The Landmark Trust

THE PROSPECT TOWER

History Album

Lord Harris

Written by Charlotte Haslam

Re-presented in 2015

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BASIC DETAILS:

Built c.1807-8 for General Harris

Designer unknown

Adapted as cricket pavilion c.1870

Leased to Landmark Trust 1990

Architects for restoration: Benson & Bryant

Main contractors: W.W. Martin Ltd of Ramsgate

Foreman: John Kennet

Work completed: March 1992

Contents

The 4th Lord Harris, with the Prospect Tower beyond.
He succeeded his father in 1872.

Summary

The Prospect Tower was built in 1807-8 for General Harris, who later became Lord Harris of Seringapatam. Its designer is not known, but it is typical of the Picturesque garden buildings illustrated in the architectural pattern books of the day, without which no gentleman's property was complete.

The tower cost £400 to build, and the General referred to it in his accounts as the Gardener's Lodge or General's Whim. The original intention might have been to build an ornamental cottage for a gardener, but it is hard to believe that this plan was ever realised. The pretty upper chamber was clearly meant for the Harris family's own use, and though the plain lower room was at that time self-contained, with its own door, it is too small for a dwelling. Besides which, it had a floor of knapped flint, which would not have made it very comfortable.

Whatever his practical first intentions, the General's fit of whimsy clearly overtook them, and he ended up building what was soon known as the Castle. It served the family as a summerhouse, somewhere to have tea on a June day, while enjoying the outlook over the countryside. An elderly cousin who lived with the family at Belmont noted one day in her diary that they had a syllabub there.

The tower also served as the focal point for a new garden laid out by the General. He had bought Belmont Park in 1801, having returned from service in India the year before. There he had been Commander in Chief of the army that defeated Tipoo Sultan, ruler of Mysore, at Seringapatam, thus establishing British rule in Southern India. The prize money from this campaign was immense, amounting to £112,000, and this, with other savings, enabled the General to retire from the army, and set himself up as a country gentleman. After looking at a number of properties, he bought Belmont, with gardens, park and a farm held on lease from Oriel College, Oxford, 265 acres of land in all, for £8,960.

To begin with, the General was busy making improvements to the house and farm, but he soon turned his attention to the gardens. Here again, the practical things came first: peach and grape houses, pineapple and melon pits, and new walls, all appear in the accounts from 1805. At the same time he was drawing up plans for extending the Pleasure Grounds. A park and shrubberies already existed to the south and east of the house, but the General planned to make a new garden west of what was still a public road called Abraham Street. The line of Walnut Tree Walk is pencilled in on an estate map of about 1803, running through an orchard, past a wood called Nightingale Grove. The completed scheme is shown on another map of 1812.

This new walk was a favourite of the General's, and he spent much of his old age pottering up and down it. Already planted with walnuts, there were in fact two paths, one grass, the other smooth gravel ‘after McAdam's plan.’ Between them was a wide quickset hedge, in which he had cut arbours, with seats. At the end

was the tower, with ivy growing on its walls to give a genuine air of Antiquity.

The 2nd and 3rd Lords Harris spent much of their time abroad on public duty, and the tower was probably seldom visited. However, after 1870 it was given a new lease of life. When he succeeded his father in 1872, the 4th Lord Harris had already earned a name for himself as a cricketer. He made a cricket ground in the field next to the Prospect Tower and the Belmont Eleven was soon taking on other county teams. Until the 1920s, when Lord Harris was forced by age to retire from the game, cricket was a regular feature of Belmont summer life. The tower served as a pavilion, with hooks for the gear fixed to the walls. The studs on the players' shoes pitted the floorboards of the upper room, and one distinguished visitor signed his name on the plaster.

The Repair of the Tower

The conversion of this very small tower to provide accommodation for even two people called for some ingenuity on the part of the architects, Messrs Benson and Bryant, and the builders, W. W. Martin of Ramsgate. This was achieved by making a new door between the ground floor room and the staircase, while at the same time blocking the outside door to this room. It then became possible to put a shower room in the original entrance lobby. There was just space to fit a kitchen into the corresponding alcove above. Water and electricity both had to be specially laid on, with all wires buried underground for obvious visual reasons. Before this, extensive repairs were needed. The tower had been unused for many years, and it had nearly lost its roof in the gales of October 1987. There were some ominous cracks in the walls. These had to be stitched with metal ties, and two sections of parapet, with the wall below, completely rebuilt. The roof was renewed at the same time, on both main tower and turrets.

Inside, floors and ceilings all had to be renewed. Surviving sections of the decorative cornice and central rose in the sitting room were carefully taken down and copied, to make up missing areas, before being reset. New floorboards were laid, although some of the old, stud-pitted, boards were retained in the middle of the room. When repairing the stairs, the section of wall with Sir Leary Constantine's signature had sadly to be taken down. It is now preserved in a specially made ash box. The windows were repaired, keeping the old sashes were possible, and most of the old glass. On the ground floor the existing brick floor was relaid, but with new underfloor heating beneath it.

The walls throughout the tower are finished in traditional lime-hair plaster, and painted with special porous paints, coloured with natural pigments. The building is thus able to breathe, and any damp in the walls evaporates quickly, without causing problems. After minor landscaping works, the tower was ready to receive its first visitors in the spring of 1992. One detail remained to be added: the weathervane of a cricketer, based on a portrait of Lord Harris.

The Prospect Tower

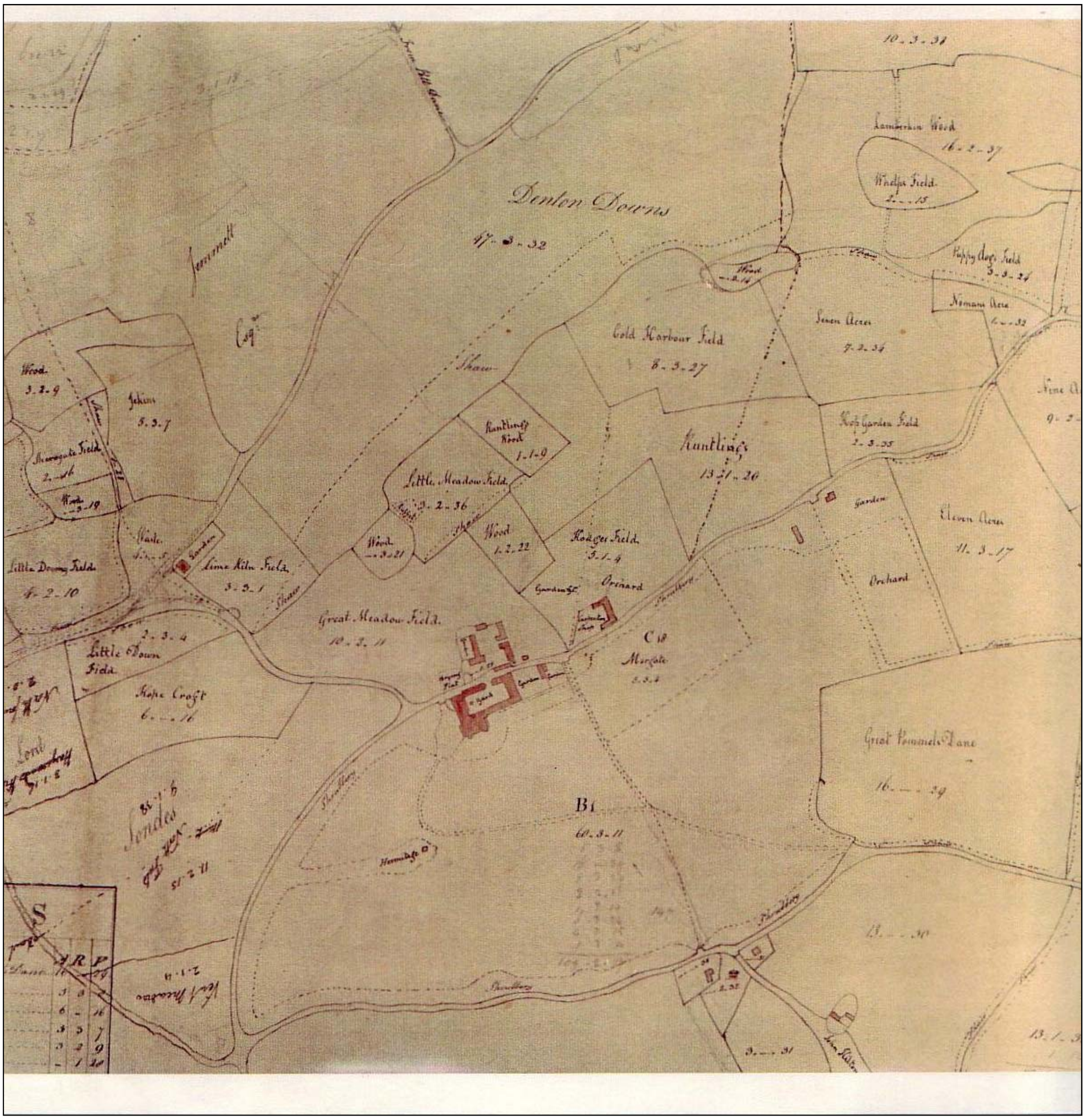
> I trust, the good sense and good taste of this country will never be led to despise the comfort of a gravel walk, the delicious fragrance of a shrubbery, the soul expanding delight of a wide extended prospect, or a view down a steep hill, because they are all subjects incapable of being painted.
>
> (Humphry Repton's letter to Uvedale Price, 1794)

General Harris, owner of Belmont Park from 1801 until his death in 1829, certainly had the good sense and good taste. Returning from India enriched by prize money from the defeat in 1799 of Tipoo Sultan at Seringapatam, in which campaign he had been Commander in Chief, he resolved to settle in England and to spend the rest of his life as a country gentleman. Next to farming, gardening was his chief enjoyment, and among the additions he made to Belmont, he included the Prospect Tower or, as he called it, the General's Whim, or Castle.

