	Grade II*, within Scheduled Monument
Tenure:	99 year lease
Opened as a Landmark:	July 2012

Phase 1 – Repair & Consolidation

Building surveyor	Peter Napier
Structural engineer	Jon Avent of Mann Williams
Quantity surveyor	Adrian Stenning
Ecologist	Penny Angold of Arupa Associates
Building analysis	Richard Morriss, Richard Morriss Associates
Contractor	Croft Building Conservation Ltd
Local contractor	Buildright, with Len Hardy & David Dalton.

Phase 2 – New Build

Architects	Witherford Watson Mann Architects
QS & Contract Administrator	Tony Peat of Jackson Coles
Structural Engineers	David Derby & Mark Tyler of Price & Myers
Archaeologist	Pat Frost of Castlering Archaeology
Main contractor	William Anelay Ltd of York
Site managers	David Marsh & Gareth Townend
Building control	Oculus Building Consultancy Ltd of Bath
Joinery	Kentside of Kendall
Staircase metalwork	Kendrew
Electrical services	H. Smith (Electrical Ltd) of Wakefield
Mechanical services	R N Mechanical of Doncaster
Landmark direct labour team	Len Hardy, John Brown, Nathan Grassby, Stuart Leavy & Carl Dowding

Phase 3 - Curtain Wall

Contractor	Midland Conservation Ltd of Walsall; Len Hardy
Structural Engineers	Jon Avent & Ed Hill of Mann Williams
Landscaping /gardens	Bowplant of Astley, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Alan Sanders.
Coach House & sheds	Len Hardy, John Brown, Buildright, David Dalton

Acknowledgement: The documentary research of Richard Morriss Associates, who wrote the Conservation Plan for Astley Castle, is gratefully acknowledged in the writing of this album, as is the contribution of Alastair Dick Cleland to the account of the castle's conservation and conversion.

DONOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Landmark gratefully acknowledges the support of the following, without whom Astley Castle could not have been rescued.

Supported by The National Lottery® through the Heritage Lottery Fund | heritage lottery fund

The Alan Evans Memorial Trust
The H B Allen Charitable Trust
Mr J Armitage
Mr & Mrs Roger Cadbury
The Charlotte Bonham-Carter Charitable Trust
CHK Charities Ltd
Country Houses Foundation
The Rt Hon the Viscount Daventry
Mr R B Eaton
Mr W Eccles
The Hon Piers Gibson
Glass-house Trust
Mrs A Gloag OBE
The Gunter Charitable Trust
Mr & Mrs D H L Hopkinson
North Warwickshire LEADER funded by DEFRA and the EU
Mr S R Martin
The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
The Mercers' Company
The Philips Charitable Trust
The Veneziana Fund

We are grateful to all these organisations and individuals, and many others who supported our appeal, including Guardians of Astley Castle, Landmark Friends and Patrons, gifts in wills, and supporters who wish to remain anonymous.

Astley Castle from the south west in the winter of 2007. Note too the pattern of the molehills in the foreground. Their path often an indication of the footings of lost buildings.

CONTENTS

The conservation and conversion of the ruins of Astley Castle are covered in Volume II of the History Album.

Those interested in trying to decode the remains of the castle as they appear today should consult Richard Morriss & Associates' Conservation Plan volumes dealing with the Building Analysis, Moated Island and Wider Landscape, copies of which are on the bookshelves.

Witherford Watson Mann Architects' competition entry and Design & Access Statement will also be found on the bookshelves.

East (top) and west elevations of Astley Castle in September 2007. Note the inner skin of the vice tower still standing in the centre below, and the northern portions of the castle that could not be saved and had to be taken down.

Astley Castle – Summary

Strictly speaking a fortified manor more than a castle, the site at Astley Castle has been in continuous occupation since the Saxon period. At Grade II*, the castle is counted of national significance. Its site includes the moated castle, gateway and curtain walls, lake, church and the ghost of pleasure gardens in a picturesque landscape.

By the early 12th century it was held by Philip de Estlega [Astley] from the Earl of Warwick. Philip's grandson Thomas de Estleye was killed at the battle of Evesham fighting with Simon de Montfort in 1265. The castle was crenellated and moated in 1266, when it briefly changed hands before reverting to the Astleys. In 1338, Sir Thomas Astley founded a chantry in the adjacent parish church to pray for the family's souls. In 1343, Thomas converted this to a college of priests dedicated to the same purpose and funded an extensive rebuilding programme of which only the chancel survives. By 1420, the manor had passed through marriage to the Grey family, through whom it became entangled with the succession to the throne of England and earned its association with three queens of England.

The first, Elizabeth Woodville, probably lived at Astley in the mid-15th century as Sir John Grey's wife. Grey died fighting for the Lancastrians at the Battle of St Albans in 1461 during the Wars of the Roses. As a young widow, Elizabeth caught the eye of Edward IV, the Yorkist claimant to the throne. She became his queen and bore him the ill-fated young princes who later died in the Tower. The second Astley queen was the daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, known as Elizabeth of York, who became wife of Henry VII.

It was under the Greys in the late 15th century that the castle achieved its most mature and considered form, both as a building and within its setting, which was enclosed at this time. However, after the death of Edward VI in July 1553, the family overreached itself. Despite the better claims of both Princesses Mary and Elizabeth to succeed to the throne, Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk seized the initiative and placed his daughter, Lady Jane Grey, on the throne. Jane's reign lasted just nine days, before Mary I's superior claims prevailed. Both Jane and later her father were beheaded for treason – Lord Grey rebelled a second time in January 1554 and was captured in a hollow oak tree at Astley.

In 1600, the castle was bought by Sir Edward Chamberlain. They restored the church, which had fallen in to disrepair after the Dissolution, and improved the castle. During the Civil War, Astley became a garrison for Parliamentary soldiers. In 1674 Astley Castle was bought by the Newdigate family who owned the neighbouring Arbury Estate. From this time on, the castle became a subsidiary dwelling. In the 1770s, an Astley from a cadet branch, Sir John Astley, leased the castle briefly and was responsible for the construction of the stables and coach house, in consultation with his landlord, Sir Roger Newdigate 5th Bart, who was transforming Arbury Hall into the Gothick masterpiece we see today.

In the 19th century, Astley Castle became a dower house and was then let to a succession of tenants. It also inspired writer George Eliot, born Mary Ann Evans, who grew up on the Arbury Estate where her father was an agent. Astley is said to be the model for 'Knebley' in Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857). Eliot drew inspiration for several of her characters from those she grew up with.

Requisitioned during World War II for convalescing service men, a dilapidated Astley Castle was restored by the Tunnicliffes in the 1950s as a hotel. The castle completed its slide from grace when it was gutted by a mysterious fire in 1978, just days after its lease had expired. Vandalism, unauthorised stripping out and collapse made its plight still worse. The site is so large and so complex that for many years, no solution could be found to give it a future.

Astley Castle became a ruin. As a structure, it had become so ravaged by time and events that no single element of its architecture could be felt to be a truly exceptional example of its kind. By 2007, English Heritage had listed it as one of the sixteen most endangered sites in Britain and a solution was urgently needed.

In the late 1990s, the Landmark Trust had tried to provide the site with a viable future through its usual solution of conventional restoration and conversion for holidays, but the site is so complex that such an approach proved impractical, both technically (there were no internal finishes or fixtures left to restore) and financially. In 2005, Landmark proposed a more radical solution: to reinstate occupancy of Astley Castle in a manner appropriate for the 21st century. An architectural competition was held, the brief accepting that some parts of the castle were now beyond restoration, but which sought to create good modern accommodation within the ancient ruins. The winning scheme by architects Witherford Watson Mann keeps the sense of living within the castle, making the most the views both into and out of the site.

After careful recording, those parts of the building beyond pragmatic repair were taken down. The new-build introduced also consolidates and ties together what could be saved of the original fabric as unobtrusively as possible, leaving the castle's form in the landscape largely unchanged. There was further work on the wider setting, including repairs to the curtain walls and moat, the 18th-century Gothick stable block. The historic parkland surrounding the moated site, much of which is a Scheduled Monument, has been opened up with public trails.

Thanks to an HLF-funded Access & Involvement Programme, many people learnt about and helped with the restoration project. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers was active in site clearance and landscaping and numerous schools visited. Astley Art Club were 'artists in residence.' Another competition was held to create a new knot garden, replacing a feature that had existed on the site in some form since the late 17th century with one that echoes Astley 'Three Queens.' Astley Castle can finally face its future with confidence again, thanks too to all who will stay in it, so contributing towards its future maintenance.

Introduction : Our feeling for ruins

What is it about ruins that makes them so fascinating? What is a ruin but a heap of senseless stones? Rose Macaulay wrote of the 'perhaps overcastled earth. Yes, there are too many [ruins].'[1] And yet we find ourselves drawn to them, they are a part of the furniture of our minds. Here is John Vanburgh to the Duchess of Marlborough in 1709, arguing to preserve 'Some Part of the Old Manor' at Blenheim:

> *'There is perhaps no one thing, which the most Polite part of Mankind have more universally agreed in, than the value they ever set upon the Remains of distant Times. Nor amongst the Severall kinds of those Antiquitys, are there any so much regarded, as those of Buildings; Some for the Magnificence, or Curious Workmanship; And others; as they move more lively and pleasing Reflections (than History without their Aid can do) on the Persons who have Inhabited them; On the Remarkable things which have been transacted in them, Or the extraordinary Occasions of Erecting them.'*

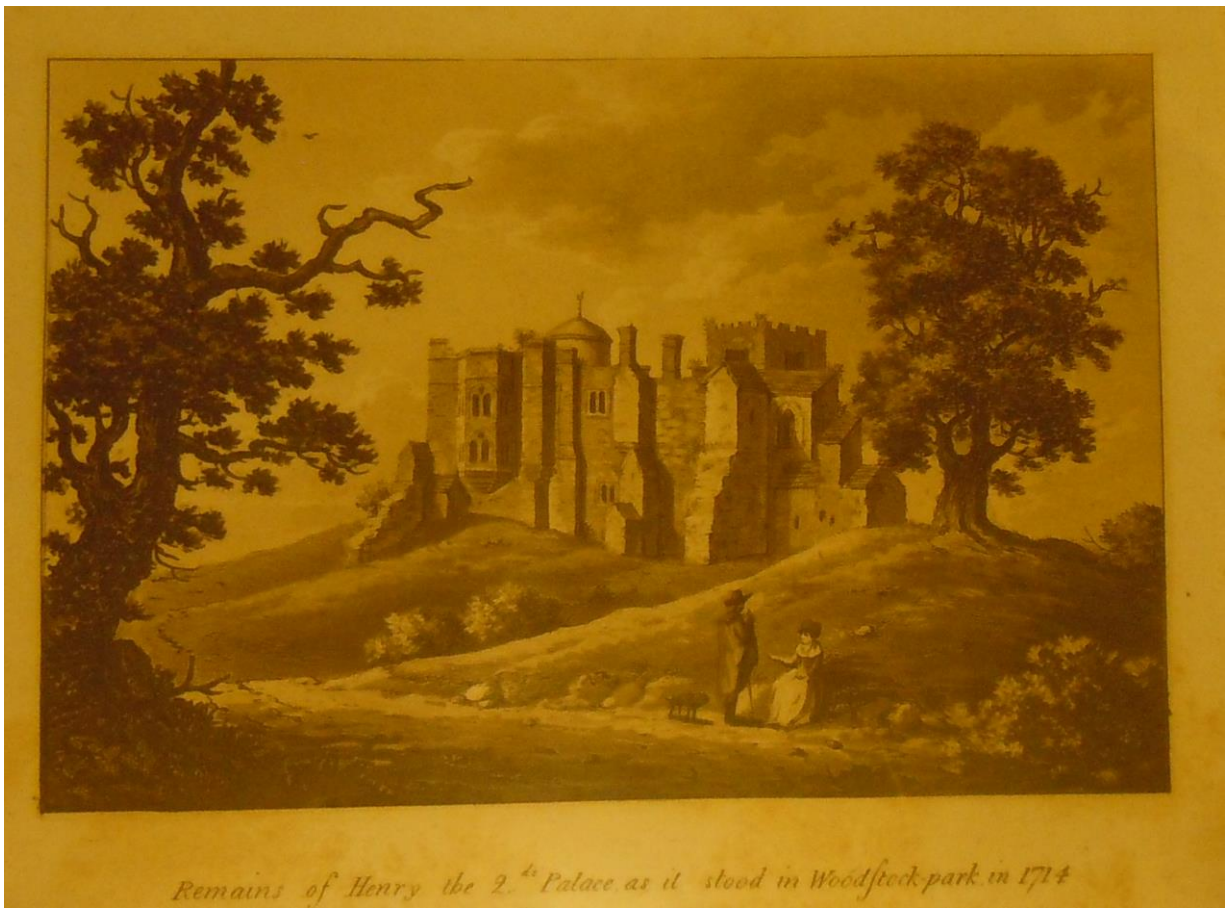
And here is 19th-century German philosopher Martin Heideigger:

> *'The more a work of art opens itself through its world, the more it becomes luminous; the more luminous it becomes, the more unique and lonely it becomes – and therefore the more significant.'*

Of course the bricks and mortar of a ruin present an archaeological record, to be read, more or less, factually. But ruins represent much more than that to our collective experience. Ruins are contradictory. They evoke in us a sense of both mortality and eternal values, of metaphysical challenge to confront our own place in the grand scheme of things. Ruins are objects of great resonance, both symbol and archetype. Their grandeur and antiquity, their stillness and decay offer us the chance to pause and consider our own inner response to space and time.

For Landmark as a buildings preservation charity, a ruin is normally a sign of a conservation failure, and therefore of work to be done. Astley Castle is different.

[1] Rose Macaulay, *The Pleasure of Ruins*, 1953, p. 369.



The ruins of the Old Manor on the Blenheim estate at Woodstock, for whose survival John Vanburgh pleaded unsuccessfully with the Duchess of Marlborough in 1709. It is perhaps the first recorded example of our urge to preserve ruins for their own sake.

Ruinous beyond conventional conservation (let alone restoration), Astley Castle challenged Landmark to confront its own ability to enable the survival of historic structures by its usual means. This process led to a completely new kind of dialogue for Landmark with the past, to find a sympathetic and intelligent and above all *contemporary* response to a beautiful but intractable structure, set in a fine historic landscape.

Magnificently executed by Witherford Watson Mann Architects, the result is an organic integration and entwinement of the fabric of eight centuries. It is not nostalgic, it does not seek to sanitise or contain. The historic fabric of the castle is not sealed or encapsulated; some was so far decayed that it has had to be sacrificed and what is left will continue, gently, to weather and evolve. The scheme allows the past to resonate, both physically and metaphysically, through our own time and into the future. It promises a rich dialogue that most of us will, perhaps sometimes unexpectedly, find thought provoking and enriching.

And through this unconventional approach, Landmark has found a way to meet its standard, its 'usual' heroic challenge. Astley Castle will now survive for future generations, thanks too to all those who stay here. It will also, perhaps, tell those future generations more about our own time and scale of values than most other surviving historic buildings.

Astley Castle has witnessed, and just occasionally influenced, the grand sweep of Britain's history. Its history remains important, of course, but now it also has a more than usually explicit contemporary character, the voice of our own day at the beginning of the 21st century. Landmark's founder, Sir John Smith, used to speak of 'nudging the cannonball of progress in its flight'. Just for once, at Astley Castle we have wrapped our arms around that cannonball and, with exhilaration, have flown with it.

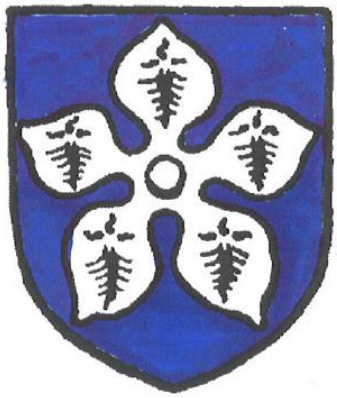
History of Astley Castle

There has been settlement at Astley since at least the late Saxon period (11th century), when the Manor was held by Alsi. The name itself probably derived from the *ĕast-lĕah* - the 'east clearing'. According to the programme written by the Rev Ivo F. H. Carr Gregg for the Pageant held at Astley Castle in 1951, Astley was one of a chain of about 150 'homestead forts' erected around the 10th century at the time of the Danish invasion of Mercia between Rugby and Tamworth to repel such attacks. Astley is one of the best surviving examples. 'A much larger castle had been built somewhere about in the 12th century and some of its remains can still be seen, especially on the east side.'[2]

After the Norman Conquest the site came into the hands of Robert, Count de Meulan, and was tenanted by Godric. It then passed to Robert's brother, Henry, later Earl of Warwick.

The Astleys: early 12th century to 1420

By the early 12th century Astley was held from the Earl of Warwick by Philip de Estlega [i.e. Astley]. The knight's service was to hold the earl's stirrup whenever he mounted his horse. Philip was succeeded, in turn, by his son Walter, and grandson, Thomas.



The coat of arms of the Astley family –
Azure a cinquefoil ermine
(a five-pointed flower dressed with ermine on a blue background).

[2] No other source for this confident statement has yet been identified.

Thomas de Estleye married Joan, daughter of Ernald du Bois of Leicestershire, who was one of the leaders of the Barons under Simon de Monfort. Thomas was killed at the battle of Evesham in 1265 fighting for de Montfort's against Henry III's forces.

As a result of this rebellion, the Manor, along with most of de Estleye's other estates, passed temporarily to Warin de Bassingburn. In October 1266, Bassingburn was granted licence to '*enclose his houses of Bassingburn, co. Cambridge and Esteleye* [Astley] *co. Warwick with a dyke and wall of stone and lime and to crenellate the same and keep them so in perpetuity*'.[3] In these troubled times, the King kept close control over who was allowed to fortify their homes, making sure that only his supporters had this privilege. Bassingburn had little time to undertake much, if any, work, since Astley was given to Thomas de Estleye's son, Andrew, a few months later, on his return from a Crusade.