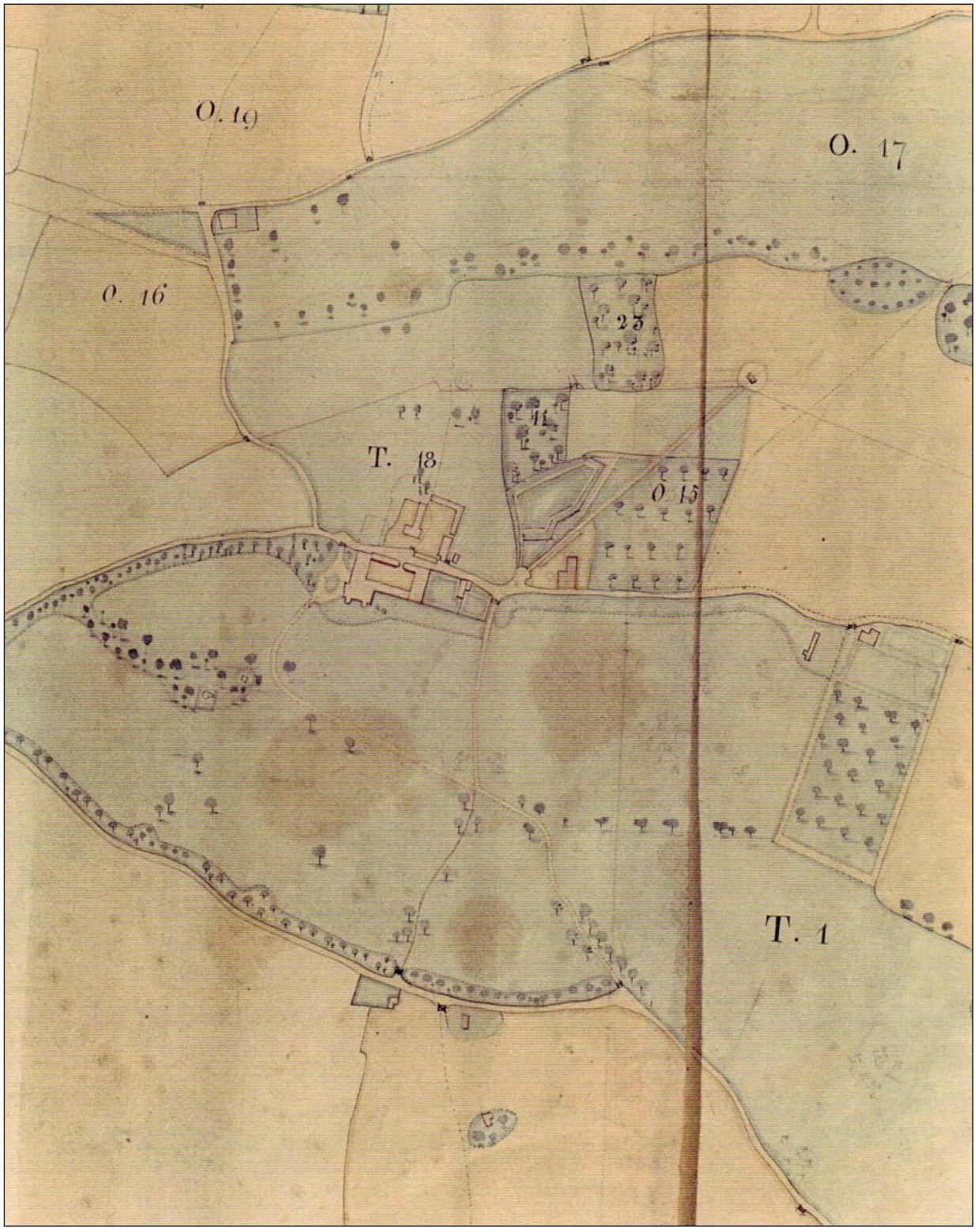
It seems to have been built about 1807-8. The General was a careful guardian of his wealth, and drew up regular statements of his income and property, and every so often he listed the improvements he had made at Belmont and what he had spent on them. The lists are repeated, and updated, every year or two. In the first few years, they show his efforts concentrated on the house - enlarging the offices, adding a billiard room and so on; and on urgent estate maintenance and the building of the house called Little Belmont.

Then in about 1805 work starts on the gardens, and in 1808, along with peach and grape houses, pineapple and melon pits, and new garden walls, is listed ‘Gardener's Lodge or General's Whim,’ on which he had spent £400. Evidence that this was the existing tower comes later, when it is listed as ‘Whim or Castle’; while in 1812 it is referred to simply as the Castle.

It is hard to believe that the tower was ever lived in by a gardener. The ground floor was certainly self-contained, with its own door, and like many garden buildings could have been planned as a dwelling, with the grander room for the



Map of c 1802 -3, dating from soon after General Harris's purchase of Belmont, but before he had begun to extend the garden to the west. The dotted line through Hodges Field marks the position of the future Walnut Tree Walk. Cleverly, the tower was built just within Cold Harbour Field, part of his freehold estate, whereas the intervening field, Runtling's was only held on a 21 year lease from oriel college, of which he only acquired the freehold in 1813/14.



Map of 1812, showing the General's new garden to the west of Abraham Street, and the walk leading to the new tower or Castle. The wood numbered 11 is Nightingale Grove, now slightly reduced in size. The Hermitage to the S.E. of the house has been joined by the house, which still exists.

family above, reached by a separate stair. On the other hand, it originally had a floor of knapped flint - not exactly a comfortable domestic interior therefore. Some hint that the building did not live up to its original purpose is given in another, later, list, which notes 'Whim for a gardener's house, if wanted.' It seems that the General's desire for a toy building may have outstripped his practical first intentions.

No record has yet been found of the Castle's designer or builder. It is a thoroughly Reptonian building, with its irregular and Picturesque outline, and stained glass. The use of local flint was no doubt deemed to make it look more ancient, like the church towers of the area, and this sense of age was further enhanced by a covering of ivy, there already by 1826.

The comfort of a gravel walk

The tower was not, of course, an isolated structure, but formed part of a larger garden plan. When General Harris bought Belmont in 1801, a park and shrubberies already existed to the South and East of the house. To the West of the drive, then still a public road called Abraham Street, there was only an estate yard and orchards. Some evidence of plans to bring this area within the pleasure grounds can be found on a plan of the estate which, although undated, seems to have been drawn about 1802 or 1803 (on the back of a large parchment on which are listed the forts of Tipoo Sultan, dated 1799 and signed by Harris). It includes Little Belmont, but no later works. On this, in the position of the present Walnut Tree Walk, and of the same length, a line is dotted in, through the middle of what was formerly Hodges Field.

The realised plan is shown on another map of the estate dated 1812, with the long straight walk (almost sure to be of gravel) leading to the tower at its furthest point. On one side is the orchard, and on the other a new garden with irregularly shaped walls, now the kitchen garden. Beyond the tower is evidence of new plantations and clumps, as the park was extended to the North. Sketched in very

lightly are ideas for further walks, and another circular feature to the South, which were probably never realised.

There are further mentions of the Castle, and of the new walk and garden, in some surviving diaries for the years 1810 - 1813. These were written by Mrs Elizabeth Dyer, an elderly cousin who lived with the family at Belmont until her death in 1814, when the General put up a memorial in Throwley church 'to commemorate an uninterrupted friendship for sixty-eight years, from his cradle to her grave.'

In three tiny books, part diary and part almanac (containing in addition to engravings of picturesque views such useful information as the names of bishops and military leaders) she kept, in separate sections, her 'company account' (listing a constant and regular round of visits to and from families in the immediate neighbourhood) and a journal. In this, along with the state of her health, or the weather, she noted down the destination of her daily constitutional.

In her late 70s, these walks were clearly the chief interest of her life, interrupted only by bad weather, illness, or some over-riding duty like the making of a new gown (the knitting of some stockings, perhaps for campaigning soldiers, once took up two whole weeks, with frequent disasters when several hours' work had to be undone). A particularly long expedition is noted with pride ('first time for months past'), though frequently followed the next day by 'fatigued, not out.'

Much of the time, she pottered about near the house, on the 'lawn and pavement' (of which she once achieved 40 lengths before breakfast), or in the flower garden. The area south of the house was also popular, through a shrubbery and laurel grove to the Hermitage ('sat and read Mrs H's letter'), or down the Church Way Path. Flowers were remarked on, a fine display of hawthorn blossom on the drying ground, or wood anemones near the ice house. The first cuckoo was heard near the 2nd Clump in the park. As she grew older,

the General made short cuts, so that she could still reach a favourite spot, such as a Woodland Wild, into which he made a new gate from the adjoining paddock.

She did not neglect the area west of the house, into which the General was busy extending the garden. Nightingale Grove, a wood behind and partly underneath the present kitchen garden, was a favourite place which she visited nearly every week. And every so often, she visited the Castle. This was mostly done in company, either with the General or with other members of the family and guests as well. Once they had tea there, on another occasion a syllabub.

The Castle was never a frequent destination, as the Hermitage was, or later a Woodbine Bower. It may be that it was the General's den, and other visitors were not encouraged; or it may also be that to begin with there was no easy path to it, and a strong arm was needed to get her there. After one expedition there on her own, from Nightingale Grove, she comments ‘further than I've been for some time.’ Then on 16th June, 1813, she noted that she had walked to the Castle and back by the ‘new walk, part of the ruin of Nightingale Grove.’ Over the next few weeks, she does this twice more, once walking round the Castle and once towards it. The going was clearly much easier all of a sudden, the comfort of a gravel walk having been provided.

A glimpse of the General's enjoyment of this part of the garden in his own old age is provided in the second edition of *The Life and Services of General Lord Harris* (as he became in 1815), written by his son-in-law, S.R. Lushington. In 1826, the General's 81st year, a grandson paid him a visit:

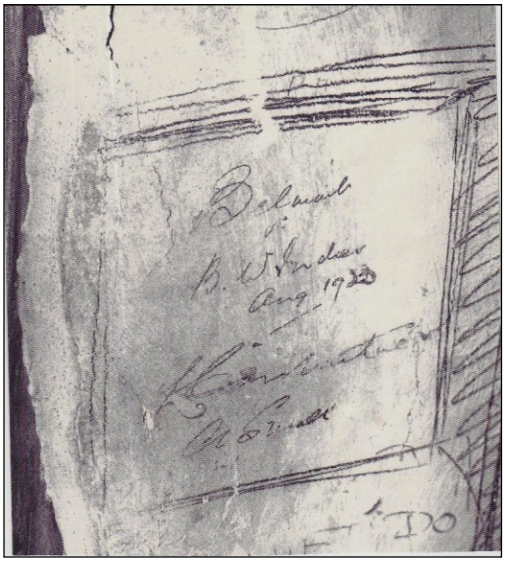
> I rode over to Belmont in the evening; my aunts were out riding; my grandfather, I was told, was in the flower garden. I went in search of him but not finding him there, proceeded to his favourite walk, a thick and high quickset hedge separated two walks, overhung with walnut trees; that on the right was green sward, the other smooth gravel, ‘which’ as he told me ‘he had not long finished after McAdam's plan.’ At intervals of about a hundred yards, he had made himself seats, by cutting into the quick hedge, so forming a green bower round him, with the trunk of a

> walnut tree for the back of the arm-chair; a small castle over-run with ivy terminated the walks. Here I was also unsuccessful; but on my return I found him in a jasmine arbour, by the side of a small fish-pond, reclining on an old yew bench, a branch, lately added to it, formed an arm.
> This, he said, after making me sit down at his feet, the carpenter had lately put up at his order, to prevent him tumbling off it if he should happen to fall asleep, 'for,' he added, 'I sometimes take a little nap here, but very seldom.' Upon my remarking how pleasant his new walk was, and how well the park looked, he proceeded to speak of his farms and lands, and the bad state of some he had bought from Oriel College.

The Oriel farm had included the fields around the tower itself. The General's enjoyment of the prospect from it probably had much to do with his pride in the measures he had taken to make this land productive, a subject on which he frequently enlarged in his statements of property.

A second innings

The Prospect Tower enjoyed a longer active life than many garden buildings. If for some years after the death of the General it dwindled away behind its ivy, becoming little more than a place of retreat for children wishing to escape the supervision of aunts and governesses, around 1870 it was woken up again. The 4th Lord Harris had the field beside it turned into a cricket pitch for the Belmont Eleven, and the tower itself was brought into service as a pavilion. The ground floor was the main changing room, with rows of hooks for the gear. Possibly the upper room was still used by the family, but it was certainly used by the players too, the studs on their boots having pitted the floorboards, and there were more hooks in the alcove.