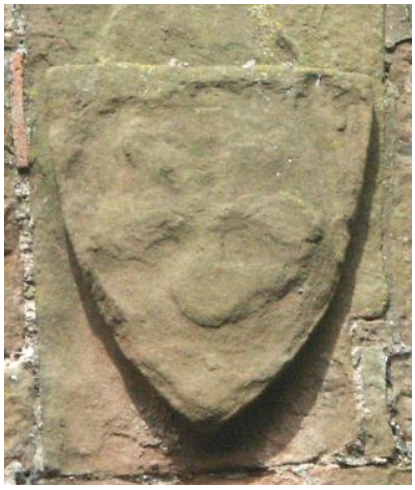
Andrew still held the Manor in 1300 and seems to have been the first Astley officially considered a Baron of the English peerage, although the title may have been used earlier. His son, Nicholas, was captured at the battle of Bannockburn in 1314 and, as he died without issue in 1325, the Manor of Astley passed instead to his nephew, Sir Thomas Astley, one of the most significant figures in the castle's history.

Sir Thomas, who was summoned to Parliament from 1342 to 1349, married Elizabeth de Beauchamp, daughter of Guy, Earl of Warwick. In 1338 he founded a chantry in the adjacent parish church. A chantry was an endowment or fund for a priest or priests to say masses for the soul of the benefactor and his family, since Catholic faith decreed that the soul's passage to heaven could be hastened by such prayers. Sir Thomas was either very pious or must have felt he had many sins to atone for (or both), for in 1343, he converted this establishment into a small ecclesiastical 'college' for the training of priests.

[3] *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1248-66, 648

The college was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and housed a group of secular clergy (who were part of the Manor community, as opposed to monastic priests who would largely withdraw from it) – a dean, two prebendaries, three vicars and clerks and servants. This was quite an institution, all praying for the souls of his family's dead and distributing alms to the local poor. The unevenness of the landscape between today's church and the castle probably conceals the footings of the college's ancillary buildings: no doubt living quarters, cloisters and kitchens although these still await archaeological investigation. There are also the remains of medieval fish ponds east and west of the moated site.

Sir Thomas also rebuilt the parish church magnificently, into a far bigger building than the one we see today – what serves as today's nave was merely the chancel of Sir Thomas's church. Its nave had transepts, and a tower.



Medieval coat of arms for the Astley family, reset today on the church tower.

This building activity is especially impressive given that it started during the years of the Black Death. It must have been the work of more than one generation and continued by Sir Thomas's heirs. It seems a lantern shone from the tower to guide travellers through the Forest of Arden in which Astley then stood.


Ground Floor Plan
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
Medieval (1066-1265)
Late Medieval (C 15th)
Early C16th
Early C 17th (around 1627)
Early C 19th
Mid C 19th (1830-1840)
Late C 19th / early C 20th
A. The Medieval West Range
Stone-built two storey medieval range, altered late C 16th, early C 17th, and early C19th
B. The Garderobe
Remains of post-medieval garderobe
C. The Back Stair Range
Complex stone built structure, probably of C 16th date; latterly containd service stair.
D. The Jettied North Range
Three bay range, two story (with attics), jettied timber framing over stone probably early C 17th
E. The North-west Corner Extension
Early C 19th brick two -story extension
F. The North Extension
Large two-storey stone porch, rebuild in early C19th
G. The Porch
C 17th stone porch, rebuild in early C 19th
H. The Hall Range
Two-storey stone late medieval high-status hall range, altered in early C 17th and early C 19th
I. The South-East corner
High status stone built two storey range of early C17th

The coat of arms of the Greys of Ruthin - *barry argent and azure with three roundels gules in chief* – and as re-set in the walls of St Mary's Church.

Just three alabaster tombs survive in St Mary's today from the many that adorned it when it was a collegiate chantry. On the right is Sir Edward Grey, Lord Grey of Groby (d.1457), Elizabeth Woodville's brother-in-law. In the centre is Elizabeth Talbot (d.1487), wife of his son, Edward Grey. On the left is Cecily Bonneville (b. 1460) who married Thomas Grey, 1st Marquess of Dorset, in 1474.

Much later, in 1656, antiquary William Dugdale recorded that it was 'a landmark so eminent in this part of the woodland where the ways are not easy to hit, that it was called "the Lanthorne of Arden."' In the 1950s, the church floor had to be excavated due to mining subsidence. In a vault beneath the floor two skeletons were found, thought to be those of Sir Thomas Astley and his wife Elizabeth.

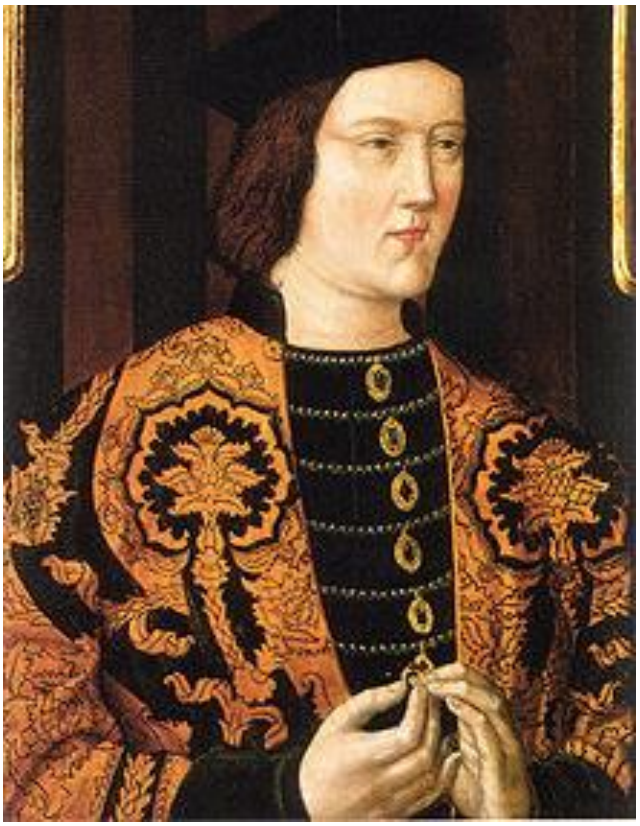
The last direct male heir of the Astley family was Sir William Astley, the eldest son, who died in 1420. The Astley families of Patshull, Staffordshire, and of Wolvey, Warwickshire, were descended from two younger sons, Thomas and Giles respectively. In the late 18th century, as we shall see, a member of this Patshull branch returned to live briefly at Astley Castle.

Thanks to Landmark's works, detailed archaeology has been carried out on the remains of the castle. A copy of this report can be found in the bookcase and so this highly complex building will only be sketched in outline here. In this medieval period, we can imagine the castle as a two storey structure, broadly on the site of today's living accommodation, built of the local red sandstone and dwarfed by the church, protected from attack by the moat and curtain walls. The castle's massive early walls still form the bulk of its western wall and the now central spine wall. Its Gothic windows were altered in the early 17th and 19th centuries.

There was probably a large first floor hall (site of today's living room) where the lord and all his retainers mostly lived and slept together. The lord and his immediate family probably had chambers and solars leading off the hall, also at first floor level. On the ground floor was a series of smaller chambers. There were hearths served by flues built into the walls, although their subsequent evolution makes their original form hard to read. A two storey range was built at the northeast corner of this rectangular complex, with a circular feature called a vice, which originally held a spiral staircase (its remnants now part of today's lift shaft). The moated island would have held a court with a jumble of mostly timber outbuildings and animal sheds.

Elizabeth Woodville (1437-1492) one of the three Queens traditionally associated with Astley Castle.
(President & Fellows of Queens' College, Cambridge)

Henry VI, a weak and pious ruler who became a pawn between the warring factions during the Wars of the Roses.



Edward IV, son of the Duke of York, who came to the throne in 1461. Handsome and charismatic, he was also over six feet tall. His Court was outraged when he chose to marry Elizabeth Woodville, a non-noble widow, when he could have had the pick of European princesses.

The Greys: 1420 - c1600

When Sir William Astley died in 1420, his daughter, Joan, inherited the Astley estates. After the death of her first husband, Thomas Raleigh of Farnborough in Warwickshire, Joan married Reynold (or Reginald), Lord Grey of Ruthin, so introducing the second important family to the castle's history. At a national level, the Greys were one of the most significant families during one of the most enduringly fascinating period of our history. To chart Astley Castle's life through the Greys' period of ownership, even as a minor holding in their vast estates, the family's own rise and fall requires us to dive into all the colour, charm and brutality of the Plantagenet and Tudor eras. At the death of Lord Grey of Ruthin in 1440, the Astley estates passed to their son, Sir Edward Grey. Sir Edward made a good marriage, to Elizabeth, the grand-daughter and heiress of William, Lord Ferrers of Groby, Leicestershire. Elizabeth became Lady Ferrers of Groby, 'livery' that passed to her husband and enabled Edward to be summoned to Parliament as Lord Ferrers. The marriage also brought him the Ferrers seats of Bradgate and Groby, in Leicestershire, which became the Greys' main seats. Sir Edward died in December 1457 and there is a monument to him inside St Mary's, Astley. Even if Astley Castle was a lesser residence than Groby or Bradgate, it seems the family valued Astley College as a place of religion and family memorial.

The Astley estate then passed to the eldest of their three sons, Sir John Grey of Groby, who in about 1452 married the eldest daughter of Richard Woodville, later 1st Earl Rivers, who had secretly married Jacquetta of Luxemburg, widow of the Duke of Bedford. Marriage in secret is a theme that recurs in their daughter's life. Her name was Elizabeth Woodville, and as the story unfolds, she will be the first of the three queens traditionally associated with Astley Castle. Elizabeth was born in 1437/8 at Grafton Regis in Northamptonshire. Contemporary accounts, and indeed portraits, attest to her golden haired beauty – she was considered the most beautiful woman in Britain.

According to one description, perhaps not entirely complimentary, Elizabeth had 'heavy lidded eyes like a dragon.' As Sir John Grey is described as 'of Groby' it is not in fact clear whether he and Elizabeth resided permanently at Astley, although as a significant estate they would undoubtedly have visited it.[4]

By the mid 1450s, however, the country was plunging into the civil strife known as the Wars of the Roses, fought between two rival branches of the royal House of Plantagenet: the houses of Lancaster (the red rose) and of York (the white rose). Weak, mentally impaired and eventually deeply religious, Henry VI inherited the throne in 1422 as an infant of ten months and was never more than a puppet king. His father was the warlike Henry V, a descendant John of Gaunt, Edward III's fourth son (Edward reigned from 1327 to 1377). Richard, Duke of York, could claim succession from Edward's third and fifth son and eventually challenged Henry VI's right to be king, after quarrelling with Henry's queen, Margaret of Anjou and other prominent Lancastrians.

Noble families like the Greys were inexorably drawn into the conflict. Sir John Grey emerges as a proficient leader of men. Despite the proximity of Astley to the Earl of Warwick's stronghold at Warwick Castle, he remained loyal to Henry VI. There had been previous armed clashes between the two sides, but matters first came to a head in 1455 at the First Battle of St Albans. This brought temporary peace until violence flared again in 1459, when Sir John Grey was a Lancastrian 'commissioner for the array' (or militia) of Leicestershire. York and his supporters were forced to flee the country, but Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, one of York's leading supporters, invaded from Calais and captured Henry VI. York returned as Protector of England but was dissuaded from taking the throne for himself. Margaret and other Lancastrian nobles gathered their forces in the north, and when York moved to suppress them, both he and his second son Edmund were killed at the Battle of Wakefield in 1460, when Grey again led a contingent.

[4] These tortuous family relations are confusing even to the best scholars of the period. It is surprising to find how even august historians' accounts vary in the detail of the relationships – we have done our best in this album!

The Lancastrians then marched south to recover the king, Henry VI.

The armies met for a second time at St Albans on 17th February 1461. Sir John Grey was one of an estimated 15,000 troops fighting for Margaret of Anjou and the Lancastrians against around 10,000 Yorkists fighting under Warwick. It was a bloody battle, especially for the Yorkists who lost 40% of their men. Sir John Grey was one of two thousand Lancastrians who lost their lives in the battle, leaving his wife Elizabeth (née) Woodville a widow at 24, with two young sons, Thomas (who was eleven when his father died) and Richard Grey.

The Lancastrians had recovered Henry VI but failed to occupy London and retreated north. The Duke of York's eldest son, the nineteen-year-old Earl of March, was instead proclaimed King Edward IV. Edward rallied his troops and won a decisive victory over the Lancastrians at the Battle of Towton on 29th March 1461. One of the lesser results of Edward's victory was the disinheritance of Sir John Grey's line. Elizabeth Woodville, as Grey's widow, was left in straightened circumstances.

In 1464, the tale goes that Elizabeth waited under an oak tree near her parents' home near Stony Stratford with her two young sons in either hand, to plead the case for the return of her dead husband's forfeited lands with the young king Edward, who was hunting nearby. Edward, who was playing off various royal princesses against each other in these years and not known for restraint where the ladies of the Court were concerned, fell in love with her. Elizabeth did not succumb easily, arguing that although '*she did account herself too base to be his wife, so she did think herself too good to be his harlot*.' On 30th April 1464, Edward rode over to her father's Manor at Grafton Regis in Northamtonshire, where, on 1st May, he secretly married Elizabeth. He did not confess the deed to his Council until September 14th, causing 'great displeasure to many great lords

Simplified family trees showing the relationship between the Greys and the Tudors

(1) Sir John Grey (d 1461) = Elizabeth Woodville* (1437–92) = (2) Edward IV (1442–83)

Edward V (d. 1483?) [*The Princes in the Tower*]

Richard (d. 1483?)

Elizabeth of York* (1466–1503) = Henry (Tudor) VII (1457–1509)

Thomas Grey 1st Marquess of Dorset (*c.*1455–1501) = Cecily Bonneville

(2) Charles Brandon Duke of Suffolk (1484–1545) = Mary (1496–1533) = (1) Louis XII King of France (1462–1515)

Henry VIIII (1491–1547)

Arthur Prince of Wales (1486–1502)

= (1) Katherine of Aragon

Mary I (1516–58)

= (2) Anne Boleyn

Elizabeth I (1533–1603)

= (3) Jane Seymour

Edward VI (1537–53)

Thomas Grey 2nd Marquess of Dorset (1477–1530)

(1) Henry Grey 3rd Marquess of Dorset Duke of Suffolk (1517–54) = Frances Brandon (1517–59) = (2) Adrian Stokes (d. 1585)

Lady Jane Grey* (1537–54)

Katherine (1540–68)

Mary (1545–78)

*Astley Castle's so-called 'Three Queens'

Richard III, last of the Plantagenets, a figure who has divided historians ever since his traducing by the Tudor propagandists. This 16thC copy of an earlier portrait has been altered to suggest he was a hunchback.

and especially to the larger part of all his Council' (Lord Wenlock). The Earl of Warwick was especially displeased and it was a dangerous gamble.[5]

Elizabeth, as de facto queen despite her relatively base origins, immediately became a powerful, if not always popular, figure in the land. She bore Edward two sons, the ill-fated Princes in the Tower, and was also able to promote her own Woodville/Grey family interests. Her eldest son Thomas Grey, had his father's lands reinstated to him. He became Earl of Huntingdon in 1472, relinquishing the title in 1475 to become 1st Marquess of Dorset, and a Knight of the Garter. His second marriage was to Cecily Bonneville, a rich heiress who brought great country estates, and whose memorial effigy still survives in Astley Church. At Edward IV's death in 1483, Thomas Grey was Constable to the Tower of London, a key post that gave him control of both its arms and treasure.

However, the envy and enmity that Elizabeth Woodville and her entourage had provoked in serving their own interest meant that their fall after Edward IV's death was swift and dramatic. Thomas Grey's younger brother Sir Richard Grey was part of the 12-year old heir, Edward V's, entourage as he headed south to London for the coronation with his younger brother. At Pontefract Castle, the young princes were abducted by Richard, Duke of York (Edward IV's younger brother). Sir Richard Grey was detained and then executed on 25th June 1483. Richard of York claimed the throne the following day as Richard III and declared Edward and Elizabeth's offspring illegitimate, claiming that Edward had been previously married. In the autumn of the same year, the two young princes mysteriously disappeared during their incarceration in the Tower of London. Their fate was unknown, but in 1674 two skeletons were discovered in a chest buried beneath some stairs at the Tower and presumed to be their bodies. They are now buried at Westminster Abbey.

[5] On Sept 4th 2000, Prince Charles planted a tree christened 'The Woodville Oak' at Stony Stratford to commemorate the marriage, replacing an ancient oak on the spot that had perished in an arson attack in 1997 and said to be where the couple met. However, when this tree was dated it was found to be a mere 340 years old, so not the original oak after all.

All that remains of Bradgate, main seat of the Greys from the late 15th century and birthplace of Lady Jane Grey. Just NW of Leicester near the village of Cropston, Bradgate is now a country park and a worthwhile excursion for its geology as well as its history.

After the mysterious disappearance of the princes, Thomas Grey, Marquess of Dorset joined the Duke of Buckingham's rebellion against Richard III. This hasty and ill-planned revolt soon collapsed, forcing Thomas to flee to Brittany for two years. He was attainder for treason in Parliament in 1484, which meant that all his lands were forfeited to the Crown. However, there were Greys for all seasons and not all of them suffered from the sudden end of Elizabeth's influence. Edward Grey 'of Asteleye', had earlier been pardoned of all offences by Edward IV in 1472 for, presumably, previously siding with the Lancastrian king Henry VI. When Thomas Grey, Marquess of Dorset, was attaindered for treason by Richard III in 1485, Edward was created Viscount Lisle and granted the Manor of Astley – worth the not inconsiderable sum of £44 10s per annum - for services rendered to Richard I. Edward Grey's wife, Lady Lisle, who died in 1483, is thought to be one of the alabaster effigies by the entrance in St Mary's Church today.

Thomas Grey joined forces with Henry Tudor, Duke of Richmond, at Rennes – but then deserted him at the urging of Elizabeth Woodville his mother, who, despite (or perhaps because of) the disappearance of her young sons, had made a deal with Richard III. Instead, Thomas Grey remained in Paris as security for a loan to Henry Tudor and played no part in Richard III's eventual downfall at the Battle of Bosworth on 22nd August 1485. Henry became king, the first of the house of Tudor and notwithstanding his relatively tenuous claim to the throne through descent from John of Gaunt and his mistress, Elizabeth Swynford.

As reward for his support for Henry in exile, Thomas Grey was then given back his estates by Act of Parliament, including Astley Castle. In the late-1490's Thomas Grey replaced an old house at Bradgate, Leicestershire, with a new great house and doubled the size of its deer park. This became the main Grey family seat. At nearby Groby, according to Leland, he began an even more ambitious brick mansion but it was never finished.