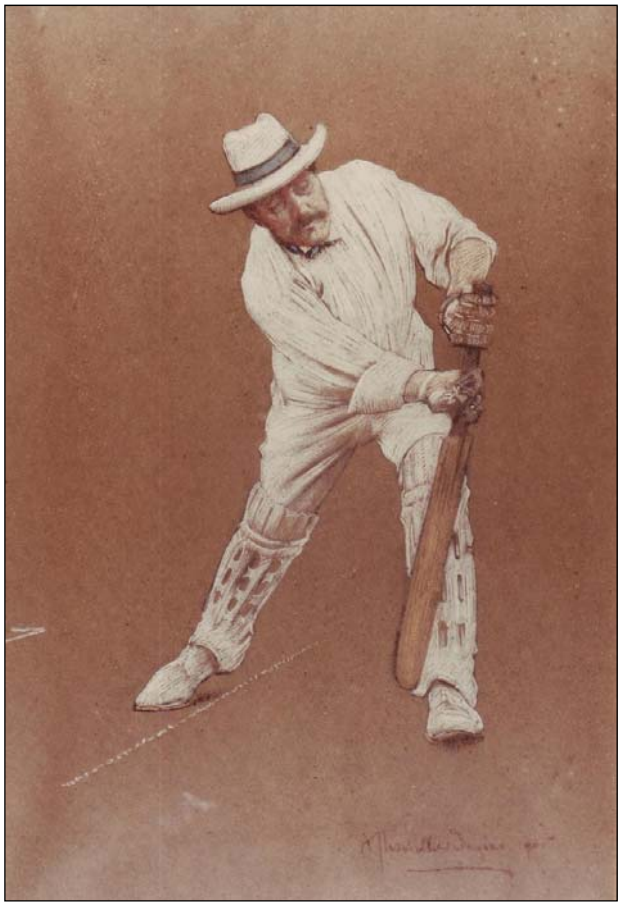
The Belmont Eleven with the Philadelphia Pilgrims, 1921.
Lord Harris is seated in the front row left of centre.

In his memoirs, *A Few Short Runs* (1921), Lord Harris talks about his experience of country-house cricket. Matches organised at home and away by schoolboys and undergraduates throughout the summer provided him with useful early experience. One such boy was the Hon. George Milles of Lees Court, in the same parish as Belmont. The standard of play was good:

> The amount of interest taken in the doings of these private Elevens was keen, and the cricket was quite useful in discovering promise. I cannot say, in their case or that of the Belmont Eleven, that we confined ourselves to the immediate locality. There is a pretty fond delusion, I think, nowadays, that in the old days the country club was confined to the cricketers close around the residence of the patron. In my experience, patrons went far and wide to pick up good players, County players if possible, although they might be living twenty miles away.
>
> There was a homeliness about these matches of olden times which was very genial. If the ground was too wet, two sides would be formed and some goal-running would take place; and if it was too wet to do anything, a sing-song would be organised in the tent where the ordinary was served.

Perhaps the roof of the Prospect Tower, too, has been raised by loud and cheerful male voices.

The Belmont cricket ground is not marked on the edition of the Ordnance Survey 6-inch map surveyed between1866-71, whereas that at Lees Court is. Possibly the Eleven was not formed until after the death of Lord Harris's father in 1872, although he had played his first game at Lords in 1868, in the Eton and Harrow Match, at which time his father had also retired to Belmont after many years service in India. However, we can be sure that before very long, the game was a regular feature of Belmont summer life.



4th Lord Harris

From The Boys Own Room

It is likely that the building received a thorough overhaul at the same time. Certainly at some date iron bands were fixed around it to arrest the outward spread of the walls. The flint floor was covered with the less knobbly alternative of brick and, possibly, sash windows were inserted on the upper floor, replacing what were presumably, to begin with, casement windows like those on the ground floor.

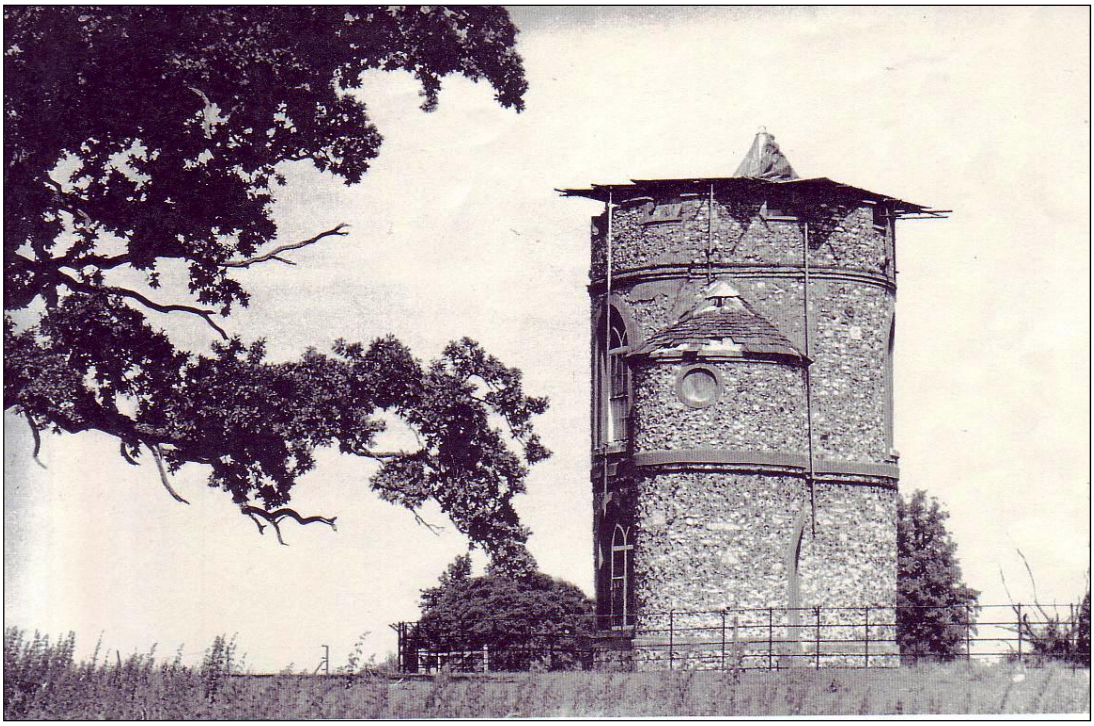
It is many years since cricket was played at Belmont, however. Charles Igglesden, in Volume XXI of *A Saunter Through Kent with Pen and Pencil* (1928), recorded that Lord Harris played in 1927, at the age of 76 (and it is hard to believe that he was only a spectator on the day that Belmont played the British West Indies during their tour in 1923), but after his death in 1932, the team did not long survive. The 5th Lord Harris did not share his father's enthusiasm for the game, and Lord Harris himself, in *A Few Short Runs* commented that 'country-house cricket was largely dependent upon the patron continuing to take an interest. As soon as his leadership failed the games would collapse.'

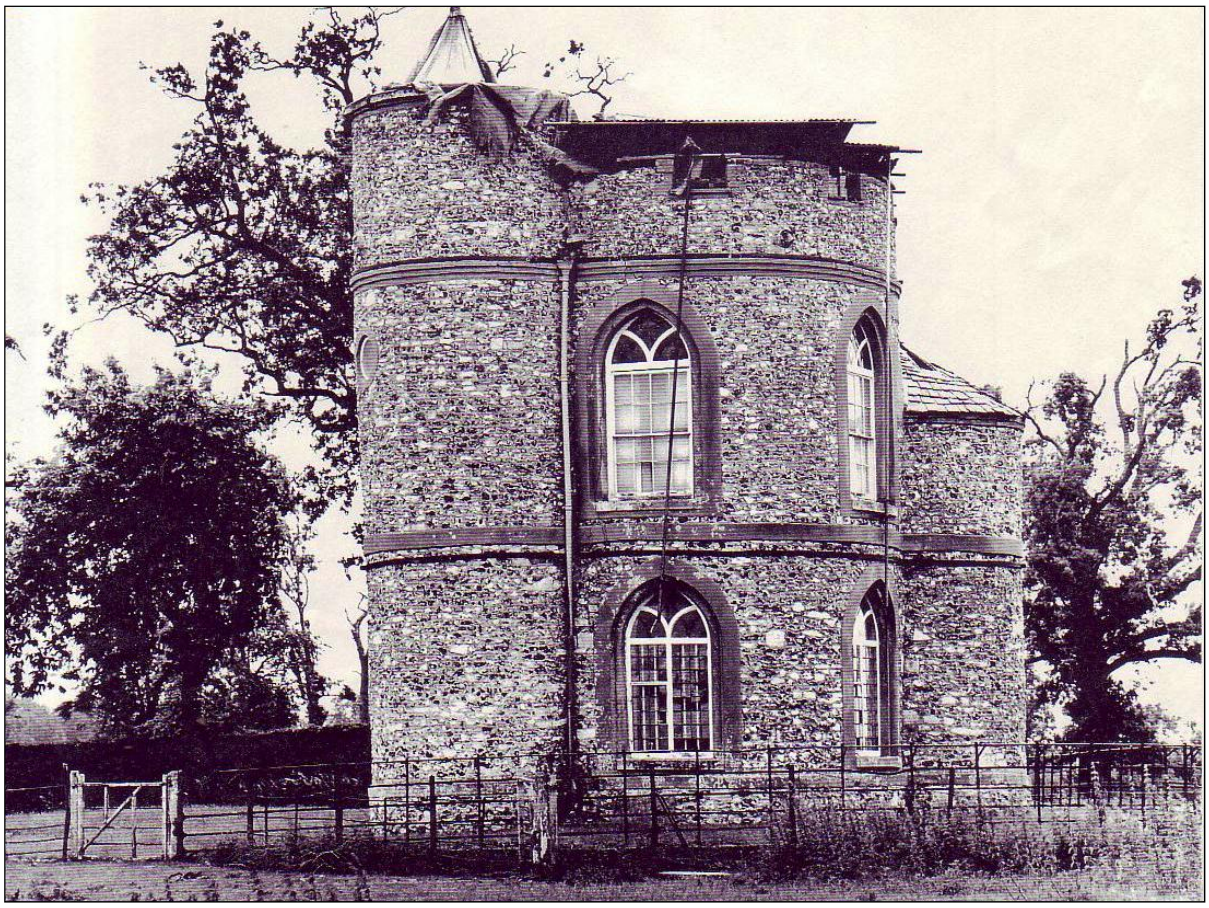
The cricket pitch returned to being a bumpy field, and the Prospect Tower became first a garden store and was then abandoned altogether in its distant and unfrequented corner of the garden. After the death of 5th Lord Harris in 1984, its condition became of increasing concern to the Trustees who now administer the house and garden. This especially so after the gale of October 1987 nearly blew the roof off.