Elizabeth 'of York' (1466-1503), daughter of Elizabeth Woodville and Edward IV. Her marriage to Henry VII (Tudor) united the houses of Tudor/Lancashire and York. She is the second queen associated with Astley Castle, although in fact ownership passed to her half-brother, Thomas Grey, 1st Marquess of Dorset.

Henry VII meanwhile married Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville's daughter, known as Elizabeth of York. This was as symbolic marriage that united the red rose of Lancaster and with the white rose York to bring an end to the conflict between them and found a new dynasty. Thomas Grey, Marquess of Dorset, married first Anne, daughter of the Duke of Exeter, but they had no children. By his second wife, Cecily, daughter and heir to Lord Harrington, Thomas Grey had seven sons and seven daughters before he died in 1501, aged 50. Thomas was buried at Astley. The collegiate foundation at Astley was still clearly viewed as the rightful resting place for the Grey family, priests still performing masses for their souls, and by association Astley Castle must have had significance as a place to visit and maintain, even though the family would have been spending most of their time at Bradgate or at Court.

The Grey estates including Astley were next inherited by Thomas Grey's eldest son, also Thomas, 2nd Marquess of Dorset and Lord Ferrers. This Thomas was also a Knight of the Garter and an experienced soldier, if not a particularly successful one on campaign. He was a companion of Henry VIII and seems to have shared his monarch's love of finery. He jousted at most royal tournaments, on Henry's side – and the king liked to win. A description of Thomas Grey's appearance at the meeting between Henry and Philip of Castille at Windsor in 1506 appears in one of the famous Paston letters:

> '*My Lord Marquess riding upon a bald sorrel horse, with a deep trapper full of long tassels of gold of Venus, and upon the copper of his horse a white feather, with a cot upon his back, the body goldsmith's work, the sleeves of crimson velvet, with letters of gold.'*

Thomas Grey also carried out improvements at Astley - though it is unlikely that he visited more than occasionally, and he owned land in sixteen counties. Around 1500 it was probably Thomas (rather than his father) who enclosed of 30 acres of demesne lands around the castle to create the Little Park that sloped down to a lake in the east (presumably Astley Pool - it is said locally that this was created by quarrying stone for the castle). At about the same time the 'Great Park' (now lost) was enlarged to include 18 acres in Astley and 90 acres in Arley.

The famous painting of the Field of Cloth of Gold that hangs today at Hampton Court Palace. This meeting between Henry VIII and Francois I of France took place in a valley near Guines just south of Calais. Thomas Grey, 2nd Marquess of Dorset is identifiable as the knight preceding Henry and carrying the Sword of State, a clear indication of his status.

Thomas Grey 2nd Marquess of Dorset led a flamboyant and high profile life at Court. In 1520, he was one of the eight Challengers during Henry VIII's extravagant games and jousts at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, when Henry VIII met Francois I of France in the Pas de Calais – where Grey also bore the Sword of State in front of the King. He was also a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, and a great friend of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, more of whom below.

Thomas Grey, 2nd Marquess of Dorset, bears the Sword of State ahead of Henry VIII at the Field of Cloth of Gold.

Thomas Grey, 2nd Marquess of Dorset was also involved with local Warwickshire and Leicestershire politics, in a foretaste of the provincial jockeying that came to a head in rebellions later in century. He came close to disgrace at court through a long-running feud in Leicestershire with the Hastings family. This came to a head in 1516, both sides trying to out do the other in the size of their retinues at court. By 1522, the king had to prohibit the wearing of livery by either family in Leicester. In 1523 both families were excluded from local government. In 1524, a fight in Leicester between Thomas Grey, 2nd Marquess of Dorset's cook and a client of

Hastings escalated into a brawl involving hundreds. A bond of £1000 (a huge sum) was required from each rival against the holding of the peace. Thomas Grey 2nd Marquess Dorset was appointed lord master of Princess Mary's commission and packed off to Wales. He also lost his place in the Privy Council, but was soon back in royal favour. In 1528, he was appointed constable of Warwick Castle and in 1529 of Kenilworth too. Writing in the 1530s, the antiquary John Leland listed *Ascheley* [sic.] *Castle* as one of a small handful of castles in the county, and one of only three that seemed habitable, after Warwick and Kenilworth – so that Grey was thus placed in charge of all three defensible sites in Warwickshire.

In 1529, as a close contemporary of all the parties involved, Thomas Grey, 2nd Marquess of Dorset was one of the principle witnesses in the king's divorce proceedings, supporting Henry's claim that his brother Arthur had consummated his marriage to Katherine.

Thomas Grey died in 1530 and was also buried at Astley, where the collegiate priests could pray for his soul as they did for his ancestors'. That such a prominent Court figure should choose Astley as his final resting place reinforces the sense of its continuing importance as a place of family memorial. When his father died in 1501, Thomas had been considered too poor for his rank as 2nd Marquess of Dorset because much of his lands were still held by his mother who had inherited in her own right. After a lifetime of loyal service to the Crown, he left a very wealthy heir in his eldest son, Henry Grey - who will later be Lady Jane Grey's father, and whose story we now pick up.

Henry Grey was born in 1517 at Bradgate, so was only 15 and not yet of age at his father's death in 1530. Thomas left a life interest in the Manor of Astley to his wife, Margaret, although she apparently did not live at Astley in the later years of her life, preferring instead to live in lodgings built by her husband in Tilty monastery, Essex. It was the custom of the time that underage heirs or heiresses became the wards of powerful men, the income from their inherited estates being

valuable perquisites for their protectors, distributed through the Court of Wards, and their future marriage prospects also enhancing a protector's own network of interest. Henry Grey became the ward of his father's friend, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, married to Mary Tudor, sister of Henry VIII.

When Francis XII of France had died in 1514, Mary Tudor had prevailed upon her brother Henry VIII that he keep his promise that she now be allowed to marry Brandon. They married in secret at Cluny in February 1515 and publically at Greenwich in May, and even though Charles Brandon subsequently had to seek papal annulment for an existing marriage contract to ensure the legitimacy of their offspring – it is perhaps interesting to note that Henry VIII had precedents for his own campaign to annul his marriage to Katherine of Aragorn. Their firstborn, a son, died as a youth, but their eldest daughter, Frances, survived.

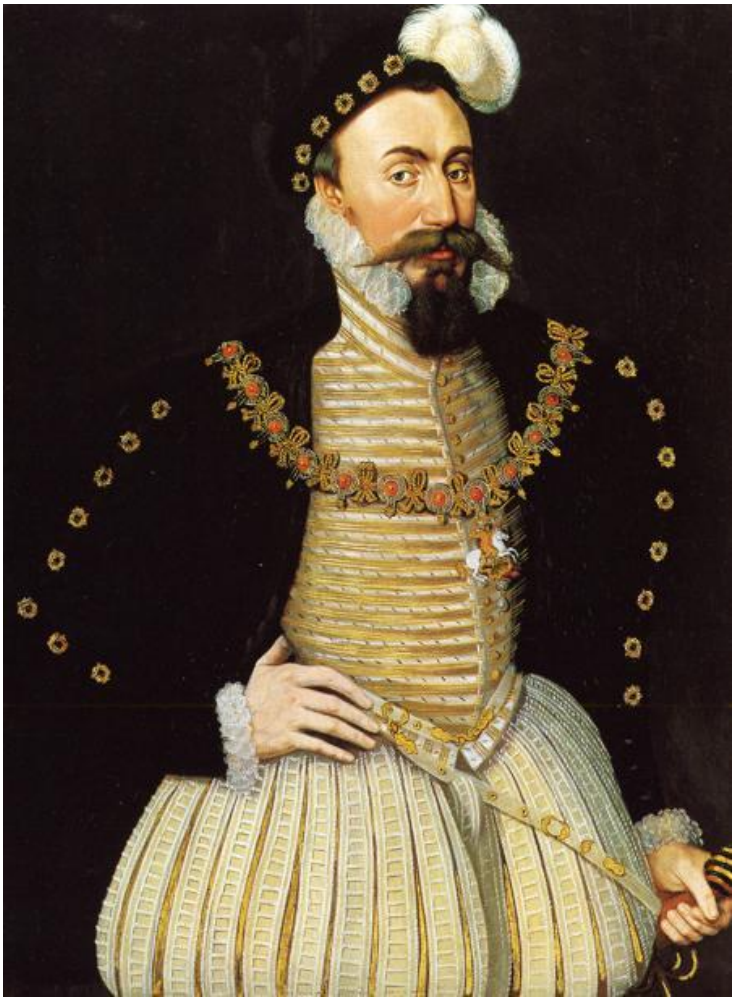
For this powerful family, wardship of an heir to an estate like the Greys was a valuable piece in the chess game of patronage and power.

As a youth, Henry Grey had been betrothed to Katherine, daughter of William FitzAlan, Earl of Arundel, but no doubt at Charles Brandon Duke of Suffolk's instigation, Henry repudiated Katherine and in May 1533, aged 18, he was married to Charles and Mary Tudor's eldest daughter, Frances, then 16. Four years later, Henry and Frances Grey had a daughter, Lady Jane Grey, one of the most compelling figures in a compelling age.

The events of her father, Henry Grey's life reveal him to have been a man of mediocre talents and judgement. In 1538, he was described as:

> '*young, lusty and poor, of great possessions but which are not in his hands, many friends of great power, with little or no experience, well learned and a great wit*'.[6]

[6] Hammond, P W (ed.), 1998, *The Complete Peerage*, *Vol. XIV*, 272



Henry Grey, 3rd Marquess of Dorset and from 1551 Duke of Suffolk. He was also father of Lady Jane Grey

Another contemporary described him as '*an illustrious and widely-loved nobleman of ancient lineage, but lacking in circumspection*'.[7] The chronicler Holinshed, described him as '*a man of high nobility by birth, and of nature to his friends gentle and courteous, more easy indeed to be led than expedient*'.[8] The overall impression is of a vain and self-important man, easily led by others.

The last decade of Henry VIII's reign was of course a turbulent time, as the king dissolved the great monastic estates and broke with the Church in Rome, in pursuit of his own dynastic ambitions and religious reforms. One of the changes consequent on the English Reformation was the outlawing of prayers for the souls of the dead, now seen as a Popish practice for which there was no place in the new, Protestant Church of England under which people relied for salvation on predestination and God's will. Having already laid claim to the monasteries, this now provided an excuse for the Crown to claim chantries like the college at Astley for its own. Astley College was suppressed in 1545, but, most conveniently for Henry Grey as owner of Astley Castle, the college and its church was granted to his wife Frances, a reward for her services to Katherine Parr, Henry VIII's sixth and last wife. As granddaughter of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, Frances also had next claim on the throne after Henry VIII's own children, Mary, Edward and Elizabeth.

Henry Grey, 3rd Marquess of Dorset survived unharmed through the unpredictability of the old king's last years, although his younger brother, Leonard Grey, one-time Deputy of Ireland, was executed in 1541. At the funeral of Henry VIII in 1547, Henry Grey 3rd Marquess of Dorset was the Chief Mourner, but it seems he was not especially popular with Henry or the Court: his father-in-law had nominated him annually for several years for the Order of the Garter without success.

[7] MacCulloch, D (trans. & ed.), 1984, 'The *Vita Mariae Angliae Reginae* of Robert Wingfield of Brantham', *Camden Miscellany XXVIII, Camden Fourth Series Vol. 29*, 291

[8] Holinshed, R, 1577, *Chronicles of England, Scotlande and Irelande*

Henry VIII's longed for male heir, delicate Edward VI, inherited the throne aged just 15, under the influence of the powerful Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and Protector of the Realm. Henry Grey 3rd Marquess of Dorset provided useful support for the new regime, and was finally made a Knight of the Garter within weeks of the accession.

Despite benefiting from Protector Somerset's influence, Henry Grey soon began to fall under the sway of Somerset's younger brother, Thomas Seymour, Baron Sudeley. Thomas Seymour was playing his own dynastic game. He married Katherine Parr and was both courting the favour of both the young Edward VI and flirting with Edward's teenage sister, Princess Elizabeth, as the next Protestant in line to the throne should Edward die (the rightful next heir, Henry VIII's elder daughter Mary, was unacceptable to the Protestant party because she was a Catholic).[9] Thomas Seymour also persuaded Henry Grey to let his young daughter Jane Grey to go to live with the Seymours at their home at Sudeley Castle in Gloucestershire and join Katherine Parr and Princess Elizabeth. For Jane too was a useful pawn in the dynastic chess game: Thomas Seymour planned to marry Jane to Edward VI, as a further means of undermining his brother Somerset. This possibility was seductive enough to draw Henry Grey into Thomas Seymour's orbit.

Thomas Seymour was arrested for treason and attaindered (his lands and property forfeited) early in 1549.The fickle Henry Grey was one of those called to give evidence against him and some of this casts a brief beam of light onto Astley, which it seems was in poor repair. According to Henry, Thomas Seymour:

> '…*advised me to keep my house in Warwickshire* [i.e. Astley], *as it is a county full of men, chiefly to match my Lord Warwick. I replied that my house was almost down and I was unable to repair it. I had stone,*

[9] Mary had been passed over in favour of Edward as monarch because she was female. It is interesting that only in 2011 was the rule of succession changed to allow a female eldest child to inherit the Crown ahead of a younger brother.

brick and wood, but lacked provision for keeping my house at Bradgate, sixteen miles away'.[10]

(This is a rare reference to Astley in the documents. Very little primary source material for the Greys survives from the mid 1530s-c1551 – most of the records were lost or destroyed when the family seat at Bradgate was confiscated after Suffolk's eventual execution for treason, and the Greys' two London houses were also lost and later demolished.)

Thomas Seymour was executed after his rebellion but Henry Grey survived. Indeed, he became even wealthier, by exchanging coin and plate for new coins, all part of Protector Somerset's debasement of the currency. Indeed, Somerset was over-reaching himself and was deposed by the rest of the Privy Council later in 1549. Indeed, the Council is where the true power lay in these years of uncertain royal succession. Henry Grey continued to prosper, partly due to his potential importance as the husband of Frances, who was now third in line to the throne.

Henry Grey's new mentor was John Dudley, Earl of Warwick – avowed enemy of the Seymours - and through his influence Grey finally became a Privy Councillor. In 1551, Charles Brandon's last male heir died and Henry Grey was made Duke of Suffolk, inheriting the title through his wife Frances. At the same ceremony at Hampton Court in October, Warwick became Duke of Northumberland. When Somerset was executed in 1552 for felony and plotting to overthrow Dudley, Grey even obtained much of Somerset's property, including his retinue of 100 horsemen and the £2,000 a year allowance needed for their upkeep. The Grey family were at the peak of their power and influence.

Through 1552, Edward VI's health began to fail (it is likely he suffered from tuberculosis). This threw the question of the succession into even sharper relief.

[10] Knighton, C S (ed.), 1992, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series of the Reign of Edward VI 1547-1553*, 83

The image generally accepted to be of Lady Jane Grey (National Portrait Gallery) but if so, a later (1590s) copy of an earlier original, like so many surviving Tudor portraits. 'Queen' for just nine days in July 1553, Jane is the third queen associated with Astley Castle, through her father's ownership.

This portrait, dated to 1550-60s was for many years thought to be of Lady Jane but doubt has now been cast on the identification.

Historian David Starkey caused a stir in March 2007 by claiming this miniature which dates from the 1550s to be a likeness of Lady Jane. Painted on vellum and less than 2 inches in diameter, such early miniatures were only done for sitters of very high status. The attribution is based on the brooch, which matches one in an inventory of Jane's possessions in the British Library – an agate centre with a classical profile. Starkey maintains that the foliage behind the brooch includes the four petalled gillyflower (related to wallflower) which was the Dudleys' badge, and "Gilly" was the nickname or rebus of Jane's husband, Guildford Dudley. The suggestion is therefore that the miniature was painted after Jane's marriage to Dudley in May 1553. The inscription 'A[n]no xviii', suggesting the sitter was 18 years old, is inconsistent with Jane's execution at 16, and the Starkey attribution has not gone unchallenged.

Under the 3rd Act of Succession (1544) and Henry VIII's will (1547), the Suffolk line would inherit the Crown if Henry VIII's children died childless. Henry did not care for his elder sister Margaret, former Queen of Scotland and so promoted the interests of his other sister, Mary. If Edward died, next in line were Princess Mary (Catholic), Princess Elizabeth (Protestant but daughter of the discredited Anne Boleyn and declared illegitimate) – and then Frances Brandon, as daughter of Mary and so niece of Henry VIII (and grand-daughter of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York).

Frances herself seems never to have been seriously considered for the throne, the focus passing instead to her and Henry Grey's then 15-year old daughter, Lady Jane Grey. Jane was a pious and well-educated girl, critical of her parents' pleasure-loving life and a fervent Protestant like her cousin the king. There was little affection between daughter and parents and Jane sought solace in learning. It was her misfortune that accident of birth made her, now, fourth in line to the throne. There seems, in fact, no evidence she ever lived at Astley Castle, despite the enduring local tradition of an association through the family ownership of the site.

The Duke of Northumberland and the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk began to harbour dreams of founding a new dynasty. A contemporary considered that Henry Grey – a '*timid and trustful duke*' - was in awe of Northumberland but was willing to accept the prospect of '*a scarcely imaginable haul of immense wealth and greater honour*' by marrying Jane to the Duke of Northumberland's son, Guildford Dudley, in May 1553.

Northumberland, with Edward VI's support, was the main instigator of the plan to put Jane on the throne following the death of the ailing king – theoretically to maintain the Protestant ascendancy – and Henry Grey was obviously part of that plot. On 21st June 1553, Edward named Jane heiress, so excluding his own sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, as well as Jane's mother, Frances, from immediate

succession. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Jane, and indeed her foolish father, were mere pawns in the Duke of Northumberland's ambition to put his own son, Guildford Dudley, on the throne. The lawyers told to draw up the will to execute the 'devise' of the Crown to Jane initially refused on the grounds that such a task was treasonable, but then capitulated, and the document was signed by over a hundred nobles.

When Edward VI died on 6th July 1553, Northumberland kept his death secret for three days. On July 10th, Jane was brought by water from Isleworth to Westminster and the Tower. Later that day she was proclaimed queen in the City - but no one cheered. Jane was herself was reluctant to be declared Queen and was forceful enough to refuse to allow her new husband to be called king.

Princess Mary fled London to set up a base at Framlingham in East Anglia and was soon gaining support. Princess Elizabeth lay low at Hatfield. Henry Grey Duke of Suffolk – who had brought 300 armed men to the capital to support his daughter's accession – was asked by the Privy Council to lead a force to prevent Mary claiming the throne. Some accounts say Jane refused to let him go; another contemporary said Grey himself refused to go, '*using some fainting fits, or according to others, attacks of giddiness as his excuse*'.

Whilst the Duke of Northumberland led their army instead, Henry Grey stayed in London but with characteristic cowardice failed to support his daughter as the Council gradually turned against her and swore allegiance instead to Princess Mary as direct heir. Northumberland's venture ended on 20th July in Cambridge, as his support from the Council melted away. Jane was deposed after just nine days and Mary was declared queen, for all her Catholicism.

Lady Jane Grey's execution at just 16 years old and her helplessness as a political pawn made her a tragic heroine, and she has captured the imagination of artists and historians ever since, as in this famous painting by Paul Delaroche in 1834.

In fact, Jane was beheaded in the open air, in public near the White Tower in the precincts of the Tower of London, having watched her husband Guildford Dudley's execution earlier the same morning from her window. 'I pray you despatch me quickly,' she is said to have whispered to the executioner.

Suffolk tore down the canopy of state above his daughter's head. Jane is reported to have said 'Out of obedience to you and my mother I have grievously sinned. Now I willingly relinquish the Crown. May I not go home?' Suffolk apparently left without answering and according to one account, hurried to proclaim Mary from Tower Hill, leaving Jane in the Tower to be taken into custody. Mary entered the City in splendour on 3rd August, and unlike Jane, was greeted with gunfire, cheering and music as the rightful heir.

Jane's mother Frances Grey, Duchess of Suffolk, who has had a great deal of bad press from historians, emerges as something of a cipher, either the most astute of the Greys, and a woman of both personality and charm, or a cold and ambitious woman. She was certainly a survivor. She immediately pleaded with her niece Mary for mercy towards her family. The Duke of Northumberland was executed for treason, but Henry Grey was released from the Tower where he had been imprisoned and with remarkable leniency was allowed to retire to his house at East Sheen, albeit with a bond of £20,000 for good behaviour, useful liquid capital for the new queen. It seems possible that clemency might eventually have followed for Jane too had all lain low, notwithstanding the death sentence imposed on her in November 1553.

Henry Grey, however, then became involved in Sir Thomas Wyatt's opposition to Mary I's marriage to Philip of Spain and the return of Catholicism, opposition that led to outright rebellion. Grey, as Duke of Suffolk, was the only important magnate to join the rebellion. In January 1554 the plot was uncovered and Henry Grey fled London in a vain attempt to raise a rebellion in the Midlands. The account of his failure in the deposition of one of his secretaries, John Bowyer, for Grey's attainder puts the spotlight firmly onto Astley Castle.[11]

Bowyer was ordered to warn Henry Grey's two brothers, John and Thomas, who were then in London, and they met Henry Grey at Towcester before arriving at

[11] Knighton, C S, 1998, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series of the Reign of Mary I,*

Bradgate a few days later. Henry Grey Duke of Suffolk then rode to Leicester, in an unsuccessful attempt to gather support. He then rode back to Coventry, but within half a mile of the city was warned that the gates would be locked against him. He seems to have realised then that all was lost. According to a contemporary source:

> '*…with all his company he* [Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk] *rode to Astley, where every man took off his harness. Lord Thomas and Lord John took frieze coats from the servants. I went to see my gelding, for my man had tired his horse. Before I came in again they had divided the money between them, so that I and two or three others more had nothing*'.[12]

John Bowyer then '*went into the house to see him and depart*' and saw Thomas Grey leave, borrowing Bowyer's coat; Henry Grey was planning to flee abroad, one of the countries suggested being Denmark and, in a later deposition, Bowyer claimed that '*the Duke changed apparel*' with him.[13] Here is chronicler Raphael Holinshed's account, who had Warwickshire connections and was writing about events not long afterwards in 1577:

> The Duke *'in the town of Leicester and other places caused proclamations to be made in semblable wise as Sir Thomas Wyatt had done against the Queen's match, which she meant to make with the said king of Spain, but few there were that would willingly harken thereto.*
>
> *'But now ye must understand, that before his coming down he was persuaded that the city of Coventry would be opened unto him, the more part of citizens being thoroughly bent in his favour, in so necessary a quarrel as defence of the realm against strangers as they were then persuaded. But, howsoever it chanced, this proved not altogether true; for, whether through the misliking which the citizens had of the matter, or through negligence of some that were sent to solicit them in the cause, or chiefly, as should seem to be most true, that God would have it so, when the duke came with six or seven score horsemen, well-appointed for the purpose, presenting himself before the city, in hope to be received, he was kept out.*
>
> *For the citizens, through the comfort of the Earl of Huntingdon that was then come down, sent by the queen to stay the countries* [counties] *from*

1553-1558, 43.

[12] *ibid.*

[13] Knighton, 1998, *op. cit.*, 43; 345

falling to the Duke and to raise a power to apprehend him, had put themselves in armour and made all the provision they could to defend the city against the said Duke; whereupon, perceiving himself destitute of all the aid as he looked for among his friends in the two shires of Leicester and Warwick, he got him to his Manor of Astley, distant from Coventry five miles, where appointing his company to disperse themselves and to make the best shift each one for his own safeguard that he might, and distributing to every of them a portion of money, according to their qualities and his store at that present, he and the Lord John Grey his brother bestowed themselves in secret places there within Astley Park; but through the untrustyness of them to whose trust they did commit themselves, as hath been credibly reported, they were betrayed to the Earl of Huntingdon, that when was come to Coventry and so were apprehended there by the said Earl and afterwards brought up to London.

'The Duke had meant at first to have rid away (as I have credibly heard) if promise had been kept to him by one of his servants, appointed to come to him to be his guide; but when he, either feigning himself sick or being sick indeed, came not, the Duke was constrained to remain in the park at Astley, hoping yet to get away after that search had been passed over, and the country once in quiet. Howsoever it was, there he was taken, as is before said , together with his brother the lord John Grey..[14]

William Dugdale, the local antiquary, adding more detail, wrote that the Duke,

'*Finding he was forsaken, he put himself under the trust of one Underwood, as 'tis said, a keeper of his park here at Astley, who hid him some few days in a large hollow tree there standing about two bow-shots south west from the church, but being promised a reward, betray'd him*'.[15]

In an inventory of the contents of Astley Castle taken in 1804, a table and chair said to have been used by Henry Grey - the '*Duke's Chair and Table*' - are listed as present. It seems they remained at Astley until the early 20th century, when the Newdegate family removed them to Arbury Hall.

[14] Holinshed, R, 1577, *Chronicles of England, Scotlande and Irelande*
[15] Dugdale, W, 1656, *Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated*

The table and chair said to have been used by the Duke of Suffolk while he was hiding in his oak tree after his second rebellion in 1554. (It must have been a very large tree!) The table is inlaid for backgammon. Both pieces appear in late 18th century inventories for Astley Castle, and in *Beauties of England* (1814) Britton noted that *'In the hall are shewn a heavy inlaid table, and a rude and cumbrous chair, which are said to have belonged to the Duke.'* They have been kept at Arbury Hall since the early 20th century.

Lady Jane Grey's father's actions, and her own refusal to renounce her faith, made Mary I's decision to sign her death warrant inevitable. Jane was beheaded, with her husband Guildford Dudley, at the Tower of London on the 12th February 1554. Henry Grey was convicted of treason and executed on the 23rd February. His elder brother, Thomas Grey, was later caught near Oswestry and was also executed, but his younger brother, John Grey, was reprieved.

Traditionally, Astley Castle is thought to have been slighted and the family ruined after the executions of Jane and Henry. However, the condition of the castle immediately before then is unclear, bearing in mind Henry Grey's earlier response to Thomas Seymour that it was already dilapidated. The structural evidence also points against significant demolition. That Frances Grey, as Henry Grey's widow, was allowed to keep Astley Castle was an act of generosity on Mary's part since a traitor's property was forfeit to the Crown. The Manor of Astley, however, was granted by letters patent to Edward Chamberlain, the next significant family in its history.

Despite her husband's treasons and her eldest daughter's misfortunes, the widowed Lady Frances Grey remained on good terms with Mary I, still allowed to attend Court. The fact that she survived suggests Mary liked her, and perhaps there were remnants of solidarity between these cousins who had grown up together in the early years of Henry VIII's reign. Frances seems not to have been in favour of her husband's intrigues, not wanting her daughter Jane to marry Guildford Dudley, or to claim the throne – yet she made no attempt to visit Jane or Henry Grey in the Tower.

In March 1555, then aged 37, Frances Grey married her Master of Horse, Adrian Stokes, and they may have made Astley one of their residences, since the main Grey seat at Bradgate had been confiscated. This marriage drew the disapproval of earlier historians, something repeated even in very recent works.

Opinions are divided over whether the drawing by Hans Holbein the Younger (left) is of Frances Brandon as Marchioness of Dorset (wife of Henry Grey and mother of Lady Jane Grey) or of her mother-in-law, Margaret Grey, 2nd Marchioness of Dorset (1487-1541). The painting above right is a later copy of an early original that was clearly based on the drawing; the point is usually made that a young woman (Frances was 26 in 1543, when Holbein died) would not be carrying a walking stick – although the Holbein drawing appears to be of a young, rather than elderly, woman.

The one likeness indisputably of Frances Brandon is the effigy on her tomb in Westminster Abbey (below), paid for by Elizabeth I and executed to the highest standards. Elizabeth also ordered that the royal coat of arms should be quartered with Frances's own on the tomb – a mark of high royal favour.

William Camden's *Annales*, written in the early-17th century, was probably the source of this disparagement, accusing Frances of '*forgetting the nobility of her lineage*' by marrying that '*mean gentleman*'. Stokes was seen as too lowly in status for a duchess and also thought to be just 21 and so too young for the widowed Frances. According to some sources, Catherine de Medici's catty comment '*Has the woman so far forgotten herself as to marry a common groom?*' (on the rumours of Elizabeth's liaison with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who would be Elizabeth I's own Master of Horse) is wrongly attributed as being made by Elizabeth about Frances. In fact, Elizabeth I, who acceded to the throne in 1558, seems to have counted Frances among her dearest friends. The marriage was probably a love match. Stokes was in fact born in 1519 and so only a couple of years younger than Frances and an experienced soldier, so warranting the role of Master of Horse, an important one in any noble household.

They had two children, both of whom died in infancy. The marriage did not last long for Frances's health was failing and she died in 1559. She was buried not at Astley College but in Westminster Abbey, at Elizabeth I's own expense – another indication of how well Frances navigated the complicated personal relationships of the time.

Frances left all her goods and a life interest in most of her estates to Adrian Stokes, including (probably) Astley Castle and also Beaumanor in Leicestershire, a fine house that became Stokes' main residence.

Stokes was a fervent Protestant and quickly aligned himself with the Earl of Huntingdon in the tussle for local influence. He was returned to Parliament as senior knight for Leicester in 1559, was not returned in 1563 but recovered his seat in 1571, now as junior knight behind the younger brother of the Earl of Huntingdon. In 1572, Stokes married Anne, widow of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, a marriage that brought him to the heart of a close knit group of Carew and Throckmorton families.

Frances Brandon, Marchioness of Dorset and later Duchess of Suffolk, has had a bad press from historians, being caricatured both as the wicked mother of Lady Jane Grey and pilloried for re-marrying (and 'too quickly') Adrian Stokes, her Master of Horse. Stokes was supposed to be much younger than herself, and she also supposedly 'forgetting the nobility of her lineage', in William Camden's words. Opprobrium was perpetuated by the mis-identification of this rather unsympathetic portrait, by Hans Eworth. In a 1727 catalogue entry based on a note attached to the back, the painting was claimed to be of Frances and Adrian Stokes, and appeared to reinforce the stereotype. In fact, Stokes was only a year or so younger, they married over a year after the Duke's death and Master of Horse was a senior post in a great household.

It was only in 1986 that the portrait was instead identified as Mary Neville, Lady Dacre, and her son. An early engraving, an example of how the misattribution spread, hangs in one of the bedrooms in the castle.

The Astley Castle estate seems to have included the church and college after their suppression by Henry VIII in 1545. According to the Victoria County History, which cites Dugdale, in 1558 Stokes stripped the lead from the church; the buildings would have been too large and too expensive to maintain for such a small parish without its income. Stokes' own Protestant allegiance may also have played its part, since prayers for the dead were long since outlawed, and Stokes was only doing what many others did in plundering church property. The Grey connection was not entirely lost however: in June 1567, Elizabeth I signed a warrant to permit Lady Catharine and Lady Mary Grey, Lady Jane's younger sisters, to receive 'the rents and profits of certain lands late parcel of the possessions of the College of Astley, co. Warwick.'[16] It may be that the Grey sisters' lack of funds also played their part in the stripping out of the church. (Indeed, Catherine and Mary Grey led colourful onward lives themselves, both marrying without permission - a dangerous strategy for girls with their own claim to the throne under the Virgin Queen).

Whatever the legalities involved, the damage caused to the church was enormous and in about 1600, according to Dugdale, the west tower fell down.

Adrian Stokes died a wealthy man, in 1585. His heir was his brother William – and it seems likely that ownership of Astley Castle then passed to the existing owner of the surrounding Astley Manor, Edward Chamberlain.

[16] *Calendar of State Papers – Domestic 1547-1580*, ed. Robert Lemon (1856), June 1567.

2.3 The Chamberlain family, c1600 - 1674[17]

It will be remembered that the *Manor* of Astley had been granted to an Edward Chamberlain after Henry Grey's fall in 1554.[18] The VCH account suggests that Astley Castle too was owned by the Chamberlains from 1554, but Elizabeth's 1567 warrant to allow the Grey sisters an income from certain lands formerly belonging to the College suggests that at least part of the Astley holdings had remained in Grey/Stokes ownership. Adrian Stokes is traditionally associated with the plundering of the church lead, although the primary source for this information is not clear. Consolidated Chamberlain ownership of castle, church and Manor is however certain by 1600, with Adrian Stokes' death in 1585 the most likely date for this regrouping.

The Chamberlain coat of arms as it appears on the exterior of St Mary's Church. The scallops and chevron are yellow, against a red background.

So when William Camden wrote the *Visitation* of Warwickshire in 1619, which assessed gentlemen's pedigrees, he referred to an Edward Chamberlaine [*sic.*] of Astley who appears to have inherited from his grandfather, Richard Chamberlain in 1619 since his father, John, had died in 1615.

The Chamberlains arrive on the scene as lesser gentry after the lofty Greys. Little is known of them, but they brought with them the characteristic zeal and

[17] The spelling of Chamberlain varies considerably in the documents – Chamberlayne, Chamberlaine… - and so has been standardised here.
[18] VCH: Astley, fn. 42: Chan. Inq. p. m. (Ser.2), cxii, 16.

injection of money of Jacobean gentry on the rise, carrying out significant work to both church and castle.

The church we see today owes it appearance very largely to the Chamberlains, probably the Edward who acquired ownership in 1600. The remains of the mighty medieval nave, transepts and tower were all pulled down and Sir Thomas Astley's chancel of c1343 was converted into today's nave. A new tower and chancel were built out of reused materials in work remarkable for its adherence to the Gothic tradition. Fragments of re-used carved medieval stone were also incorporated into the new chancel – look out especially on its exterior for shields bearing the Astley and Ferrers family coat of arms at eaves level. The Chamberlain rebuilding is recorded by a datestone of 1608 high up on the south wall.

The Chamberlains also carried out a comprehensive refurbishment of the castle. They must have been of an antiquarian cast of mind, or perhaps seeking their own dynastic validation: a far more usual approach at the time would have been to demolish the lot and start again. Instead, the medieval core of the castle was preserved, and a new, castellated façade planted on the east elevation, retaining some of the earlier work at its then north east corner. It is this castellated face that came to most characterise Astley Castle in recent years, and is an aspect that today's scheme has been careful to perpetuate.

In 1996, a date stone of 1627 was salvaged from the south end of the house and now sits on one of the inside first floor window sills of the ruined court. A date of 1627 is consistent with the stylistic evidence of much of the surviving southern end of the house and with tree-ring dating of the timbers in a composite stone and timber-framed wing at the north end of the building, perhaps added as servants' quarters in the same years but sadly too decayed to save during the latest refurbishment.

Edward Chamberlain 'of Astley Castle', was, in the early-17th century, one of Warwickshire's feodaries, officials appointed by the Court of Wards in each county to collate evidence for the King on local estates, such as Inquisitions Post Mortem and assessed lands held by wards of the Crown. When he died in 1619, his grandson Richard Chamberlain inherited Astley and so it seems likely that Richard was responsible for the alterations to the castle to which the 1627 datestone refers, or else that he completed or added to those carried out by his grandfather Edward. It seems possible too that the estate and castle were divided between different brothers around this time, since the apparent story of the years of Chamberlain possession of the castle told by the physical evidence – a lavish refurbishment, a gentry family in comfortable residence – does not entirely mesh with what is known of the Chamberlains themselves, or at least did not endure for long.

In 1625, Richard Chamberlain senior and junior and another son, Edward, leased the Manor of Astley to Thomas Cole. But the two Richards fell out and when 'Richard Chamberlaine of Astly's' will was proved on 12 May 1630, he left Astley to his son-in-law, also Richard Chamberlaine and daughter Jane Chamberlain '*to continue the said Manor in name and blood of Chamberlaines*', and afterwards to Jane's sons Richard, Thomas and John.[19] A bitterly fought and protracted legal case followed at Chancery.

There were further leases of the Manor to Francis Bluett and Thomas Wood in 1657, and to Thomas Mede in 1663, and again it remains unclear whether these included the castle.

Meanwhile, younger son Edward Chamberlain was in trouble with the authorities over his local taxes, which may indicate that he was living at Astley Castle as the main residence in the parish. In the Warwickshire Quarter Sessions Order Book for Michaelmas 1630 it was ordered that:

[19] *Virginia Gleanings:* Virginia Magazine of History & Biography, Vol 26, No. 2 pp.145-50.