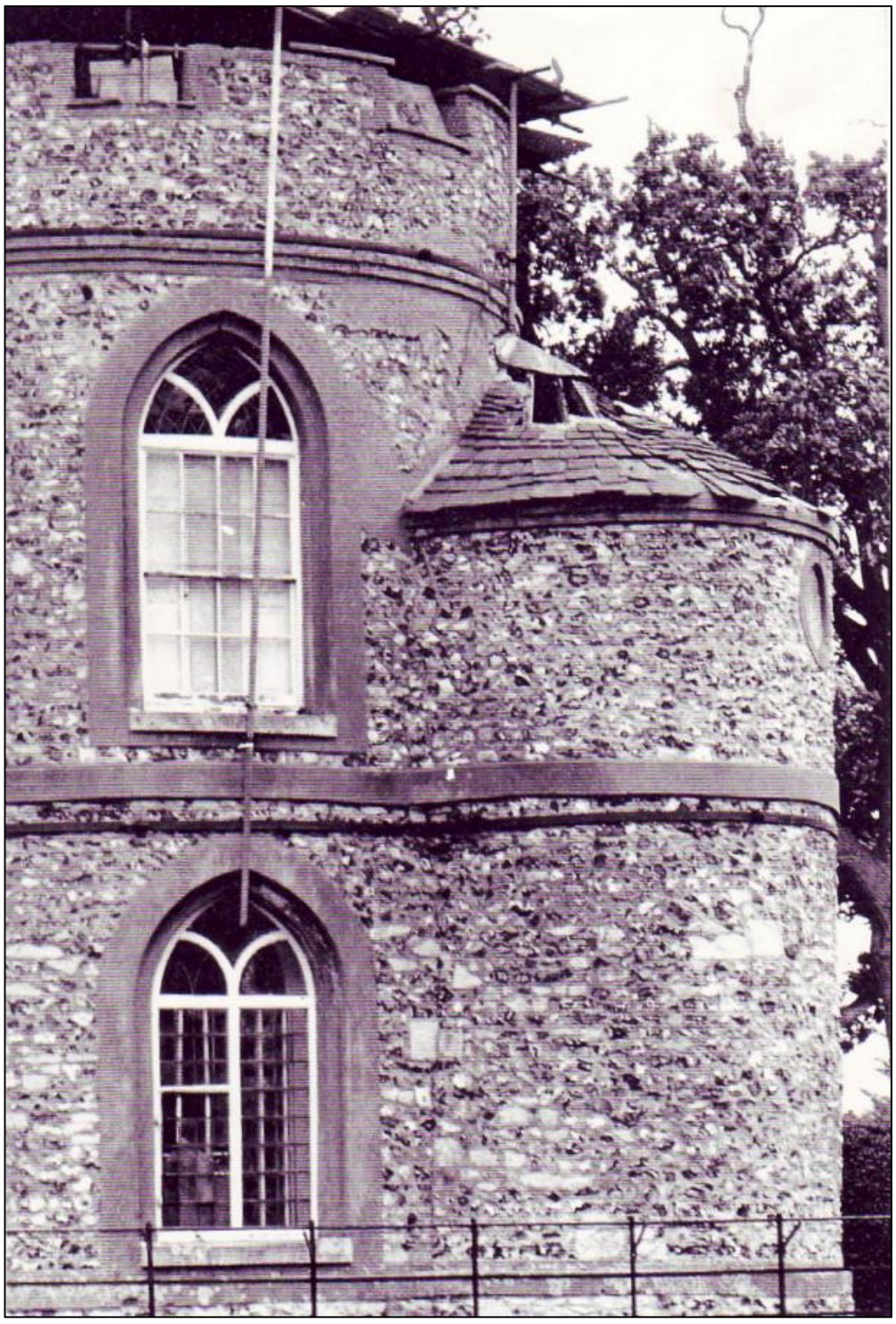
A temporary roof was quickly put on, and the architects for Belmont, Benson and Bryant, were asked to approach the Landmark Trust at the same time. This they did, with the happy result that a lease of the tower was granted to the Trust in 1990.

The Prospect Tower in 1990, photographs by James Morris

The temporary roof was put on after the gales of October, 1987

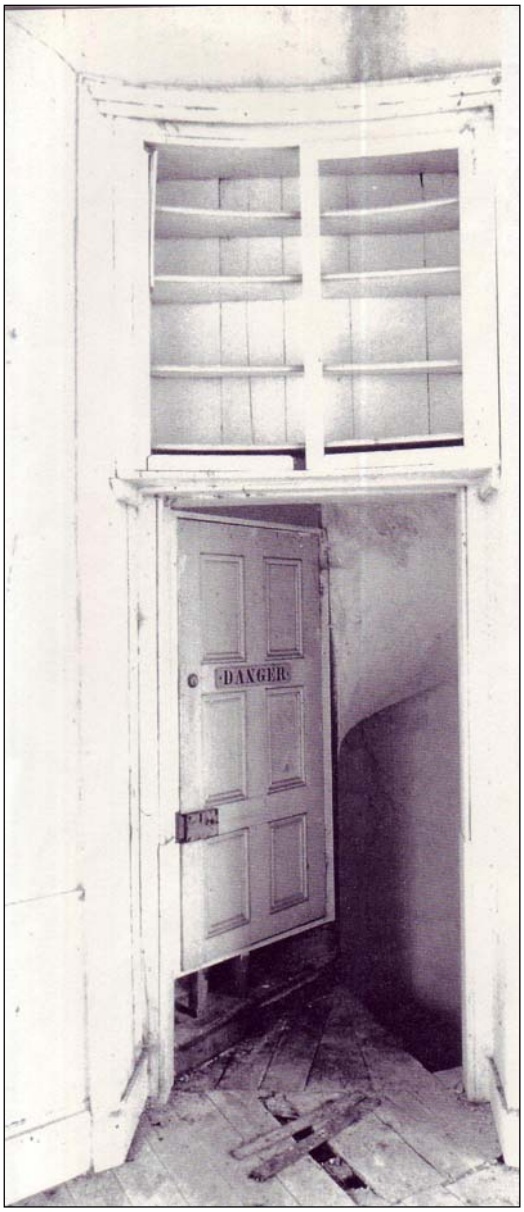






The main room

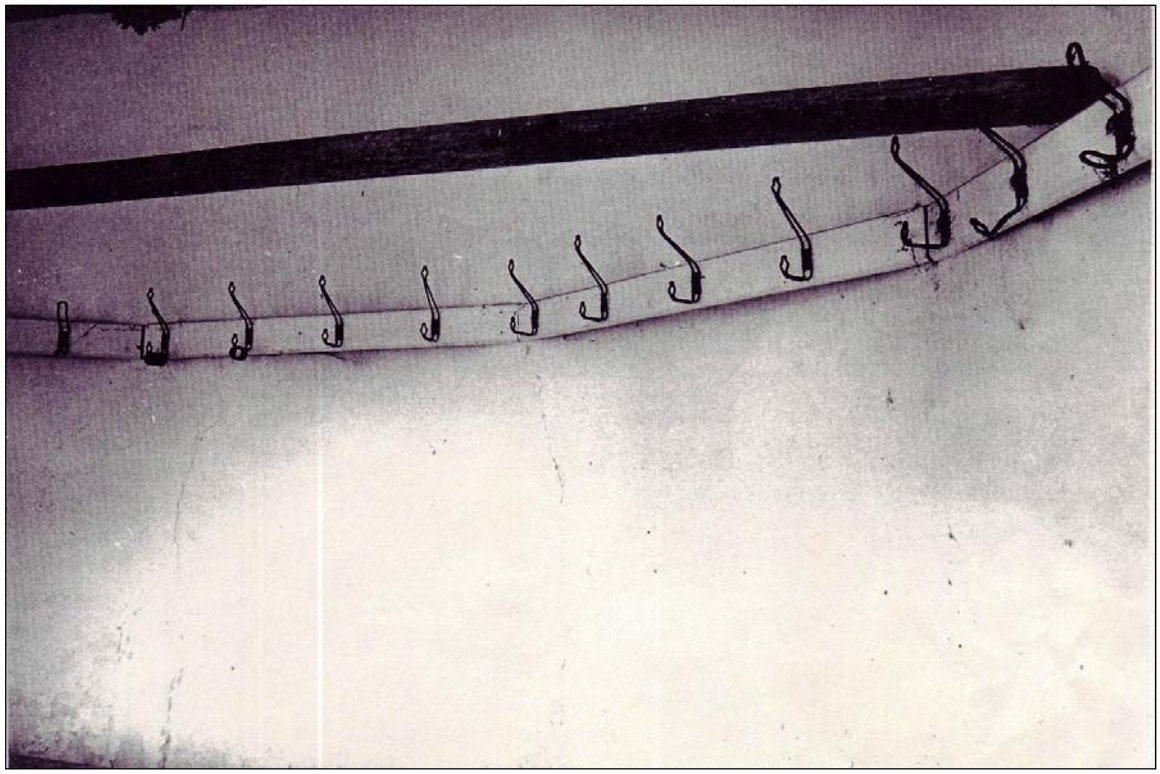
The main room



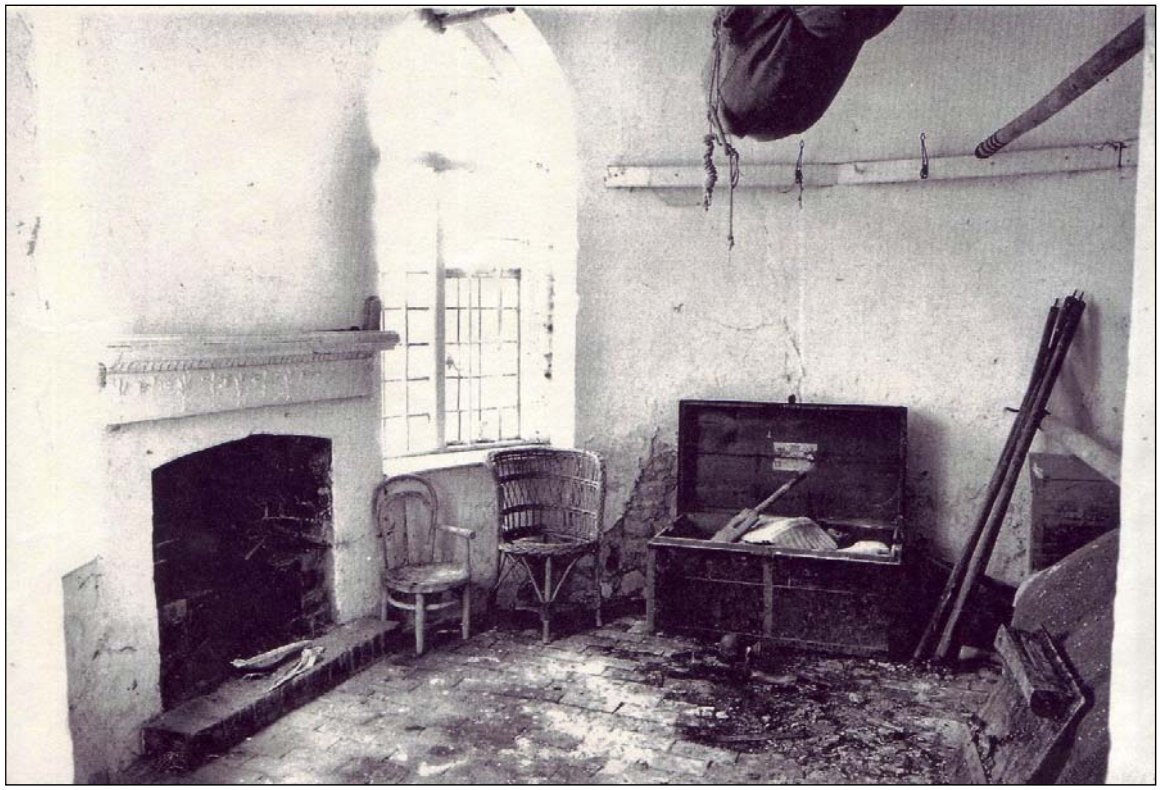
The cupboard over the door and the door to the roof, have both been restored.

Floorboards, pitted by cricketers' shoe studs.

The ground floor room, now the bedroom.



The ground floor room, now the bedroom.



The Repair of the Tower

In the years after World War II few estates had funds to spare on the upkeep of purely ornamental buildings. An estate workman might replace panes of glass, mend a gutter or patch a roof, but any more thorough overhaul was out of the question. Belmont was no exception and the Prospect Tower inevitably suffered: on the ground floor, remnants of cricketing activity and the hammocks and awnings of past summers gently rotted, while leaks in the roof increased in number. The gale of 1987 merely served to speed up a process of decay that was already well underway. As the final details of the lease to Landmark were put together, the architects, Benson and Bryant, drew up a schedule for the tower's repair, and a scheme for its conversion to a dwelling.

The building itself really dictated how this should be done. Once it was agreed that the sitting room should be on the first floor, in the grandest room with the best views, it followed that the kitchen should go into the alcove opening off it; and that the bedroom should be on the ground floor. Finding space for some sort of bathroom took a bit more thought. The answer lay in a new door opening onto the main staircase, removing the need for the ground floor to have its own outside door, which could therefore be blocked. The bathroom - it was hoped to begin with that there might be room for a small bath - could then go in the lobby. After much measuring, it was realised that it would have to be a shower-room.

The tower is built of chalk and brick, with flint as an outer skin. It had clearly shown signs of instability early on, resulting in the fixing of the iron bands around the outside. There were also numerous cracks in the walls, both of the main tower and the turrets. These needed to be carefully stitched with reinforced concrete. Two areas at the top of the tower, above the smaller turret and to the west of the stair turret, proved so weak that the parapet and a section of wall below had to be taken down and completely rebuilt. This was a very tricky operation, since there was a very real danger that by removing one part of it, the whole drum might fall in. For extra security in the future, a concrete ring beam

was constructed below the parapet, running right round the building. The York coping stones were replaced, and new ones provided where these were missing. The top of the stair turret was also partly rebuilt, with a new lintel over the door.

Only some of the oak joists of the main roof frame were sound, the remainder being replaced in new oak. The main central oak beam was beyond repair. This was renewed in steel, to do the double job of holding the whole tower firm, and forming a solid base for the new roof covering in cast lead.

The turret roof was renewed entirely. Its structure and new lead cover copied exactly what was there before. On the smaller turret, however, it was felt that smaller slates would look better than the existing ones, which were probably not original. Luckily, some of just the right size were found in a yard on the estate.

The window and door surrounds, the plinths and string courses running round the building, are all of render over brick, which was cracked and broken. This has been patched, with a similar mix of lime and sand, with some natural pigment added to provide a good match.

Inside the tower, the ceiling on the first floor had partly fallen in. The rest had to be taken down, to carry out the repairs to the roof structure. Some sections of the cornice were saved, to be refixed, but much of it had to be renewed. Sixty new leaves were cast from moulds, made from the originals. The surviving sections of the central rose were also used to make moulds for the new sections. This was done by a local sculptor, R.T. Fenton.

Looking into what is now the shower room, but was formerly the only entrance to the ground floor room.

The flint floor originally extended throughout the ground floor.

Repairs to the first floor structure meant that the ground floor ceiling also had to be taken down. Steel channels were fixed either side of the existing oak beam (which had clearly originally been used elsewhere) which is visible in the bedroom, and those joists which could not be saved were renewed in oak. New pine boards were laid over most of the first floor, but in the middle of the room, the old boards, pitted by cricketers' studded boots, have been kept. In the bedroom, the brick floor was taken up, and a new concrete slab with underfloor heating was put down with the bricks relaid over it. The shower-room floor was still in knapped flint (as indeed was the whole bedroom floor, under the brick) but it was thought this might prove uncomfortable for bare feet and so it was replaced with quarry tiles.

The outside door into what is now the shower room was blocked on the inside, but left in position externally. The old door to the stair turret was in a poor state, but was cut down and used as the door to the under stair cupboard. A new front door was provided to the stair turret copying the old one. They are painted with the estate's standard grey. The door into the bedroom is of course new, along with the steps inside it.

A door on the stairs at first floor level was removed, and the stairs themselves repaired and the handrail at the top renewed to the same design. Unfortunately, in the process, the section of plaster bearing Sir Leary Constantine's signature had to be taken down. Because it had a timber block embedded in it, which if removed might break it in half, it has sadly not been possible to put this back in its original position on the upper part of the staircase. Instead, it hangs in the sitting room in a special ash box.

Above the door into the sitting room was a very curious cupboard. It would have been difficult to repair, and so it was thought better to remove it altogether, and provide a new door surround. The curved door itself is also new, the panels and moulding details following the window shutters.

The kitchen has been carefully and cunningly fitted into the alcove opposite. Since this is both funnel-shaped and asymmetrical in plan, fitting the cupboards in was extremely difficult, the result also slightly irregular. The design of the tall cupboard doors again follows the window shutters.

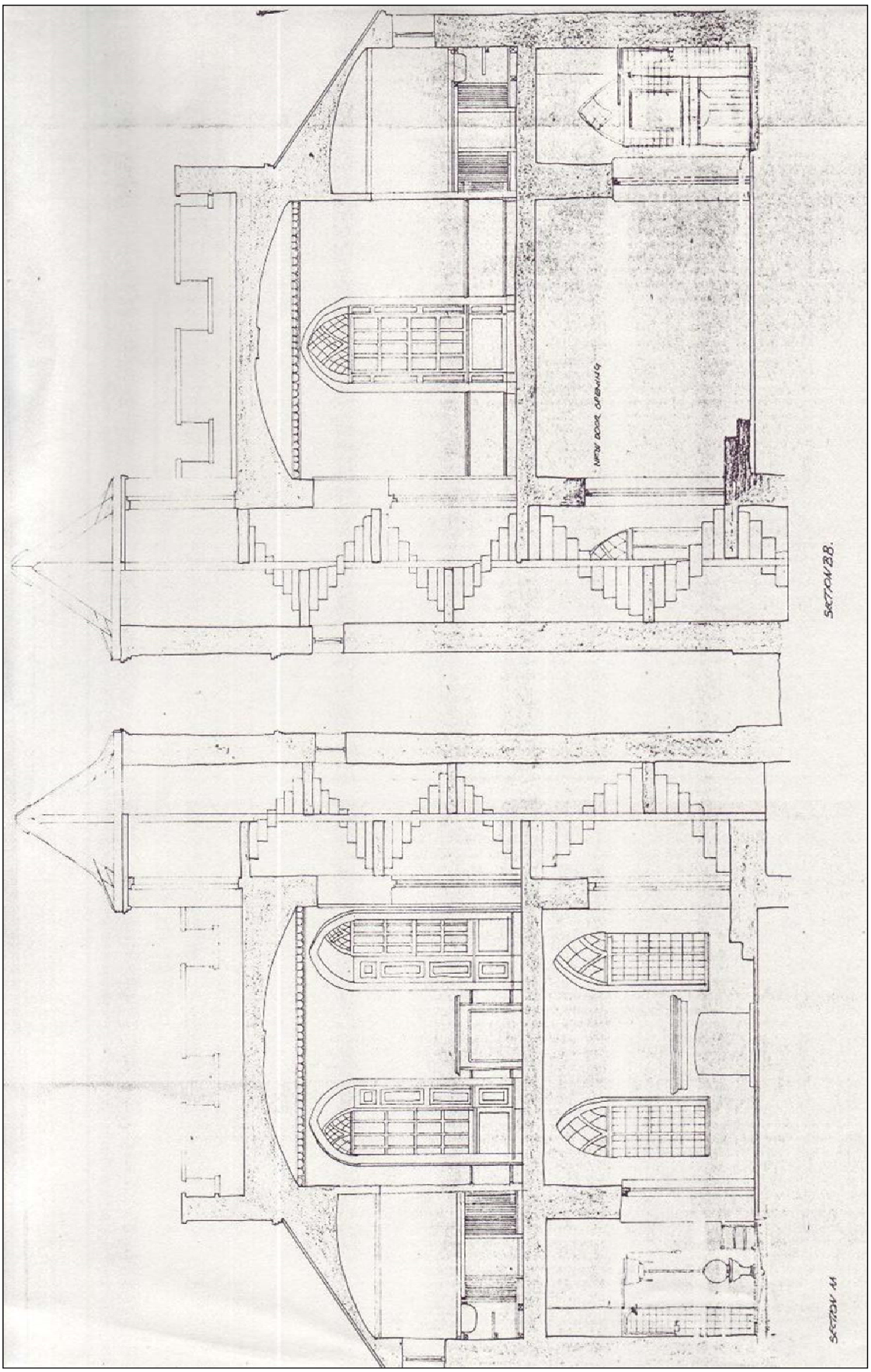
All the joinery of the windows had to be dismantled. It had been hoped that some of the sashes could be retained, but in the end only one was (the upper half of the window looking down the walnut walk). The others are all new, though much of the glass is old. The coloured glass was releaded, with one or two new pieces where the old was broken or missing. The casements on the ground floor were also repaired and the old glass releaded, this work all being done by Grove Glass of Broadstairs.

The walls were then completely replastered with lime plaster. All the wall paints are a type of lime casein paint suitable for lime plaster, tinted with natural pigments. In the bedroom, the oldest hooks (which mostly came in fact from the first floor alcove) were fixed back again. The grate in this room was also repaired, and provided with a new fireback, a copy of the original, of which only half remained. This was made in fibre glass to imitate cast iron, for economy and because this is not a working fire place.