> '*Forasmuch as this court was this day informed by Thomas Smyth, constable of the parish of Astley in this county, that Edward Chamberlain, gentleman, one of the inhabitants of the same parish hath refused and still doth refuse to pay his part of many levies being moderately taxed and imposed upon him by the parishioners and inhabitants of the same parish, it is now thereupon ordered that the said Mr. Chamberlain upon reasonable notice and request thereof made shall pay all the levies so by him arrear and unpaid or show good cause to the contrary at the next Quarter Sessions to be here holden*'.[20]

Chamberlain still had not paid by next Quarter Sessions and at Epiphany 1631 the constable was '*hereby required to attach his body and carry him before the next Justice of the Peace in this county*'.[21]

The Quarter Sessions of Easter 1647 again record a miscreant Chamberlain, this time Richard, at which his estate was deemed to be worth £300 per annum. In the following Sessions, Trinity, Richard optimistically claimed that there were '*divers ancient writings*' exempting his Astley estate from payment of any levies - but he could not find them.[22] He was allowed one further chance to pay up, but could not produce the papers at the Michaelmas Sessions and was ordered to pay all the levies and taxes. He is referred to as Richard Chamberlain the Younger, whilst a Richard Chamberlain the Elder (presumably the Richard who inherited in 1619) was living at Temple House, today the dower house of Arbury Hall.

[20] Vol 1 of the set - 1935 - Michaelmas 1630, 107
[21] *op.cit.*,115.
[22] *op. cit.*, 175

The Chamberlains and St Mary's Church.

The Chamberlains rescued and transformed the decaying collegiate church at Astley. They rebuilt the west tower and turned the former chancel into today's nave (top). The height and blocked-in tracery of the huge east window of the former chancel indicate the impressive scale and quality of Sir Thomas Astley's 14th-century church. The Chamberlains also built today's chancel in convincingly Gothic style, marking its construction with a datestone of 1608. They almost certainly incorporated material from the collapsed tower in both the church rebuilding and their alterations to the east elevation of the castle. The external walls of the church are studded with the coats of arms, some medieval, some 17th-century, of the castle's former inhabitants.

The Chamberlains were also responsible for the fine wall paintings in the church, of the Creed (top), the Lord's Prayer (above) and the Ten Commandments. In English (not Latin, the language of the prayers of the collegiate priests) these are rare survivals and have recently been conserved. They speak of the new Protestant phase in the church's history, prayers for the dead and the worship of saints now outlawed and increasing literacy assumed among a congregation expected to take responsibility for their own salvation.

By the 1640s, the whole country was in disorder, as Parliament rebelled against the policies of the Crown in the Civil Wars. Most of Warwickshire was held by Parliament forces, and Astley Castle was no exception. Like many a great house, it was requisitioned as a garrison, whose troops rode out and terrorised the local area at will.

An illuminating account, drawn up in June 1646 by Euseby Cradock, clerk to the Leicestershire county committee, refers to the five garrisons at Coventry, Warwick, Tamworth, Edgbaston House and Astley House and lists one hundred and sixty three claims for reparation. All of them refer to losses caused by Parliamentary soldiers who held sway in the area, though Royalist garrisons were guilty of similar acts elsewhere. The account includes claims against several incursions by troops from the parliamentary garrisons at 'Astley House'.

A common local complaint was over the requisitioning of horses, variously described by the Parliamentary committee as 'stoned horses', 'black geldings', 'old nags' and valued from five pounds down to five shillings. Between 1643 and 1646 soldiers from the Astley garrison took eleven horses (small beer compared with the Coventry and Tamworth garrisons, who purloined 52 and 50 respectively).

Another common accusation against the Parliamentary garrisons in Mr Cradock's account was the taking of hostages for ransom. Usually the demands were for paltry sums which were settled promptly. But isolated Astley Castle seems to have been an ideal spot for such activity. The main offender was Lieutenant Hunt of the Astley garrison who allegedly held the constable of Upton until a payment of £1.10.0 was made for his release. Matthew Pone, the constable of Hinckley, and Thomas Keene of the same town, were imprisoned at Astley House until a 'fine' of five pounds apiece secured their release.

Around Michaelmas 1643 Hunt was said to have forced Francis Orton of Witherley to pay £1.13.4 for his freedom.[23]

In January 1646, a diary entry by William Dugdale records the only known instance of Astley Castle being involved in a military engagement:

> '*Astley house in Warwickshire [was] surprized by My Lord of Loughborough's forces, the governour (a shoomaker) and the rest in the house prisoners and conveyed away with most of the armes, ammunition, etc..*'.

This must have been one of the last successes enjoyed by the Royalist army in the conflict, and numerous musket balls have been found in the wider landscape around the moated site.

The tax collector's memory is a long one, and during the subsequent Commonwealth period, Richard Chamberlain was again in trouble with the local authorities. His father died in 1654 and at the Trinity Sessions of 1656 Richard was ordered to pay all the levies and taxes since his father's death - and all those then still in arrears. There is mention too of a Mr Edward Vaughan as Chamberlain's tenant, and it is possible that Vaughan was then living at the castle, which had no doubt suffered some degradation from the garrison's occupancy. The Chamberlains retained ownership of the Manor of Astley, but there is no evidence of their occupancy of the castle, which appears not to have been lived in by them after the 1650s. In 1674, both castle and Manor of Astley were acquired by Sir Richard Newdigate 1st Bart of neighbouring Arbury Hall, as a new chapter opened again in Astley Castle's history.

[23] PRO SP 28/161 http://www.localhistories.org/hinckcivil.html
Before the Battle of Edgehill, veteran Royalist general Sir Jacob Astley (who has no known connection with Astley Castle) prayed what became known as 'Astley's prayer': 'Oh Lord, thou knowest how busy I must be today. If I forget thee, do not thou forget me.' Sir Jacob was liked and respected by all who served under him, and when at the end of the war he surrendered the last Royalist field army at Stow on the Wold, he is reported to have said to his captors *'Gentlemen, ye may now sit down and play, for you have done all your Worke, if you fall not out among yourselves!'*

Sir Richard Newdigate 2nd Bart, was responsible for a fine 'Mapp of the Lordship of Astley' by Robert Hewitt, published in 1696, of which this is a detail. This is the first representation of the formal feature or gardens that has become today's knot garden. Note too the small structure on the northern edge of the moated island, near where footings of a bridge remain today – a banqueting house? Note too The Plash (marshy area) and the so-called New Garden, which includes a vestigial viewing mound. 'New' perhaps refers to its colonisation from the former collegiate grounds.

The Newdigates of Arbury Hall, 1674 to the present day

Arbury Hall too had its origins in the religious faith of the Middle Ages, having been founded as an Augustinian monastery in the 12th century and dissolved by Henry VIII in 1536. The Astley and Arbury estates have been intimately connected ever since, for at its Dissolution Henry VIII gave Arbury to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk whose daughter Frances, as described above, married Henry Grey, owner of Astley Castle. Arbury was one of the many estates that passed into Henry Grey's hands through his wife's inheritance and like Astley was retained by her after his execution. In 1567 Arbury was sold to Sir Edmund Anderson, later Chief Justice of the Common Pleas for Elizabeth I, who built a fine new house on the site. Finding Arbury inconveniently far from London, in 1586 Anderson exchanged it for Harefield Place in Middlesex, owned by another lawyer, John Newdegate. Newdegate's son, also John, succeeded him in 1592 and was knighted by James I on his accession in 1603. The Newdegates later also reacquired Harefield Place.

In 1677, his son Sir Richard Newdigate (the spelling was still variable) became first baronet and Sir Richard's acquisition of Astley Castle in 1674 is equally the sign of a rising family consolidating their holdings. Sir Richard Newdigate 1st Bart. also bought back his family's Harefield estate in 1674 and made it their main seat; Arbury was given to his son, another Richard, who became the 2nd baronet in 1678. He spent a fortune improving the estate, including a private chapel, vast stables and landscaped gardens at Arbury Hall. He also carried out a famous 'census' of Chilvers Coton in 1684, an invaluable resource for Restoration historians that records each inhabitant in the parish (which does not include Astley). It was Arbury, rather than Astley Castle, was the natural focus on the estate for each current generation, as is the case today, and while Astley could have been a useful adjunct to it, the castle was now never going to be anything but a subsidiary residence. By the mid-18th century, the castle was being used used as a dower house to Arbury, for the mother of Sir Roger Newdigate 5th Bart.

Genial Sir Roger Newdigate, 5th Bart. (1719-1806) who, during his long life, transformed Arbury Hall (below) into a Gothick masterpiece. Today, Arbury Hall is home to James FitzRoy Newdegate, 4th Viscount Daventry. It is open to the public on summer Bank Holidays only – see www.arburyhall.co.uk for details.

Sir Roger 5th Bart was just fourteen when he inherited in 1734 and for the next 72 years of his long life would transform Elizabethan Arbury Hall into the outstanding Gothick masterpiece that survives today.[24]

Sir Roger's extensive correspondence survives and has been published by the Dugdale Society. A copy is to be found in the bookshelves at Astley Castle, and the letters provide a wonderful insight into the life of a genial, conscientious 18th-century gentlemen, who did much, in a quiet way, for both his country through serving as an MP, and his county, in the many small ways such a squire might oil the wheels of local intercourse to resolve disputes and ensure that life for those living in his patch of Warwickshire proceeded as it should. As for his political persuasion – he was a fine example of the Country party, that shifting chimera of Georgian politics that could at times be deeply inconvenient to the governing cliques. In Sir Roger's own words:

> *I can't answer your Question what my Party is? I am only sure that it is neither Cumberland nor Pelham. Landed men must love peace, men proscribed & abus'd for 50 years together should be presented with fools caps if they make Ladders for Tyrant Whigs to mount by. I like the King & shall be with his Ministers as long as I think an honest man should, & believe it best not to lose the Country Gentleman in the Courtier...*[25]

To read Sir Roger's letters is to plunge into the world of Austen's books, or indeed into the works of George Eliot - Eliot was born in 1819 as Mary Ann Evans at South Farm on the Arbury Estate, as her father was land agent to the estate.

Thanks to Sir Roger's copious correspondence, we also have the first detailed descriptions of Astley Castle. In 1765, his mother Elizabeth died, aged 84. She had been living at Astley Castle, presumably since her husband Sir Richard Newdigate 3rd Bart died in 1727 (and may well have been preceded in it as dower

[24] Arbury Hall is owned today by James FitzRoy Newdegate, 4th Viscount Daventry and is renowned as an example of the Gothick style to rival Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill. It is a private family home today, and is open to the general public only on certain summer Bank Holidays. Check www.arburyhall.co.uk for details.

[25] *The Correspondence of Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury, Warwickshire*, ed. A.W.A. White (Dugdale Society, 1995), p. 140.

house by Henrietta Wigginton, widow of Sir Richard Newdigate 2nd Bart who died in 1710 – the Newdigate women had a habit of outliving their men).

So in October 1765, Sir Roger 5th Bart was seeking a tenant for the (furnished) castle. He stumbled upon someone most appropriate, one Sir John Astley who had ancient family links with the castle. Sir John was a descendant of the original Astley family through the second son of Sir Thomas Astley - founder of the collegiate church in 1343. Sir John had inherited this branch of the family's seat at Patshull, on the Staffordshire/ Shropshire border. He also had estates at Everleigh, Wiltshire. A Tory colleague of Sir Roger's, and a Jacobite - the pair had perhaps forged a friendship in the corridors of Westminster – Sir John had been MP firstly for Shrewsbury, from 1727-34, and then, from 1734 until his death, Shropshire.

Sir John Astley seems not to have had a happy married life, being effectively separated from his wife. According to one contemporary source she spent all her time in Shrewsbury whilst he lived '*the life of a recluse amidst an infinity of most delightful scenes*' at Patshull. His woes were compounded by the death in 1756 of his only son, Prince Astley, in France, who, as his architect William Baker noted, had been '*obliged to fly from England for wishing ill to his Majesty King George*'. Despite having carried out major improvements at Patshull, including replacing both church and house, he sold that estate for £100,000 in 1765 and it was perhaps as a result of that sale that he rented Astley Castle as a summer residence later the same year, already in his late seventies, an arrangement that seems to have been born out of friendship as well as business.

In a letter to Sir John Astley dated 9th October 1765, Sir Roger gives a brief but interesting account of Astley Castle that is worth quoting at length, for what it tells us about the castle and the necessities of rural life in the 18th century as well

as for the insight it gives into Sir Roger Newdigate's character. According to Sir Roger:

> [Astley Castle] *was in a very ruinous condition when my mother came to it, but she paid out about £500 upon it & made it a very commodious habitation for a small family* [household]*. It now consists of a large hall, a parlour & two very large closets, in one of which her man lay, & the other was his buttery, a small kitchen, wash house & brewhouse, pantry & a small cellar. This is the whole below stairs.*
>
> *Above is a good dining room, the size of the hall, which is above 22 feet square, a bedchamber 22 [feet] by 17 or 18 [feet] over the parlour; two large closets, one of which she kept for her own use, & in the other one of her maids lay. These she used as her own apartments.*
>
> *Upon the same storey are 3 small rooms, one in which her housekeeper lay, & another for the other maid. The room between them may be us'd as a dressing room. Over these are two garrets, which, being more than she wanted, were never fitted up. There is a small* [garden] *within the walls, which is also the court of the house, & one other garden which is also small but supplied her kitchen very well, & a backyard to t he kitchen. These all lie within the moat & wall.*
>
> *She only had one mare, which was gisted* [sic] *with the tenant, & had the use of a Stable in which, on Sundays, my coachhorses were set up during divine Service.....The house is very fully & sufficiently furnished for such a family in everything but linen, china & glass, which I have taken for my own use, & is now ready for you if you can content yourself with it as it is. I hope you will not think twenty pounds a year an unreasonable rent for the house & furniture, & conveniences as she left it. If you do, as I said before, we will have no words. It is now in good repair, & as she was at the expense of all repairs, I should expect a tenant to do them. There are no payments of any kind except the window tax.*
>
> *As I have land all round it, if I cannot make one tenant agree with you I shall try others. But none of them are upon lease, & they are always ready to oblige me. But as you intend only a summer's residence I should think it may better answer to take a piece as you want it for your horses, where there is the best grass. As to cows they seem still more unnecessary as there is a tenant who lives in a part of the castle (tho entirely separated by thick walls & in no respect interfering with it) who now rents all the land around it, & keeps a large dairy from which the family was always supplied....*

Sir John Astley's Gothick stables and coach house (*c*1766) in 2007, before their clearance and repair by Landmark. For now, they await a new use but will be kept weathertight.

> *I have one last thing to add, which if you are not provided, may be a great benefit to a large family & no small convenience to yourself: my mother's footman was hewer, gardener, everything. He lived in the House, but has a wife & family settled in the Church yard, served her honestly above 17 years, & is in every respect a proper person to take care of things in your absence, & to prepare for your coming. He knows all the ways of the country markets etc. In short, I have so great a regard for the fellow that if I can't get him under a so good a master where he must be happy, I will not turn him adrift.*[26]

It is interesting that the castle is in fact more than one residence, with part of it (presumable the north end) tenanted to a dairy farmer, and perhaps also somewhat surprising that a baronet was apparently quite unfazed by such an arrangement. The description more or less matches that implied by an *Inventory of the Household Goods Belonging to Lady Dowager Newdigate (dec.)* made on the 23rd September, 1765 although the manner in which the rooms are listed is erratic.

Even though the castle seems to have been only a seasonal home by Sir John Astley, he clearly found the stabling arrangements inadequate. By 9th April of the following year Sir Roger Newdigate was again writing to Sir John, from the House of Commons, this time regarding improvements his new tenant had in mind:

> '*I am glad you got safe to Astley Castle, & shall be very glad to be of your Council as to the improvements when you want me, but as I know you are no less anxious to preserve the Castle in its venerable form than myself I shall rest satisfied in anything you do to make it more agreeable to yourself*.'
>
> *As to stables, regularity of place does not affect convenience nor expense but [is] consistent with both, & I should be sorry to seem even to wish to put you to a larger expense, but if it should be found upon estimate that the rough red stone of which the castle is built may be had to front it in time & at no extraordinary charge I confess I should far prefer it to brick but am perfectly easy about it.'*[27]

[26] Ibid, pp. 137-9.
[27] Ibid, p. 141.

Accommodation over the choice of material was clearly reached, and the end result is the stable and coach house complex to the south of the castle - a perfectly ordinary brick-built affair but with stone-faced sides and pedimented, battlemented Gothick frontage facing towards Dark Lane, the holloway that leads directly to the Arbury estate. The building effectively dresses the approach to the castle from its now parent seat at Arbury in a style that bridges them both, and it is hard not to detect Sir Roger's hand in its light Gothick design. Sir John Astley does not seem to have previously been interested in the Gothick. At Patshull, he had the old medieval church and the house pulled down in the 1740s and 1750s, replacing both with uncompromisingly solid and fairly plain Georgian buildings.

Sir John Astley also gave Newdigate an enormous painting recording the military feats of his ancestor, Sir John de Astley, most notably a duel against a French knight in Paris, fought in 1438, and then acting as Henry VI's champion in personal combat against a challenger. Sir John de Astley was something of a celebrity in his day and several versions of this painting survive, the equivalent, perhaps, of today's posters of sporting heroes. His reputation was still current in the 1650s, when Warwickshire antiquarian William Dugdale commissioned an engraving from Wenceleslaus Hollar that closely replicates the panel, to illustrate his account:

> "*Of the Patshull branch of the Astley family was John de Astley, who, on the 29th of August, 1438, maintaining a duel on horseback, within the street called Antoine, in Paris, against one Peter de Masse, a Frenchman, in the presence of Charles the Seventh, King of France, pierc't the said Peter through the head, and had (as by the articles betwixt them conditioned) the helmit of the said Peter, being so vanquish'd, to present unto his lady. And on the 30th January, 20 of Henry the Sixth, undertook another fight in the Smythfield, within the city of London, in the prescence of the same King Henry the Sixth, with Sir Philip Boyle, an Arragonian Knight, who having been in France, by the King his master's command to look out some hardy person against whom he might try his skill in feats of armes, and missing there of his desires, repaired hither. After which combate ended (being gallantly perform'd on foot, with battil-axes, speares, swords, and daggers), he was knighted by the King, with an annuity of one hundred*

marks during his life. Nay, so famous did he grow for his valour, that he was elected Knight of the Garter."

This panel initially hung at Astley Castle but appears to have been taken to Arbury for safekeeping and restoration by the start of the 19th century. Today it hangs in Arbury Hall.

Detail from the Sir John de Astley panel, now at Arbury Hall and from the fashions depicted, probably a late 16th-century copy of an earlier original. Sir John, from a cadet branch of the family, was an accomplished jouster and fighter and a Knight of the Garter. Note too the Astley arms.