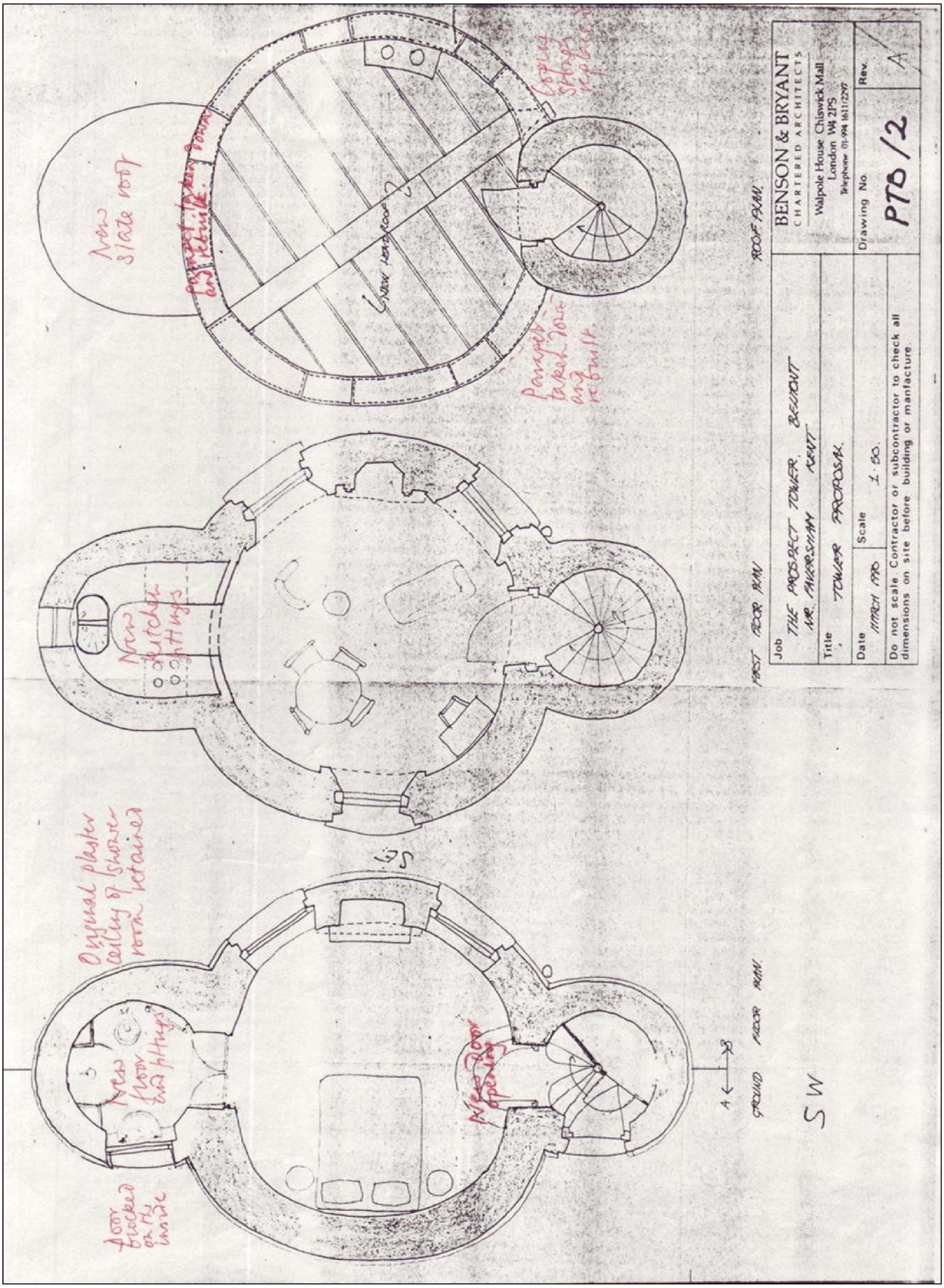
Before any of the work started, a new track had been laid along the edge of the former cricket pitch so that the builders' vehicles, and eventually cars, could get to the tower. New services - water and electricity - also had to be laid on, with all wires buried underground for obvious visual reasons. The restoration also finished with landscaping works. The ha-ha wall was raised, and the ground behind it made up, in order to do away with the park fence which otherwise hemmed the tower in too closely.

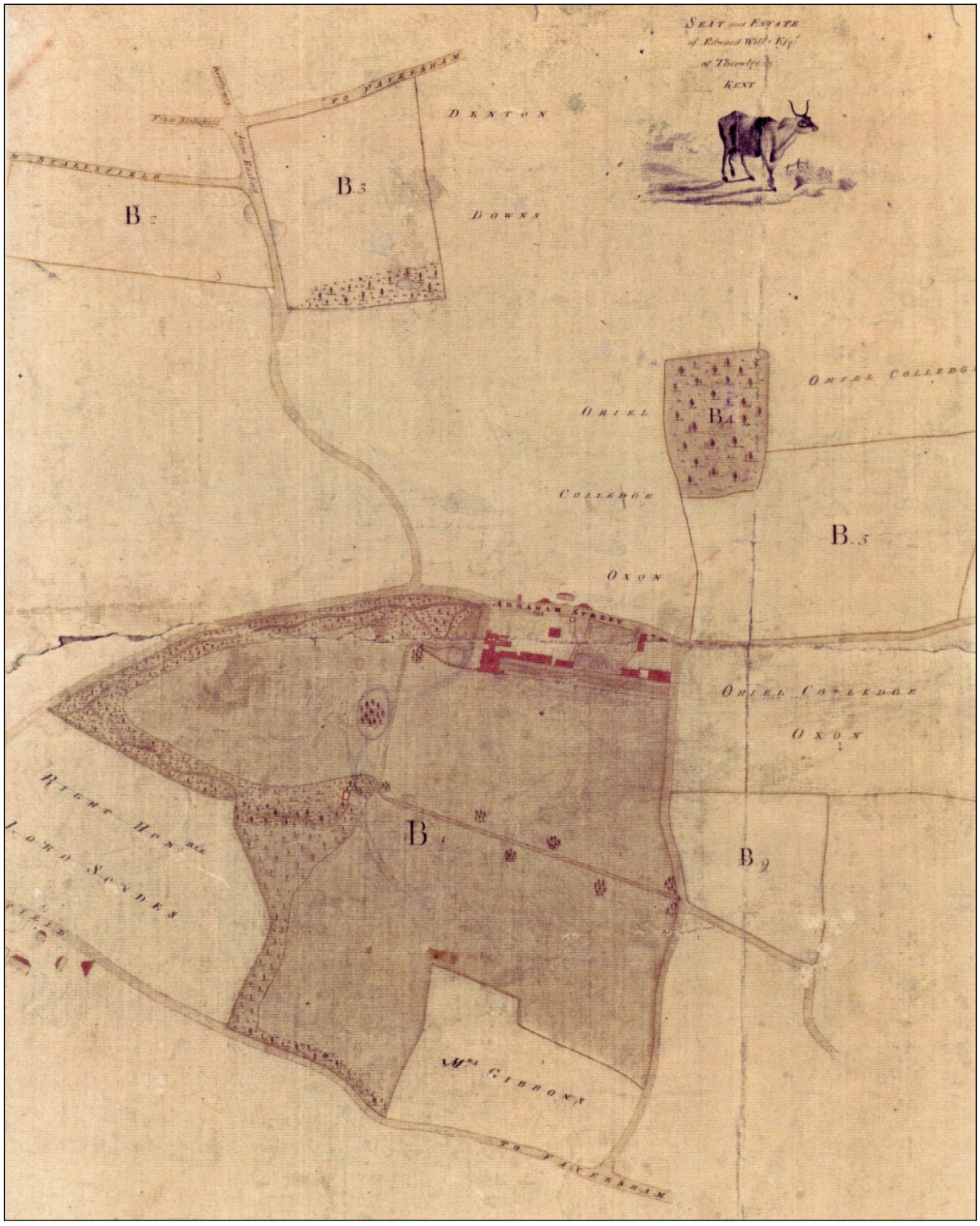
All of this work has been carried out to a very high standard by W.W. Martin Ltd of Ramsgate, under the foreman, John Kennet. A generous grant towards the cost of the repairs was given by Swale Borough Council.

The original weather vane vanished many years ago, and it is not clear from the only painting in which it appears (the portrait of Lord Harris) what it looked like. Its replacement has an appropriate cricketing theme.



Sections through the Prospect Tower, with proposals for its conversion.


BENSON & BRYANT
CHARTERED ARCHITECTS
Walpole House Chiswick Mall
London W4 2PS
THE PROSPECT TOWER. BELMONT
NR. FAVERSHAM KENT
TOWER PROPOSAL
1:50
PTB/2
Do not scale. Contractor or subcontractor to check all dimensions on site before building or manfacture.
GROUND FLOOR PLAN
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
ROOF PLAN
SW
New slate roof
New kitchen fittings
Original plaster ceiling of shower room retained
Door blocked on the inside
New floor opening



Hogben's Survey of Belmont in 1779, when it was bought by Colonel Montresor. This shows the town built by Wilks and the extent of his landscaping of the grounds.

Belmont

Its purchase and fitting out for General Harris

The history of Belmont and its owners has been fully described by various writers, including Charles Igglesdon in *Saunters through Kent* and Christopher Hussey in *Country Life,* and more recently (and with its early ownership disentangled) by John Martin Robinson in the guide book for the house, a copy of which is on the bookshelf. The involvement of one of the Wyatts was recorded in E.W. Brayley's *Beauties of England* Vol 8 (1808) but the attribution to Samuel Wyatt, suggested by Hussey on stylistic grounds, has now been firmly established by J.M. Robinson from payments in Colonel Montresor's bank accounts. Colonel John Montresor has been given his rightful place as architectural patron.

Colonel Montresor had bought Belmont from its first owner, and builder, Mr Wilks, in 1779, and it was he who remodelled the house between 1789 and 1793. He also enlarged the estate, and extended the park, continuing Wilks' work of landscaping, in a Reptonian style. His improvements can be seen by comparing the survey of 1779 with that of 1802-3, which predates further works carried out by General Harris.

Why Hussey should have quoted the title deeds as evidence for General Harris's purchase of Belmont in 1780 is a mystery - since these in fact make it clear that he only bought it in 1801, when the property of the unjustly- disgraced Colonel Montresor was sold at public auction. The estate papers also tell an amusing story of a rich man's purchase and fitting out of a country house at that time.

General Harris returned from India in 1800, after serving as Commander in Chief of the army that finally defeated Tipoo Sultan at Seringapatam the previous year. This entitled him to one eighth of the prize money, which amounted to a staggering £112,000, including jewels. This, combined with other savings from India, provided him with a fortune of £156,000. Some of this he intended to

spend on the purchase of an estate, so that he could indulge in one of his main enthusiasms, agriculture. He also wished to provide a secure home for his wife and large family.

General Harris and his family by W.A. Devis

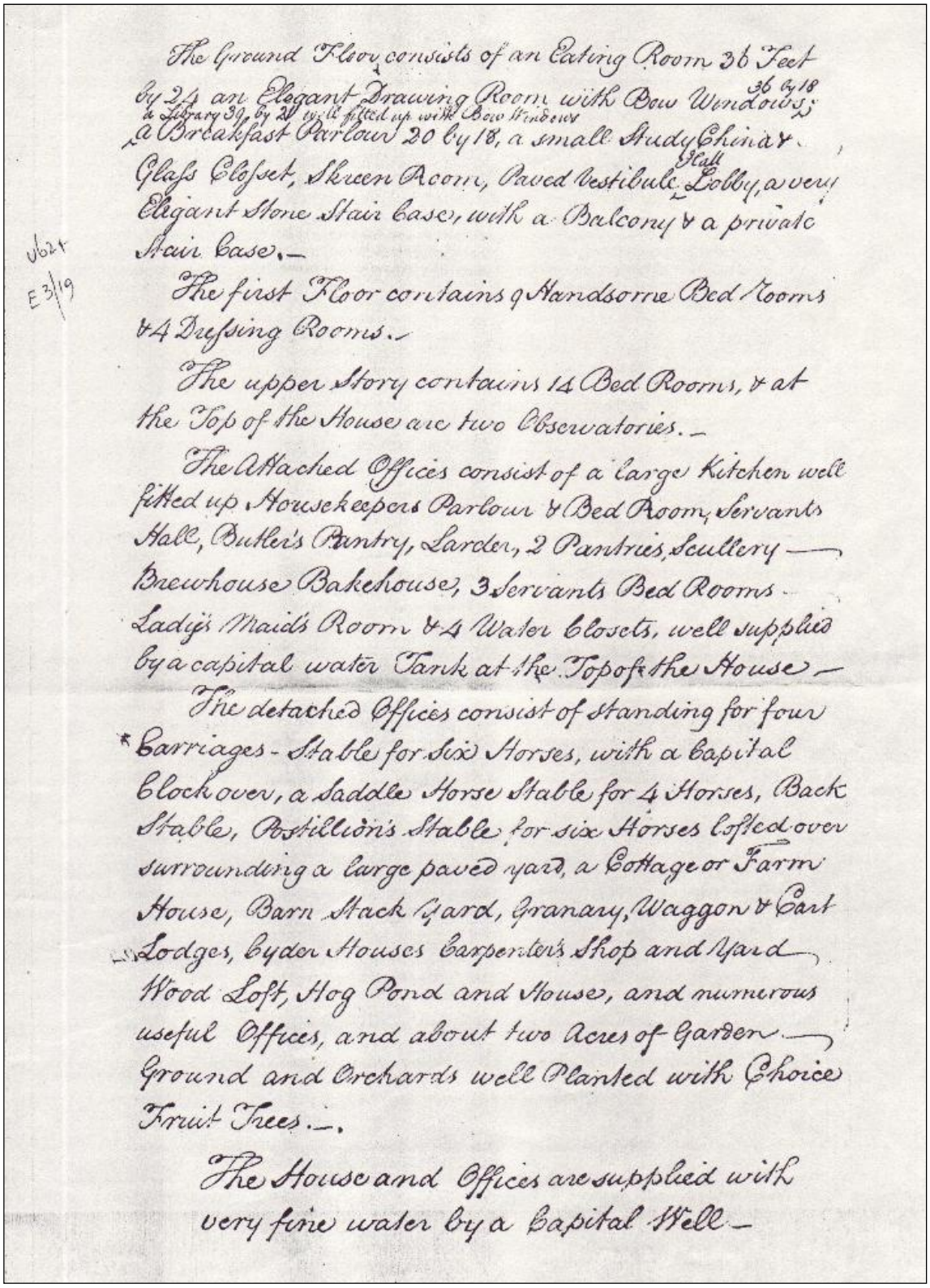
He established his family to begin with in London, but he had friends looking out for a suitable country property. A great many were suggested, in various southern counties, including Hampshire and Kent. His father having been curate of Brasted, near Sevenoaks, Kent must always have appealed to him, and in October, 1800, Colonel Auchmuty, who lived in Ospringe, alerted him to Belmont, then in the hands of the Exchequer. There was a problem with part of the park being held on lease from Oriel College, Oxford, but he would find out the length of the lease from Mrs Montresor herself. The answer was reassuring, and the General clearly interested, although the Colonel assured him that he had 'another place for you' should this one prove no good.

General Harris did not go after Belmont at once, however - perhaps he felt there was some awkwardness attached to profiting from the disgrace of a man probably known to him. In any case, when Belmont was put up for sale by auction early in 1801 at Garroway's Coffee House, he did not bid for it. The next day a letter arrived:

> An intimate friend of Colonel Auchmuty [who later turned out to be Sir Edward Knatchbull, another Belmont neighbour] takes the liberty of acquainting General Harris that Belmont ... sold yesterday for £8,900 to Mr Brace of the Temple. If General Harris has any intention or wish for the house the sale may be opened by applying to the Exchequer and to the deputy Remembrancer within eight days - the house and lands are worth £1000 more, only to pull down. The writer hopes he may be excused for this letter.

Either the General had not yet made up his mind, or perhaps he hoped to achieve a better price still. Colonel Auchmuty himself wrote with the opinion that it had sold for a song, due to a report going round that its situation was unhealthy, with which he entirely disagreed. However all was not yet lost. The Exchequer felt that Mr Brace's bid was too low, and that it should try for a better one. The house was accordingly advertised in May in the London Gazette, but with no response. The General then moved, making a bid for £8,960, to include timber, trees and saplings on the property. His offer thereby being just £60 higher than the unfortunate Mr Brace's, he got the property. The sale was confirmed in early July, although the final conveyance is not dated until December.

The General was keen to move in at once, but this the Exchequer Court refused, until the full payment had been transferred and invested in Exchequer Bills. Mr White, of the Court, was concerned that ‘there are so many observers of his conduct in this business that he dare not venture to anything which may be considered in the least degree irregular.’



The Ground Floor consists of an Eating Room 36 Feet by 24 an Elegant Drawing Room with Bow Windows 36 by 18 a Library 30 by 20 ye'll fitted up with Bow Windows a Breakfast Parlour 20 by 18, a small Study China & Glass Closet, Skreen Room, Paved Vestibule Hall Lobby, a very Elegant Stone Stair Case, with a Balcony & a private Stair Case.—

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The first Floor contains 9 Handsome Bed Rooms & 4 Dressing Rooms.—

The upper Story contains 14 Bed Rooms, & at the Top of the House are two Observatories.—

The Attached Offices consist of a large Kitchen well fitted up Housekeepers Parlour & Bed Room, Servants Hall, Butler's Pantry, Larder, 2 Pantries, Scullery — Brewhouse Bakehouse, 3 Servants Bed Rooms Ladys Maids Room & 4 Water Closets, well supplied by a capital water Tank at the Top of the House —

The detached Offices consist of standing for four * Carriages - Stable for Six Horses, with a capital Clock over, a Saddle Horse Stable for 4 Horses, Back Stable, Postillion's Stable for six Horses loffed over surrounding a large paved yard, a Cottage or Farm House, Barn Stack Yard, Granary, Waggon & Cart Lodges, Cyder Houses Carpenter's Shop and Yard — Wood Loft, Hog Pond and House, and numerous useful Offices, and about two Acres of Garden — Ground and Orchards well Planted with Choice Fruit Trees.—.

The House and Offices are supplied with very fine water by a Capital Well—

The Particulars of Belmont in 1801, prepared for General Harris.

By the end of July, all was adequately in order. An agent, William Slack, of 10, Cheapside, was sent down to make a survey of the house with regard to such matters as redecoration, the fitting of stoves and the supply of kitchen apparatus. He reported on the 21st, recommending that stoves or grates were needed for the Servants' Hall, Housekeeper's Room and Butler's Pantry, and also the Laundry. He had taken away the fronts of all the 'best Register stoves,' to be properly Japanned and polished: 'when done they will look as well as new Stoves.' He would also supply matching fenders: 'For the bedrooms, green wire fenders with brass tops will be better than steel.'

There had been a 'Delph or china stove' in the Dining Room, at the end opposite the fireplace. Did General Harris want one too? A similar stove was needed for the dressing room over the Library, which had no fireplace, and new Register stoves were needed for two of the bedrooms, and 'for the Hall, one lamp is wanting to hang to the Handrail of the staircase.'

Mr Slack had hoped to meet the new Housekeeper, but she had not arrived. He suggested that she drew up a list of all her requirements in the way of Stewpans, Saucepans, Dishcovers etc, so that everything could be sent down together by ship. Finally, he ventured to recommend a firm in the City of London for paperhanging - reminding the General that if they did this, all the bell wires would have to be taken down, and later rehung.

Over the next two or three months, all the arrangements were gradually settled and put into effect, with only the occasional hiccup. There was some difficulty with the measurement of the fireplaces: Mr Slack wondered whether he should not 'run down' to check them, since his own did not tally with the General's.

Another source of confusion arose from the fact that on his first visit, Mr Slack was shown round by Mr Kemp, a caretaker or steward for the Montresors. He gave Mr Slack the names of the bedrooms as he knew them - the Colonel's Room

and Bedroom, Mrs Montresor's, Mrs Davis's, Master William's (in the attic), in addition to Red, Green, White and Blue Rooms and the Best Bedroom. These meant nothing to the Harris's, who could not work out what stove or fender was meant for which. Across Mr Slack's attempt to explain, the General firmly wrote '4 fenders for the 4 front bedrooms.'

There were minor queries to be answered. Mr Slack presumed he should send Tongs, Pokers and Shovels for each room; should he also provide oil for the lamps, as he did for Colonel Montresor? A container of 33 gallons was duly sent off, on the Faversham Hoy, or sailing barge. Also by Hoy went the copper for the laundry, but he strongly advised against 'Romfordising,' or narrowing the chimney (as set out in Count Romford's treatise on the subject), as in his experience this simply led to problems.

Furniture and decoration

Meanwhile the important matter of furnishing was also underway. This job was entrusted to James Little, of London, who seems to have acted both as removal firm and interior decorator, and on occasion as domestic employment agent as well - he was once charged with finding a new housekeeper. Some of the furniture appears to have come from the Harris's house in Harley Street, but much of it Mr Little bought for them.

The first load went off by Hoy on 31st July. This consisted of 56 crates, trunks, hampers, chests and boxes, as well as assorted pieces of furniture, including 2 bedsteads, a pianoforte, carpets for the best bedroom and the White Dimity bedroom, and a tub of vinegar. 20 more followed on 7th August, including beds for Mrs Harris and Mrs Dyer, with their curtains, lines, 'Tassells and every requisite for fixing them.' He had also included patterns of carpet for Mrs Harris to choose from.

Some questions had obviously resulted from the first consignment. In his letter announcing the second delivery, Mr Little explained that 'his reasons for making the Dimity curtains in the French mode was on account of it being the best bedroom in the house and the bed being of an ornamental description.' There had also been a misunderstanding over carpeting the bedrooms. He had thought they did not want them fully covered, but only to have a strip round the bed. He promised to send the 'Scotch carpet patterns.'

Deliveries followed at weekly intervals through August and into September. There was green calico to line bed curtains, more and more furniture, boxes with prints, paintings and carpets. Among the furniture were some bed steps, perhaps for the elderly cousin Elizabeth. A mirror was wanted for the dining room, so Mr Little visited a glass warehouse at Blackfriars Bridge in search of a suitable plate of glass, to be silvered and framed.

Cushions for the 'soffa,' curtains and cornices were made up and despatched. He was to fix these himself 'which will be a great satisfaction to me … as they are something new in form and unless fixed with propriety cannot do me that credit which I am anxious to deserve.' He would bring with him designs for mirror frames and the 'hall lantharn shall not be forgot.' Chairs for the hall were also in hand.

In the middle of September, wallpapers were chosen and ordered. Perhaps on Mr Slack's advice, Mr Little asked that the carpenter took measurements of the rooms. He found another glass, of a better colour and more brilliant than the first, 'not fogged like the one in the library,' but it was slightly larger than they had ordered. Did they want it? Mirrors were also required for the drawing room, which was to be 'a very elegant room.'

Paper for the rooms, together with furniture for the dining room and breakfast room, 13 kitchen chairs, the dining room chimney glass (with anxious instructions for careful handling) and a telescope in a mahogany box, were all sent by Hoy on October 9th. A man was to hang the paper the following week.

Mr Little was disarmingly self-congratulatory: 'the drapery for the library curtains is exactly what I wished, and I thought looked extremely handsome and noble.' The family appear to have been similarly pleased with his work: he was delighted that his furniture met 'with general approbation.'