The magnificent panel brought by Sir John Astley to Astley Castle, which records the military prowess of his 15th-century ancestor and namesake, a knight of some renown. It hangs today in Arbury Hall.

TEXTS FROM THE SIR JOHN DE ASTLEY PANEL AT ARBURY HALL

Also note the depiction said to be of St Paul's Cathedral before the Great Fire - but more likely to be St Bartholomew's, Smithfield, as the joust took place in Smithfield. Both Sir Johns were descendants of the second son of Sir Thomas Astley who founded the collegiate church in 1343.

Inscription along bottom of frame:
1773 Sir John Astley Bart gave this to Sir Roger Newdigate Bart as an heir loom to Astley Castle.

Centre panels:
The Combate in Paris betwixt Sir John de Astley and Peter de Masse 29 Aug Anno Dom 1438
The Combate in Smithfield betwixt Sir John de Astley and Sir Philip Boyle 30 Jan Anno Dom 1441

Left hand panels:
Here the King granteth him License to perform the Combat

The Manner of his being conducted to the Lists

Here having got the Victory He returneth thanks to God

Here the King Girds him with the Sword of Knighthood

Right hand panels:

Here he taketh his Oath in ye presence of the High Constable & Marshall that he hath no Charm, Herb or any enchantment about him

Here he pierceth the Helmet of Masse with his spear

Here he presenteth Massey's Helmet to his Lady

Here he is invested with the Robes & order of the Garter

The Arbury panel seems likely (in the absence of carbon dating) to be an early (late 16thC?) copy of a mass produced picture of this 15th-century hero, probably based on a widely circulated 15thC manuscript,[28] the Hastings MS and/or John Paston's Grete Boke. Another such painted panel is mentioned in connection with a fire which destroyed Everleigh House in Wiltshire in1881 (Sir John Astley who donated the panel owned 'estates' at Everleigh).[29] Hollar's engraving of 1656[30] further popularised it.

[28] www.utumorganlibrary.org *Ordonances of Chivalry* MS M.775 fol. 275v and 277v.
Also www.chronique.com/Library/Turneys/Astley
[29] www.everleigh.com/everleigh-documents
[30] www.britishmuseum.org/research/serach_the_collection_database AN75621001, Bibliographic ref Pennington 530, Crace XXVI.36

Sir John Astley took Astley Castle on a ten year lease from 1765 but died before its term was up, in 1771 or 1772. His baronetcy ended with him, and most of his landed property passed to his paternal uncle's grandson, Francis Dugdale Astley. In March 1772 Sir Roger Newdigate wrote to Francis Astley, saying:

> *I wish you much joy of your succession to Sir J Astley's fortunes; as his heir you have first claim to succeed him as tenant to my old house which he so greatly improv'd and adorn'd, & as such I shall certainly never ask you for any other terms than he rented it upon, what ever right I may have to raise the rent to a stranger on account of those improvements.*
>
> *As I have some rooms just finished & ready for furniture, my wife hopes you will not object to our removing some few articles of the furniture – pewter etc, which we will settle together when I may have the pleasure of seeing you there. In the meantime, everything may continue as it is, & as much longer as you may find necessary to replace such articles.*
>
> *….I hope you will give us a little more of your company & be a more abiding neighbour, a better you can't be than my poor friend, Sir John Astley.*[31]

Francis Astley took on the remaining portion of the lease and an inventory of the castle's contents survives from when it ended in September 1775; Francis married the same year, which may account for his not renewing the lease.[32] Whatever Sir John Astley's improvements, from the 1775 inventory they seem not to have involved any extensions to the main house as the rooms listed are virtually the same as those of 1765, albeit in a more logical order - Old Kitchen, Old Brewhouse, Lader [sic.], Cellar, Scullery, Brewhouse, New Kitchen, Hall, Parlour, Butler's room, Housekeeper's Room, Stare Case [sic.], Dining room, Bed Chamber by the Dining Room, Servant's Room by Ditto, White Bedchamber, Passage Room, Blue Bed Chamber, Maids' Rooms, and Garrett. One new piece of furniture to appear in the inventory was a 'Gothick looking glass' in the Dining Room.

It is possible that most of Sir John Astley's 'improvements' were within the grounds of the castle. An estate map of 1807 shows not just the coach house

[31] Ibid, p. 184.
[32] WRO C7/293

but also, to the north of the castle, a three-acre tract of land between the moat and the road labelled the 'New Garden'. This 1807 map also includes, in the corners, detailed watercolours of both Astley Castle and Arbury Hall. The view of the castle, from the south-east, appears to be quite accurate and shows it to be not dissimilar to its present basic form - though some of the windows have since been altered.

For the rest of the 18th century, Astley Castle reverted to its role as dower house for widowed or otherwise floating female relatives, and was occupied by Sir Roger's sister-in-law, Mary Conyers, sister of his first wife, Sophy. She died in November 1797 and Sir Roger wrote to Francis Parker of Wooton, Derbyshire, encouraging him to take the castle on in order to be closer to Arbury. Francis was a relation and became Sir Roger's amanuensis in his declining years, but it seems he declined the move to Astley, since Sir Roger wrote to him on 27th November 1797, saddened by the refusal but with generosity of spirit:

> *On Friday last as I told you we preformed our last sad duty to our good old friend & laid her, as she desired, in my vault at Astley.*
>
> *If I took the first moment to offer you the Castle, impute it to my eager wish to have you & Fanny near me. I am old, & every day takes away some friend that I love, & it is natural for me to endeavour to rally the few that I have left around me…I must confess myself honestly as you have done, much surpris'd & disappointed, at the sudden change of your inclinations, but should have been much more concerned if you had accepted it while your hearts & minds were at Wootton.*[33]

Inventories taken in 1798 and 1804 imply no great changes in the building since 1765, other than, possibly, additional cellarage - three cellars being listed in 1798.[34] By 1804 the former first-floor Dining Room was being used as the Drawing Room.

[33] Op. cit. p. 287.
[34] WRO C7/294

Watercolour of Astley Castle from the south-east in the border of the 1807 Estate map. The wall of the bridge across the moat is embattled and all is somewhat overgrown. (WRO CR 136/M/1)

Astley Castle was becoming a Picturesque destination. This view, from *Beauties of England & Wales* published in 1814, was plagiarised by many similar guides. The arch has been moved west to give a better composition.

Sir Roger died in 1806 without a direct male heir; he devised his estates to his protégé, Francis Parker, who took on the Newdigate name, Warwickshire estates and arms for life. It was possibly Francis Parker Newdigate who carried out further improvements to Astley Castle, and extensions to it at the northern end, in the early-19th century, though it may equally have been his son or even a later tenant.

For a time the castle was apparently used by the local Rector but in the 1820s it was leased to Francis' eldest son, another Francis, a Colonel in the Army, and his wife, Barbara, daughter of the 3rd Earl of Dartmouth; at least two of their children, Edward and George, were born at Astley Castle, in 1825 and 1826 respectively.[35] The family, who had also taken on the Newdigate name, were still in residence in 1830 and presumably lived there until the elder Francis' death in 1835.

By now, Astley Castle had achieved a degree of fame as a picturesque site, featuring in various early travel guides to the area. The best of these early-19th century descriptions is probably that in Britton's *Beauties of England and Wales*, published in 1814:

> '*The building has an embattled parapet at the top, and the windows, of dissimilar shapes, are divided into numerous lights by heavy mullions of stone. The whole is rendered singularly picturesque by a profusion of ivy, which cloathes it in a most grateful and poetical mourning drapery.*
>
> *The apartments are of fair proportions, but are marked by the cold and gloomy air so frequent in structures of the 16th century. In a window of the hall, and in pannels of other rooms, are armorial paintings.....*'[36]

Most other 19th century descriptions of the castle plagiarise Britton's account although one did at least rewrite some sections:

[35] Edward was a General in the Army and eventually inherited the Arbury estate and in 1887 changed his surname to Newdegate. George's memorial tablet, stating his place of birth, is in the parish church.
[36] Britton, J, 1814, *Beauties of England*, 61

Astley Castle is the accepted inspiration for Knebley in George Eliot's *Scenes from Clerical Life.* In *Mr Gidfil's Love Story,* Knebley Church is described as *'a wonderful little church with a chequered pavement which had once rung to the iron tread of military monks, with coats of arms in clusters on the lofty roof, marble warriors and their wives without noses…and twelve apostles, with their heads very much on one side, holding didactic ribbons, painted in frescoes on the walls.'*

In fact, these painted choir stalls, which look convincingly early, were imported into the church, probably in the 18th century. Visitors to the church may note that the original Latin inscriptions were later overwritten in English.

> '*a considerable portion of this ancient structure still remains, and the grounds surrounding it being tastefully laid out and kept in good order, render this once magnificent pile of building, still a handsome and grand mansion....in some parts [the] fragments of wall are lofty, but on every side they are crumbled, by time and accident, into forms most favourable to picturesque effect, and are screened by over-hanging ever-green...*'.[37]

Later editions of some *Directories* state that the castle was renovated in 1820 by Francis Newdigate, which seems to be backed up by the physical evidence of the site. Other *Directories* of the period do not mention refer rather to its poor condition. For example, a *Directory* of 1830 describes it as '*that decaying residence*', though such are not always reliably up to date.

During this period the agent of Arbury was Robert Evans, the father of Mary Ann Evans, born on the estate in 1819 and better known as the novelist George Eliot (she adopted a man's name to be more likely to be published). Robert Evans was born in 1773 and moved to Astley in 1804 with his first wife to follow his employer, Francis Newdigate. He lived at South Farm, then in Astley parish. Robert's first wife Harriet died in 1809 and has a memorial plaque in St Mary's Church, to the right of the altar. In 1813, Robert remarried to Christiana Pearson, who was to be Mary Ann's mother. Christiana came of a good local family; her father was a parish Constable and church warden. Her three sisters Elizabeth, Ann and Mary all married locally too, the Pearson aunts providing George Eliot with inspiration for the formidable Dodson sisters in *Mill on the Floss*.

Much of Eliot's early work is considered autobiographical in its treatment of English rural life, using the raw material drawn from the area. Sir Roger Newdigate 5th Bart's benevolent character and architecture legacy were sufficient to inspire Eliot to write the series of short stories, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), in which Arbury Hall appears as Cheverel Manor, Sir Roger as Sir Christopher Cheverel, Astley Castle as Knebley Abbey and St Mary's Astley as Knebley Church.

[37] Smith, W, 1829, *A New & Complete History of the County of Warwick*

On the elder Francis' death in 1835, the Arbury estates went not to his son, the younger Francis, but to his great-nephew, Charles Newdigate Newdegate, grandson of his elder brother, Charles Parker. Francis was given 'the garden and a close' at Astley, about five acres in all, but he left Astley soon after Charles Newdegate moved to Arbury in 1835. By 1841 it was leased to James Hewett, 3rd Viscount Lifford. At the 1841 census Lord Lifford, 57, was living at Astley with his widowed mother, his wife, and their two unmarried daughters.
They lived in some style and it was certainly crowded, with 33 people present at the castle on census day. This included one family of independent means and an Army officer and his wife, probably visiting, and also a large number of servants.

On the day of the 1851 census Lord Lifford was not at Astley and the only family members in residence were six of his grandchildren, described as being 'scholars at home' ranging in age from Mary Hewett, 11, to her infant sister, Isabella, just one; the four between were all boys. Looking after the family at that time was Sophie Bryois, a Swiss Governess, a Nurse, a Nursery Maid, a Butler, Groom, Lady's Maid, Housekeeper, Laundry Maid, Kitchen Maid, Dairy Maid and a male House Servant; curiously, no cook is mentioned. In 1854 Lord Lifford, then around 70, was described as '*a very active magistrate'* and was still living at Astley. He died in the following year at Brighton, having presided, we may feel, over something of a golden period for the castle when was once again someone's main residence of some status for the first time since the Middle Ages.

After Lord Lifford's death the castle continued to be tenanted, but few of the occupants stayed for any length of time. In 1860 a Charles Edmund Marriott was living there; in 1866 it was John Clerk; and in 1868, Arthur Charles Prettyman. At the time of the 1871 census it was occupied by John Digby and his wife, Maria. This was presumably John Digby-Wingfield Digby's family whose main house was Sherborne Castle in Dorset but whose family came from Coleshill in Warwickshire; it is possible that their stay at Astley was associated with the rebuilding of the family's county seat at Coleshill – a Gothic pile dated 1873.

The Digbys lived at Astley Castle with nine of their children (the eldest was not at home on the day of the census) and 13 servants, including a School Room Maid, Butler, Valet and Hall Boy. They also only occupied Astley for a short period, as by 1872 a Captain Barnett was living there.

By 1876 Astley Castle was lived in by Charles Brudenell Bruce Esq., although in 1880 he was listed as Lord Frederick Bruce; Charles-Frederick Brudenell-Bruce was a younger son of the 3rd Marquess & Earl of Ailesbury [*sic.*] and the family also carried the courtesy title Baron Bruce.[38]

In the early 1890's Astley was leased by the home of Charles Leigh Adderley. Adderley (1846-1926) was the son of an influential Victorian politician and had been the Private Secretary to the President of the Board of Trade and was a JP for Warwickshire and for Rutland. At the time of the 1891 census he was living at Astley Castle with his wife Caroline and their nine children, looked after by 15 servants living on the site, including two gardeners. Adderley became the 2nd Baron Norton on his father's death in 1905.

In 1891 the castle was repaired, though the work seems to have been of a relatively minor nature according to the surviving specifications.[39] There are some significant pieces of information in these specifications, nevertheless. The under-floor central heating system, worked from a furnace under the back stairs, was already in place - and not working very well.

A 'Belfry' is mentioned, that needed a new ladder, and two separate stairs are specified. Outside, the attached farm (either the stable complex to the south-west of the castle or the decaying farmstead opposite the churchyard) needed repair, and there was also a Mushroom House, a Greenhouse with staging, a

[38] To confuse things still further, at this time, Frederick John Bruce, son of the 8th Earl of Elgin, was also called Lord Bruce – but the coincidence of the one succeeding the other at Astley seems rather too much.
[39] WRO B37/3908

The picturesque jumble of the west elevation above the moat as photographed by Benjamin Stone in 1899 (top) and a postcard from the 1900s.

Kitchen Garden, and a Potting Shed in the 'Old Ice House' – the location of which has not yet been identified. The Greenhouse is presumably the conservatory shown in an 1875 drawing and early photos as a lean-to at the south-east corner of the castle.

Astley Castle in high summer 1899 (B. Stone)

It is not clear if these works were done for the Adderley family or after they left, for like most of these tenants, they did not stay long at the Castle. Despite the improvements that were made to it, the castle was to be left empty for varying periods in the next twenty years or so. It seems to have been empty in 1896, but was occupied in 1900 by John Clerk, QC JP - though whether this was the same John Clerk that had leased it briefly in 1866 is not known.

Astley Castle in the 1930s
(Arbury Estate)

In 1904 the Hon. Mrs Clowes was listed as being at the castle, but from at least 1908 until about the end of the First World War it appears to have been empty. By 1921 it was the home of Frederick Povey Harpur, a coal mine owner, and his wife who lived there until at least 1936 and according to Lila Roberts, returned after the war (as in the time of Sir Roger Newdigate 5th Bart in the 1760s, it seems the castle may have provided a home for more than one household at a time, as Lady Newdegate is also remembered as living in the castle in the 1930s).

Sir Francis Newdigate Newdegate of Arbury was the last of the male line and his daughter, Lucia, was his co-heir. In 1919, she had married John Maurice FitzRoy, whose father Edward FitzRoy, a Speaker of the House of Commons who was created Viscount Daventry in 1919. When Sir Francis died in 1936, FitzRoy changed his name to John Maurice FitzRoy Newdegate. After Viscount Daventry's death in 1943, John's mother, Muriel, was created Viscountess Daventry and on her death in 1962 his eldest brother Robert Oliver FitzRoy became the 2nd Viscount. As the 2nd Viscount died without a male heir in 1976, the title went to John's son, Francis Humphrey FitzRoy Newdegate, 3rd Viscount, and in turn to his son, James Edward FitzRoy Newdegate, the 4th and present Viscount Daventry who inherited the title and the Arbury and Astley estates in 2000.

After Sir Francis Newdigate Newdegate's death, in 1937 the Newdegate family spent a summer at Astley Castle whilst works were carried out to the heating system at Arbury and according to the late 3rd Viscount Daventry, then a teenager, '*It was a hot summer and we had a most happy time living in this most ancient building*'. The Hone family were recruited as caretakers and remained there when Sir Francis' widow returned to live at Astley Castle, once again a dower house, where she died in 1941. Gwen Moreton, née Hone, recalled living at the castle for the compilation of the Astley Millennium Scrapbook:

Wartime damage and stripping out by vandals made photos such of these of purely academic interest when it came to Astley Castle's repair.

Mother, Father and I came to Astley in 1937 as caretakers of Astley Castle, also my father took over the gardens. It was named The Gardens, Astley Castle. The Castle was beautifully furnished and all red carpets. It was beautiful. Our duties were to keep it aired which my father did with under-floor heating which Mr Povey Harper, the coal owner had put in.

In 1938 Lady Newdegate came to the Castle to live. She loved Astley. She used to sit and tell my mother all about her life. At this time I was courting my Jack. Then a big blow came in 1939; war was declared. We were married three weeks later and in February 1940 Jack had to go into the army for six years, mother and I went to Coventry working on aircraft machines. Father was growing food and producing meat from the pigs as food was short.

Lady Newdegate was a very game old lady. She said to Father one day, after a nightly raid, "Hone, we should have a gun on top of the Castle!" Then after a short illness she died, after which the army took over the Castle.

All the oak rooms were boarded up and it became a reception centre for soldiers and VADs [Voluntary Aid Detachments] *to recuperate before going back to their units. There were lots of guns, or sites as they called them, near the cross roads, as the German planes used to go over every night, if it was fine. Astley Pool and Seeswood showed them the way to their bombing missions. We had some noisy nights.*

'Father still maintained the Castle. There was a Prisoner of War camp down at Arbury. They cut the lane that used to be called the New Road, which is now called Nuthurst Lane.

In the pre-war years of the 1920s and 30s, Astley Castle played its part in local life as a backdrop for special occasions. In the Millennium Scrapbook, Lila Roberts reminisced about the tradition in 1930s for the boys to vote for a village May Queen, with a dress and veil made out of muslin. The queen then made a special trip to Astley Castle, where she had to recite a poem in front of the Newdigate family, with the help of her maids of honour, as follows:

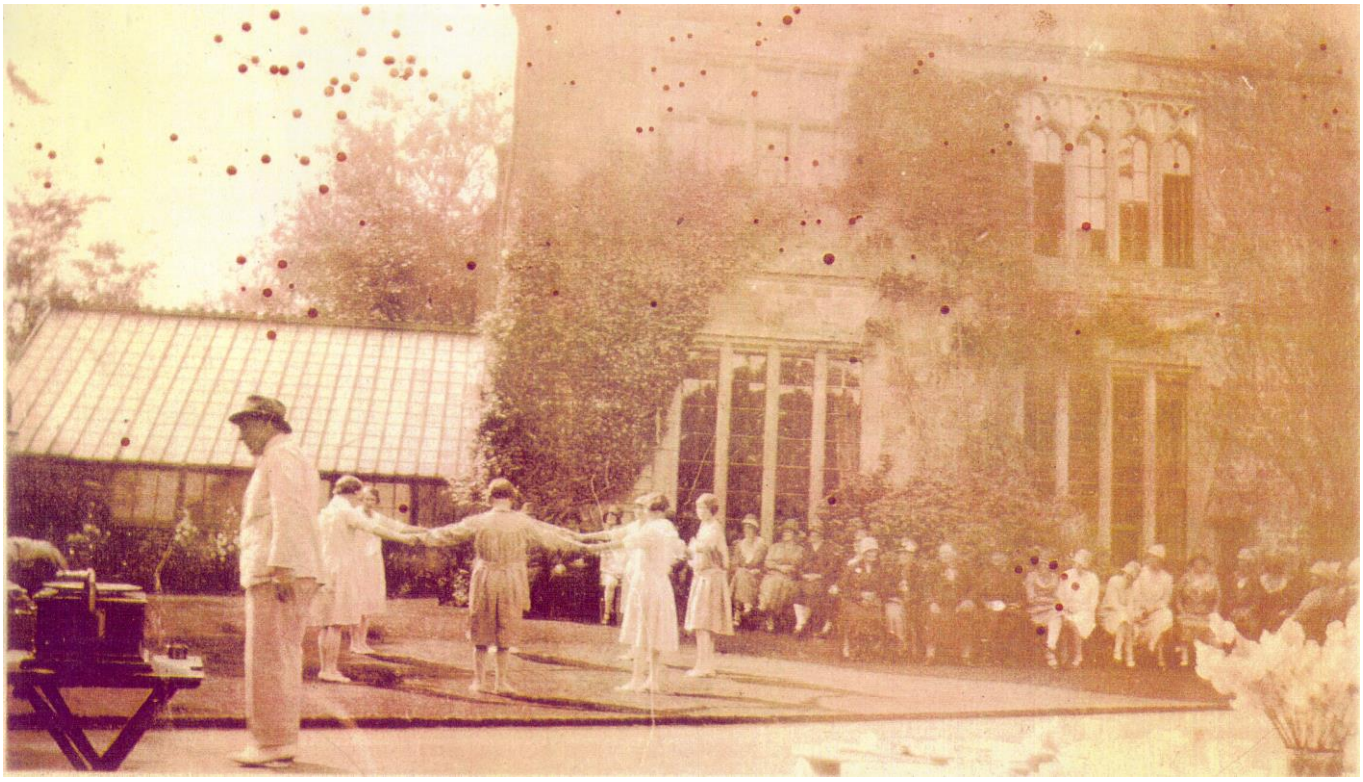
Good morning, Lords and Ladies
It is the first of May
We hope you'll like our garland
It is so bright and gay.
The cuckoo comes in April
The cuckoo sings in May
The cuckoo sings in June
And in July she flies away.

The cuckoo drinks clean water
To make her sing so clear,
And then she sings 'Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
For two months of the year.

'Lila's dress and veil were made of muslin, the kind which was used to cover the sides of bacon. Her maids wore crepe paper dresses over their own clothes. Mr Woodward, the farmer, lent them a bog dray and the children decorated it. They sat on straw bales.

'First they went to the Castle. Lila knocked at the door and recited the verse. The children snag together then off they all went down Astley Lane to Smorrall Lane, calling at the farms on the way. They recited and sang again and were given cake and lemonade.

Unfortunately, on the way home it started to rain and the colour ran out of the paper and muslin onto their own dresses…'



Village girls dancing on the lawn in the 1920s, with wind up gramophone in the foreground.
(Astley Millennium Scrapbook)

It is an echo of childhood days too rudely awakened, as Gwen Moreton recounted above, by the outbreak of hostilities and the War. The military seem to have left Astley before the end of the war, probably in 1944. Arbury Hall, meanwhile, had become a prisoner of war camp, with 10,000 German prisoners housed in Nissan huts in the grounds.

Although the 'oak' rooms were boarded up during the troops' occupation, the castle was left in a poor condition at their departure and in 1946 was found to be badly water damaged. The 3rd Viscount Daventry recalled entering it to find that taps had been left on and water pouring through the ceilings:

> *Unfortunately the damage caused during that period was very considerable and in 1946, on a tour of inspection, I discovered that the taps had been left running and the whole building left in about 4 foot of water. The damage done to the building was enormous and there was of course no compensation for such disasters in those days.*[40]

The estate could not afford to restore both Arbury Hall and Astley Castle, and the castle remained empty, though still furnished, for the next seven years. However, it seems it was not left entirely deserted. In 1951, as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations, the redoubtable Reverend Ivo F. H. Carr Gregg, who had served the parish since 1917, wrote and presented a Pageant on the history of Astley in the grounds of the castle. It was staged for a week, with the main roles taken by members of the Nuneaton Amateur Dramatic Society. It featured Saxons; the building of the chantry church; two scenes from medieval mystery plays, Noah and Doomsday; the betrothal of Elizabeth Woodville and Edward IV; the surrender of the chantry to Henry VIII's commissioners in 1545, and the capture of the Duke of Suffolk. But the pageant was something of a last hurrah, as the castle was by now standing untenanted and in increasing dilapidation.

[40] Astley Millennium Scrapbook, Vol I.

THE ASTLEY PAGEANT, 1951

SCENE FIVE

he Chantry is surrendered to Commissioners ppointed by King Henry VIII at the Dissolu- on of the Monasteries (A.D. 1545)

EAN ... ... *Eddie Harper*

ANONS *George Hall, A. E. W. Southorn, Graham Roberts, John Nunn, Reg Place, John Colledge, Frank Twigger*

ANITOR ... ... *Eric Frost*

OMMISSIONERS *L. G. Lovell, Jack Bishop*

'ILLAGERS

he Canons also appear in Scene Two and the 'illagers in Scenes Two and Three and the 'oventry Play.

COMMITTEE

President :
The Hon. Mrs. L. FitzRoy Newdegate, J.P.

Chairman :
Mr. George Hall.

Hon. Secretary :
Mr. H. Aston.

Hon. Treasurer :
Mr. J. Nicholls.

Members :
Mmes. Bates, Bend, Davenport, Hall, Hicks, Hollick, Simmons, Wright
Rev. I. Carr-Gregg
Messrs. Bishop, Lovell, Southorn.

ASTLEY

ITS CHURCH AND CASTLE

The present building is all that remains of the "fair and beautiful Collegiate Church" built by Sir Thomas Astley in 1343 A.D. But previous to this great Church there was a small Saxon Church built somewhere in the 10th Century. Sir Thomas pulled this Church down in order to erect his new Church. His object was to establish and endow a Collegiate Church, whose primary purpose was to be a Chantry, wherein masses were to be sung for the souls of the Astleys and others. So a College of Clergy came into being, consisting of a Dean and seven Clergy. This continued until 1545, when it was surrendered to the Crown at the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

The present Castle dates from about the middle of the 16th Century. But a much larger Castle had been built somewhere about the 12th Century, and some of its remains can still be seen especially on the east side, i.e. facing the present building. This was inhabited by the Astleys for several centuries. Even before this what was called a "homestead moat" had been erected at the time of the Danish invasion of Mercia, about the 10th Century, one of a chain of 150 such places, between Tamworth and Rugby, to repel the attacks of the Danes. Astley is one of the finest examples of these homestead moats.

The Committee desire to tender their very best thanks to all who have contributed in any way, particularly to the Hon. Mrs. L. Fitzroy Newdegate, J.P., who made available the Castle and grounds, and to Dr. E. Yule for the use of the adjoining field.

FESTIVAL OF BRITAI

Pageant of Astley

THURSDAY TO SATURDAY
JUNE 28th TO 30th, 1951
at 7.15 p.m.

IN THE GARDEN OF
ASTLEY CASTLE

Programme
Price 6d.

All profits from the Pageant will be presented to the Astley Parish Church Restoration Fund

PAGEANT OF ASTLEY - 1951

SCENE ONE

group of Saxons come to settle at Astley
\.D. 1050). Their leader, Alsi, is afterwards
lled at the battle of Senlac (A.D. 1066).

LSI	*Edward Hubble*
UTHRAM	*Herbert Tranter*
ARALD	*James Tompkins*
ADWINE	*Lewis Smith*
URTH	*Tony Woodford*
ULFROTH	*Jim Collins*
AXONS	*C. Spiers, W. Spencer, P. Raper, W. Sizer, W. Wheeler*

SCENE TWO

r Thomas Astley builds a new Parish Church
he present one) and establishes it as a Chantry,
ith a College of eight Canons (A.D. 1339)

TAINERS ...	*John Batsford, Ronald Povey*
R THOMAS ASTLEY	*John Holden*
ASTER MASON	*Charles Godden*
STATE STEWARD	*John Veasey*
EAD WORKMAN	*Roy Black*
RCHITECT	*Jack Bishop*
AFTSMEN	*Ronald Cooper, Eric Wincote*
RIEND TO SIR THOMAS ...	*John Carrick*

SCENE THREE

Lady Elizabeth, the widow of Sir John Grey of Astley, (who was killed fighting for the Lancastrians at St. Albans) is betrothed to the Yorkist King Edward IV (A.D. 1454)

SIR JOHN GREY	*Clifford Spiers*
RETAINERS	*Ronald Povey, Tony Woodford John Batsford*
LADY ELIZABETH	*Eileen Davenport*
HER SONS ...	*John Nunn, Harry Stokes*
WATCHMAN	*Peter Raper*
HORSEMAN	*Wilfred Sizer*
CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD ...	*William Spencer*
STEWARD	*John Veasey*
KING EDWARD IV	*Jack Bishop*
LORD IN WAITING	*Walter Wheeler*
HUNTSMAN	*L. Smith*

SCENE FOUR

The Duke of Suffolk (father of Lady Jane Grey) is arrested at Astley after his attempt to put her on the throne (A.D. 1554)

DUKE OF SUFFOLK	*John Carrick*
STEWARD	*Ronald Povey*
LORD JOHN GREY	*Ronald Cooper*
LORD LEONARD GREY	*Eddie Harper*
UNDERWOOD	*Charles Godden*
LAURENCE	*Roy Black*
SOLDIERS ...	*John Batsford, Eric Wincote*
OFFICER	*John Holden*

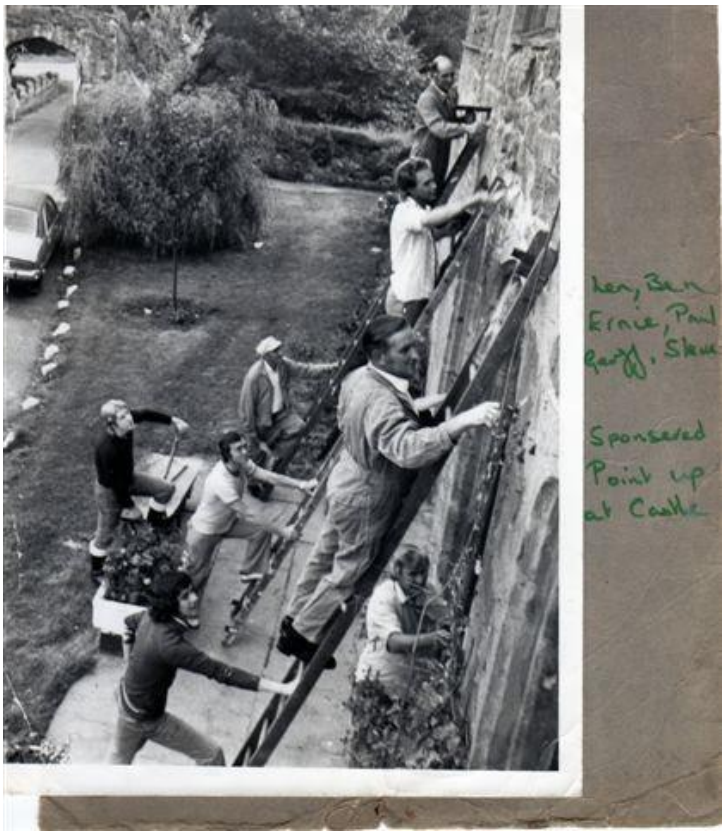
COVENTRY PLAY

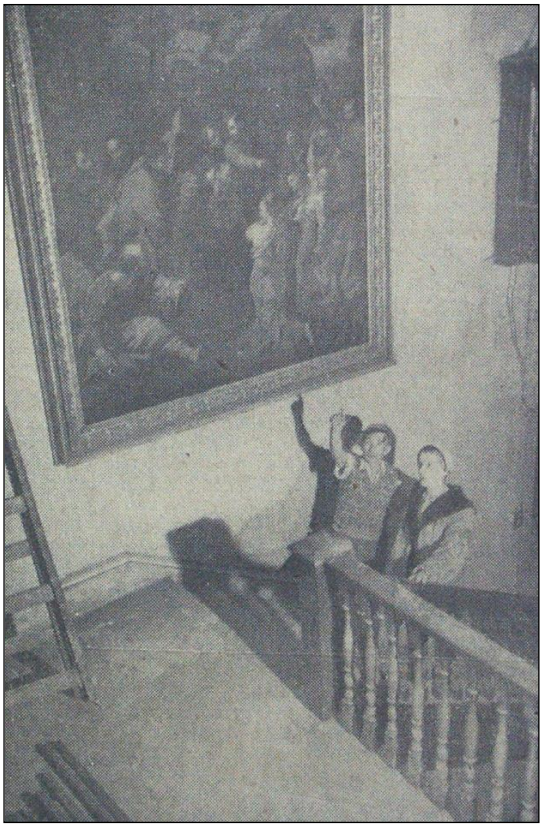
The players from Coventry come to the villag
and enact two scenes from their mystery plays—
Noah and Doomsday (16th Century)

NARRATOR	*George Hal*
NOAH	*William Spenc*
MRS. NOAH	*Eileen Davenpor*
SHEM	*Peter Rape*
MRS. SHEM	*Lilah Robert*
HAM	*Clifford Spier*
MRS. HAM	*Patricia Woolwic*
JAPHET	*Ronald Coope*
MRS. JAPHET	*Margaret Mantu*
DEUS	*Wilfred Size*
ANGEL	*Marian Taylo*
LAMETH	*Tony Woodford*
BOY	*Graham Robert*
CAIN	*Graham Russel*
ARCHANGEL MICHAEL	*Tony Wells*
ARCHANGEL GABRIEL ...	*Tony Woodford*
SPIRITS	*Arranged by Miss M. Wyn Jones of Exhal*
PETER	*John Veasey*
DEVILS ...	*Clifford Spiers, Peter Rape Ronald Cooper*

Script by THE REV. IVO F. H. CARR-GREGG, M.A., *edited by* L. G. LOVELL. *Producer* : JACK BISHOP. *Pageant Master* : L. G. LOVELL.
The Coventry Players modernised and arranged by D. MILBURN *and* L. G. LOVELL. *Wardrobe by* MMES. DAVENPORT, HICKS *and* ROBERTS.
Costumes by CHARLES FOX AND CO.

Astley Castle before the War. Note too the castellated vice tower showing above the crenellated parapet.





Pictures from the Tunnicliffes' rescue of the castle. Mrs Tunnicliffe is standing with the workman on the stairs.

Astley Castle as hotel-restaurant, 1953-1978

In desperation, the estate advertised a repairing lease for the castle at just £1 a week rent. Eventually, it was spotted by a Mrs Pat Tunnicliffe and her husband Charles, from Birmingham. Mrs Tunnicliffe was a former nursing home owner who was then running a hotel, and her initial declared plan was to restore and convert the castle into an up-market hotel dealing exclusively with overseas visitors, mainly Americans.[41]

The Tunnicliffes leased the castle and in April 1953 obtained permission from Warwickshire County Council to convert it into an hotel. The lease was a repairing lease of 21 years at £120 *per annum* with an option to extend the lease for a further seven; one of the stipulations in the lease was that the tenants had to spend over £5,000 on the property in the next five years. The castle was clearly in a poor state of repair and the new tenants had only limited financial means to deal with it – as soon becomes clear from the various Ministry of Works files at the National Archives in Kew.

The building had suffered from a combination of neglect, vandalism and lead thieves. Mrs Tunnicliffe told the *Birmingham Gazette* that all of the ceilings in the 35 rooms in the house had either fallen in or needed extensive repairs and that work was already underway. However, the costs clearly continued to mount.

On the 21st March 1955, Charles Tunnicliffe wrote to the Ministry of Works asking for a grant to carry out repairs to the castle '*as the roof is in need of repair and some work is needed outside.*' He went on to state that '*we have now reduced ourselves to poverty to keep her up. We have built the place up from a ruin and the position is now desperate*'.[42] Some of the rooms were still uninhabitable. In the inevitable flurry of paperwork associated with the grant

[41] Birmingham Gazette, 11th April 1953, 3
[42] National Archives HLG 126/493

application, a letter from the couple's accountants demonstrated that they had spent, in all, £3,137 16s 11d on the property.

Later that month a J Chaplin reported on the castle. In a statement that reveals that the absence of historic fabric found by Landmark long pre-dated our arrival at Astley, Mr Chaplin wrote that '*the house must be regarded as a shell, for the interior is wholly modernised and has no early features, with the exception of a Jacobean fireplace*'[43] In April 1955 the Historic Building Council for England sent their architect, D G Luckes, to have a look at Astley. He reported back on the 22nd, saying that the castle was indeed in need of a great deal of work and ended by writing '*I would add that the new owners have themselves, by quite incredibly hard work, rescued a very dilapidated building from ruin*'.[44]

Another Inspector, M J Craig, later agreed that good work had been done by the occupiers who were '*of limited education but unlimited courage, enthusiasm and tenacity*'.[45] Despite the financial conditions and difficulties in grant aiding such projects, and despite the strong objections of another advisor, a Mr Muir, who did not consider the building worthy of it, a grant of £1,500 was agreed providing that the Tunnicliffes paid another £450 towards an overall repair bill of £1,950.

Work was delayed as differences of repair strategies quickly developed between the tenants, the contractors and the Inspectors. There is also mention of a '*recent fire*' in one letter of early 1956 but no further details. Despite slow payments to contractors by the tenants, and one of the diamond-set chimneys being taken down and rebuilt square by mistake, the bulk of the works seems to have been finished by 1957.

However, towards the end of the year the situation became increasingly fraught, as apparent in the second of the two Ministry files at Kew. It is clear from the

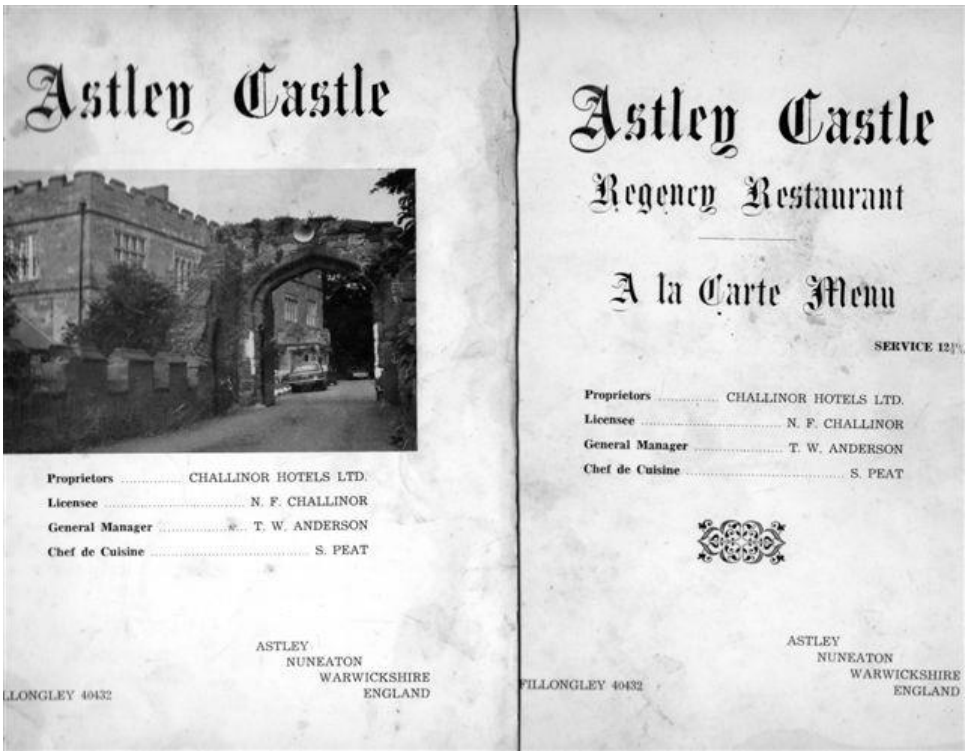
[43] *ibid.*
[44] *ibid.*
[45] *ibid.*

surviving correspondence that the tenants were quick to accept the grant payments for the work done – but very slow to pass them on to the contractors.

There was a growing suspicion in the Ministry, which had to deal with letters of complaints direct from the contractors, that the money was being used initially by the Tunnicliffes to keep their business afloat. In November 1957 a letter by W O Ulrich commented that this was the '*first case where a serious risk had appeared that the grant might be misappropriated*' which would be very bad publicity for all concerned. The grant system was in its early days and its administrators still working out their *modus operandi,* and the Astley Castle case perhaps led to a tightening up of grant procedures. It is also a revealing example of how repair of a historic building can, despite the best efforts of all concerned, lead it to slip into negative equity despite an apparently viable financial future. In the next few years solicitors were involved and threatening letters sent to the Tunnicliffes by contractors and the Ministry.

Relationships had become more and more strained until one exasperated Inspector wrote unguardedly '*I hope that this third rate pub (with a bar in every room) run and inhabited by a couple of uncouth peasants does not figure as a stately home in the lists*' (today's inspectors might be a little more circumspect making such comments that remain on the official record!).[46] Towards the end of 1960 the Ministry discussed '*the possibility of abandoning this sinking ship*' and another Inspector wrote that '*The whole place was such a shambles, made worse by the occupants*'.[47] Although it seems the contractors had finally been paid by the start of 1961, Mrs Tunnicliffe had clearly not paid her promised £450 towards the total repair bill. In February, a recommendation that the Ministry refuse to pay out the remaining £225 of their grant was accepted – and the file was closed.

[46] *ibid.*
[47] *ibid.*



Astley Castle

Proprietors ..... CHALLINOR HOTELS LTD.
Licensee ..... N. F. CHALLINOR
General Manager ..... T. W. ANDERSON
Chef de Cuisine ..... S. PEAT

ASTLEY
NUNEATON
WARWICKSHIRE
ENGLAND

LLONGLEY 40432

Astley Castle

Regency Restaurant

A la Carte Menu

SERVICE 12/6

Proprietors ..... CHALLINOR HOTELS LTD.
Licensee ..... N. F. CHALLINOR
General Manager ..... T. W. ANDERSON
Chef de Cuisine ..... S. PEAT

ASTLEY
NUNEATON
WARWICKSHIRE
ENGLAND

FILLONGLEY 40432

ASTLEY CASTLE

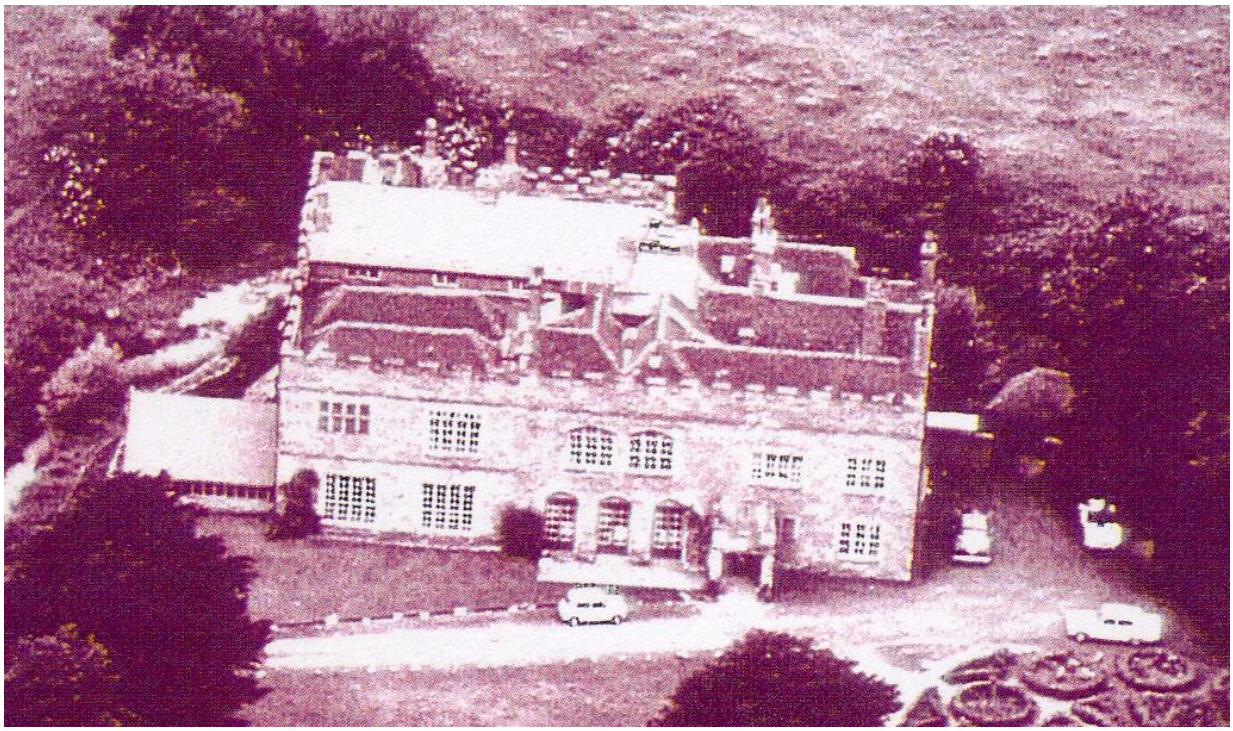
A DANCE

WHIT-MONDAY, 26th MAY, 1958

Dancing 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

TICKETS 2/6 Each Licensed till 12-30 a.m.

In Aid of High View Hospital, Exhall



Astley Castle continued through the 1960s and 70s as a restaurant with bars and a few hotel rooms. Many locals have affectionate memories of drinking or dining at the castle. It is not entirely clear when the Tunnicliffes moved away, but Mr and Mrs Geoffrey Challinor had taken over the hotel by 1971, with their son Neville. Geoffrey Challinor died at the castle in 1971.When the ailing business finally closed at the end of 1977, it was being run by Neville Challinor and his partner Tom Anderson.

Their lease expired at the end of March 1978 and a few days later, on the evening of the 3rd April, the castle was gutted by fire. The flames ripped through the restaurant area and led to the collapse of floors and the roof. The cause of the fire was and remains controversial, especially as the fire service considered it suspicious. Tom Anderson had only left the castle at 9pm that evening and the 999 call to the fire service was made just before 10pm. However, no charges were ever brought even though local conspiracy theories of all sorts still abound more than 30 years later. It seemed a sad end to nearly 800 years of history.

After the fire, 1978 to 2005

After its devastation by fire, the castle was left virtually untouched for nearly twenty years. Although the fire crews had managed to save some parts of the building, with the roof largely destroyed in the fire, the effects of neglect and weather on the surviving fabric inevitably led to additional collapse and the growth of vegetation within the walls.

Sadly, despite security measures, thieves and vandals systematically stripped the castle of any salvageable materials, deliberately pulling down walls and lighting more fires in parts of the building. In a particularly wanton act of vandalism in about 1994 most of the porch was demolished.

The castle had passed well beyond the normal economics of repair for its owners. In desperation, the estate offered it for tenancy at £1 a week, but without any takers. Astley Castle appeared to be doomed. Then in 1995, the Landmark Trust began negotiations with the Arbury estate regarding the possible taking a long lease of the castle. A 99 year agreement was duly entered into in 1997, with the usual break clause insisted upon by Landmark, that if for any reason funds could not be raised, or permissions not granted, then the lease could be surrendered.

To enable archaeological analysis and recording, the interior of the castle was cleared of debris and rubble under archaeological supervision. As the clearance progressed, however, it soon became apparent that such an approach was unnecessary. The building had been so effectively stripped since the fire that nothing of significance remained. Every fireplace and stair baluster, and even the floorboards of the main parts of the house, had been pilfered. Once the building was cleared of the debris and unsteady surviving walls propped with emergency scaffolding funded by English Heritage, a better assessment of the fabric was possible – but some areas remained inaccessible.

Meanwhile, Landmark was attempting to address the twin challenges of devising a restoration and conversion scheme for the ruined site and raising the funds to pay for this. Restoration of the whole castle would have resulted in a building larger than viable as a single holiday let – but therefore, which sector should be prioritised? More than twenty outline schemes were agonised over. Landmark's founder Sir John Smith had stood down in 1990 and it no longer had access to his trust fund, the Manifold Trust, which had enabled the salvation of buildings of comparable scale and complexity in the past. Landmark's own fundraising efforts were in their infancy: a public appeal was launched ('Lady Jane Grey invites you to open your cheque book') with some success, but it became clear that statutory funding would not be forthcoming unless as much of the fabric as possible was consolidated and re-roofed. Without such grant aid and with restoration of the whole beyond viable end use as a Landmark, the vast sums required could not be achieved.

In 2000, and with deep regret, Landmark surrendered the lease, the first time such a thing had occurred, and offered to return donations to date (thanks to Landmark's supporters' generosity, very few took up this offer, so that the monies were put to other projects). The vandals returned to the castle and some of the supporting scaffolding was deliberately loosened or kicked away. More of the fabric collapsed, as vegetation once more colonised the interior of the building.

All this rankled. In discussing how to mark the millennium in 2000, Landmark had brainstormed the possibility of finding a new way of intervening to save threatened buildings, seeking to consolidate a ruin and drop within it accommodation that represented the best design of our own time, unequivocally modern. In 2005, when discussing how Landmark might celebrate its 40th anniversary, this idea resurfaced, in the context of a return to Astley Castle. Anderton House, dating from 1971, had very recently opened as a Landmark and its enthusiastic reception by Landmarkers proved their architectural tastes to be

both open and eclectic. Gradually, those who grasped the concept with enthusiasm convinced others within the Landmark team and Trustee board. The plan emerged to solicit outline ideas by holding an architectural competition

As part of the 40th anniversary celebrations, Landmark's Trustees approved a sum to develop the competition brief and pay a contribution towards the expenses of twelve architectural practices who were invited to submit their outline schemes. Some but not all were conservation architects; all had done past work we appreciated and their submissions, submitted in February 2007, did not disappoint. With some difficulty, a short list of four was drawn up and interviewed. The choice was unanimously in favour of the intelligent, sensitive and pragmatic scheme submitted by Witherford Watson Mann Architects (Stephen Witherford, Chris Watson and William Mann).

A copy of the brief and extracts from the competition submissions can be found in Volume II of this album.

The qualities of the finished scheme can now be fully appreciated by the end result, which has remained remarkably true to the first sketches of the competition submission. The Witherford Watson Mann Architects' (WWM) approach is best explained in the architects' own words, and a folder containing their full competition submission is included in the material in the castle.

English Heritage and North Warwickshire District Council were included in discussions from the earliest stage and throughout, and the meticulous archaeological skills of Richard Morriss also played an essential role in working out the fine grain interaction of old fabric and new as a result of his Conservation Plan. With planning and listed building permissions in hand, we then felt confident about re-approaching the Arbury estate for a second 99 year lease, now with the 4th Viscount Daventry. With a total project cost of £2.7m there was also a very steep appeal mountain to climb, and Astley Castle could not have been rescued

without particularly generous contributions from the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, the Country Houses Foundation, the Arbury Estate and, in particular and at a crucial moment, an extraordinarily generous personal donation by an individual who prefers to remain anonymous.

Landmark's rescue of Astley Castle has required tremendous persistence from all those involved, whether in the fundraising phases or in the many aspects of the action on site. The castle's plight was desperate, and only in such extreme circumstances of decay would such a contemporary solution be contemplated – and yet it has been a liberating and exhilarating experience to unlock the conundrum of such advanced and hulking decay in this way. We hope all who stay at Astley Castle will find it similarly enriching.

Astley Castle Bibliography

Ashley, M, 1999, *British Kings and Queens.*

Braddock, R, 2004, 'Grey, Henry, Duke of Suffolk (1517-1554)' in Matthew, H C G & Harrison, B (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, *vol. 23.*

Brewer, I, A, 1820, *Topographical & Historical Description of the County of Warwickshire.*

Burke, J, & Burke, J B, 1844, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies of England, Ireland, and Scotland.*

Camden, W, 1877, *The Visitation of the County of Warwick in the Year 1619.*

Carr-Gregg, I, 1929, *The History of Astley and its Parish.*

Doubleday, H E, & de Walden, (eds.),1910, *Complete Peerage, Vol I*.

Doubleday, H E, & de Walden(eds), 1929, *Complete Peerage, Vol VII.*

Dugdale, W, 1656, *Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated.*

Dugdale, F, 1817, *Warwickshire.*

Emery, A, 2000, *Greater Medieval Houses of England.*

Gaunt, P, 1987, *The Cromwellian Gazetteer.*

Hammond, P W (ed.), 1998, *The Complete Peerage*, *Vol. XIV.*

Holinshed, R, 1577, *Chronicles of England, Scotlande and Irelande.*

Howard, M, 1987, *The Early Tudor Country House.*

Gibbs, V (ed.), 1916, *The Complete Peerage, Vol. VI.*

Jacob, 1961, *The Oxford History of England: The Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485.*

Kelly's Post Office Directories (various years).

Karl, F, 1995, *George Eliot: A Biography.*

Knighton, C S (ed.), 1992, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series of the Reign of Edward VI, 1547-1553.*

Knighton, C S (ed.), 1998, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series of the Reign of Mary I, 1553-1558.*

Lisle, Leanda de, (2009) *The Sisters Who Would be Queen: The Tragedy of Mary, Katherine and Lady Jane Grey.*

MacCulloch, D (trans. & ed.), 1984, 'The *Vita Mariae Angliae Reginae* of Robert Wingfield of Brantham', *Camden Miscellany XXVIII*, 4th Series, Vol. 29.

Matthew, H C G & Harrison, B (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*

Morriss, R K, 1996, *Astley Castle, Warwickshire: An Outline Analysis* (Mercian Heritage Series 21).

Mosley, C (editor in chief), 2003, *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage & Knightage.*

Namier, L, & Brooke, J, 1964, *The History of Parliament: House of Commons 1754-1790.*

Owen, W, Davis, L, & Debret, J, 1785, *The New Peerage Vol. 1.*

Pigot's, 1841, *National & Commercial Directory & Topography: Warwickshire* .

Sedgwick, R, 1970, *The History of Parliament: House of Commons 1715-1754* .

Smith, F, 1819, *Warwickshire Delineated* .

Smith, R (pub.), 1704, *The New Description & State of England.*

Smith, W, 1829, *A New and Complete History of the County of Warwick*.

Softly, B, 1976, *The Queens of England.*

Stebbing Shaw, 1976 reprint, *The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire (1798-1801).*

Styles, P, 1978, *Studies in Seventeenth Century West Midlands History*.

Toulmin Smith, L (ed.), 1964, *The Itinerary of John Leland.*

Tyack, G, 1994, *Warwickshire Country Houses* .

VCH, 1951, *The Victoria County History of Warwickshire, Vol. VI.*

Warnicke, R A, 2004, 'Grey, Frances (1517-1559), in Matthew, H C G & Harrison, B (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 23.

West's, 1830, *History, Topography & Directory of Warwickshire* .

White, A W A (ed.), 1995, *The Correspondence of Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury, Warwickshire.*

White, F, & Co., *History, Gazetteer & Directory of Warwickshire* (various years).

Williams, N, 1971, *Henry VIII and his Court.*

Williams, P, 1995, *The Later Tudors, England 1547-1603.*