The drawing room was the last room to come together. The paper was chosen in November, and curtains made up. These were Tabaret, a fabric of satin and watered silk stripes. Chairs were to be recovered, and the sofa was to have white and gold legs to match them. Sofa tables were sent on December 26th (with Mr Devis's painting), and only in February was the room complete.

The only murmur of complaint throughout this long process was a query in August as to the expense of sending everything in wooden packing cases, and a protest from the General in December when faced with the bill for wallpaper. Mr Little blamed their choice of a green pattern, this being always, he said, the most expensive colour.

The Harris's appear to have been living in the house for most, if not all, of this period. Three of their children were nearly grown up, but they had three daughters under five, and their youngest son, Musgrave, was born actually in 1801. They all seem to have been very contented with their new home, however: in October a friend was able to write 'we hear often from different people what a most excellent residence you have.'

Having settled his family in, the General turned his attention, as we have seen, to the gardens and the estate as a whole. To all of this, E.W. Brayley, in *The Beauties of England*, added his firm seal of approval in 1808. After crediting Wilks with the first house, and mentioning briefly Colonel Montresor, he goes on to say:

> The situation is elevated, and commands an extensive prospect: the apartments are disposed on a very judicious plan, and the entrance is thought to be in Wyatt's best style. The demesne has been much enlarged by the present proprietor, who has purchased several contiguous estates, and made many improvements in laying out the grounds, and planting; so that this will probably, in a few years, be one of the most pleasant seats in the county. The General's fondness for agriculture has also induced him to attempt to improve the soil, by means of sheep, and that with very considerable success.

Charlotte Haslam

April 1992

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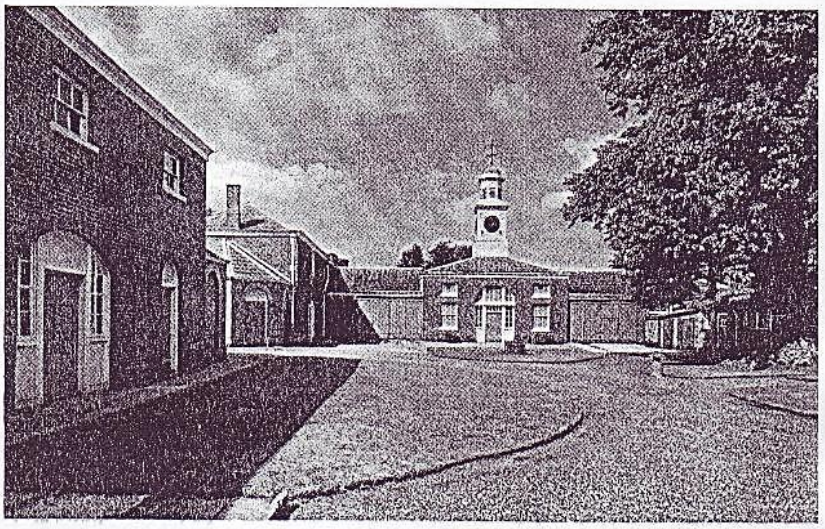
BELMONT PARK, KENT—I

THE SEAT OF LORD HARRIS

By CHRISTOPHER HUSSEY

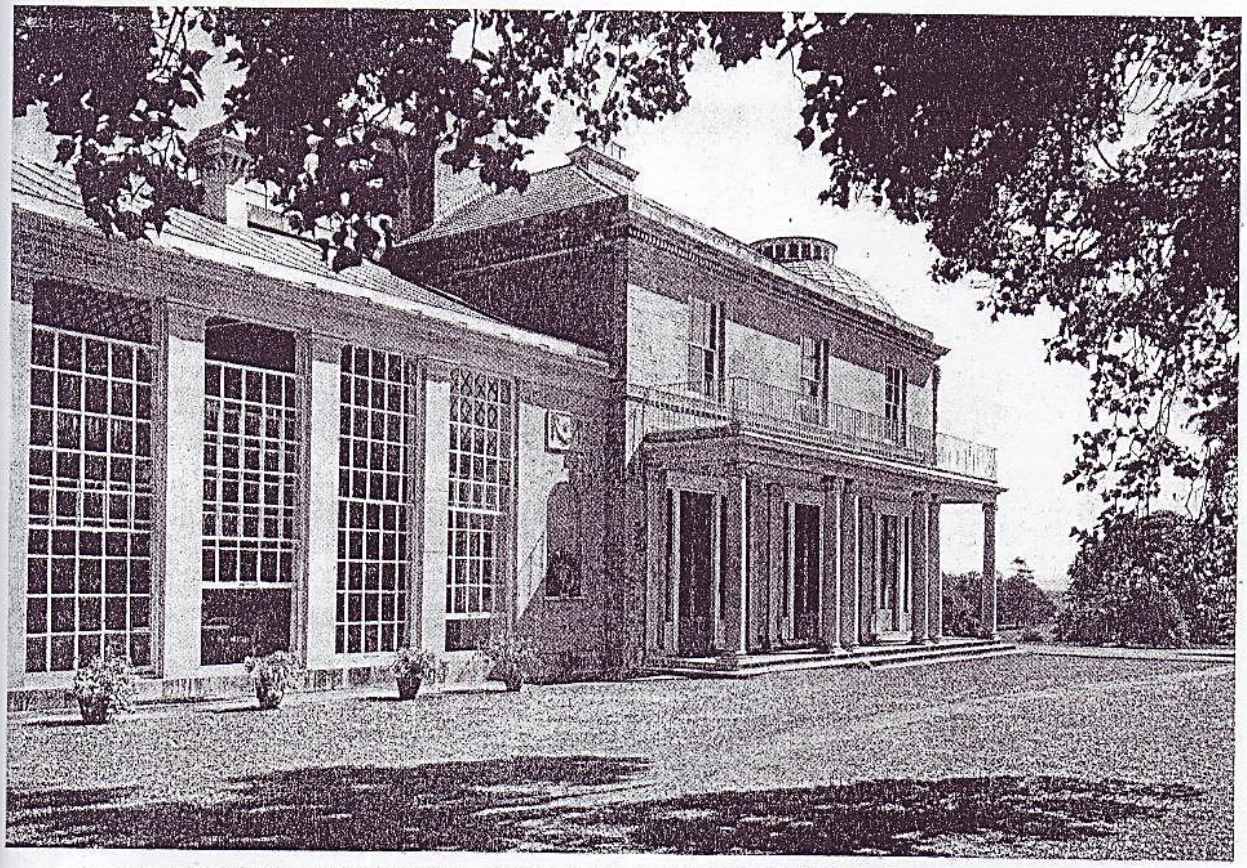
About 1792 a slightly earlier house was reconstructed for General Lord Harris of Seringapatam from designs by Samuel Wyatt.

"A LATE erected seat called, from its high situation and extensive prospect from it, Belmont; built in 1769 by Edward Wilks Esq., Storekeeper of the Royal Powder-mills at Faversham, who enclosed a paddock and shrubbery round it and occasionally resided here till he alienated it in 1779 to John Montresor Esq. the present proprietor and occupier." So Hasted tells us, in the second volume of his *History of Kent*, which, since it was published in 1782, might be supposed to be up to date in its information. In fact, the title deeds of Belmont show that in 1780 Col. John Montresor sold the property to Col. George Harris of the 5th Foot (Fusiliers), who subsequently rebuilt the house to its present unusual and pleasing character. But enough seems to remain of Mr. Wilks's "late erected seat," together with a flint and brick belvedere tower a little distance away in the garden, to give an idea of the original Belmont.



1.—THE STABLE COURT, LOOKING NORTH FROM THE BACK OF THE EARLIER WING OF THE HOUSE

To-day the late-18th-century plantations, in what was the "shrubbery and paddock," but is now in the nature of a Reptonian landscape park, have so matured that the views which attracted Mr. Wilks have to be sought from upper windows or other vantage points. But as one approaches the village of Throwley in the triangle of which the points are Faversham, Chilham and Charing, the spaciousness of the high, open chalk tableland is apparent. And from Belmont on its northern slope can be seen the countryside of Essex and eastwards the downs between Canterbury and Ashford. In Throwley Church—one of those nobly gaunt and massive 14th-century flint structures found among the Kent downs—one chancel chapel contains monuments to the four Lords Harris, distinguished as Generals and Indian Governors, dominated by Rennie's statue of the captor of Seringapatam; the other chapel a notable group of 17th-century alabaster monuments of the Sondes family of Lees Court in the eastern end of the parish. It was from them that Mr. Wilks bought the high-lying fields which he called Belmont. Col. Montresor, of the Royal Engineers, had served continuously and



2.—THE SOUTH SIDE AND ENTRANCE, WHICH IS BENEATH THE VERANDAH BEYOND THE ORANGERY

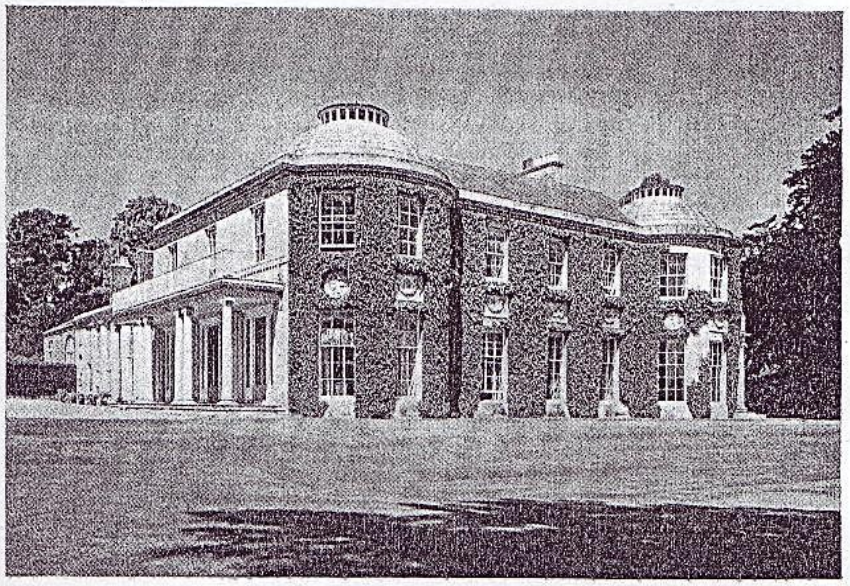
with distinction in America from 1755 till he retired to Belmont in 1779. In 1781 he bought Syndale and in 1787 Huntingfield, both near Faversham, after selling Belmont to his colleague in America, Col. Harris.

As we near the house itself (from the west) there is a choice of approaches. If that leading straight ahead is selected, we find ourselves passing between neat ranges of red brick buildings—stables and offices—into a trimly turfed court (Fig. 1), with a white belfry and clock at the north end, and facing it a rectangular two-storey block built of red brick with blue headers, while a slightly loftier yellow-coloured block at the south-east corner of the court presents its somewhat unrelated back to us. The building at the south end, axial to the clock tower, is of no great distinction apart from tidy fenestration and a central entrance: but it is homogeneous with the rest of the court architecture, and still sufficiently dominant to suggest that, possibly with the removal of a former third storey, it represents the house built in 1769.

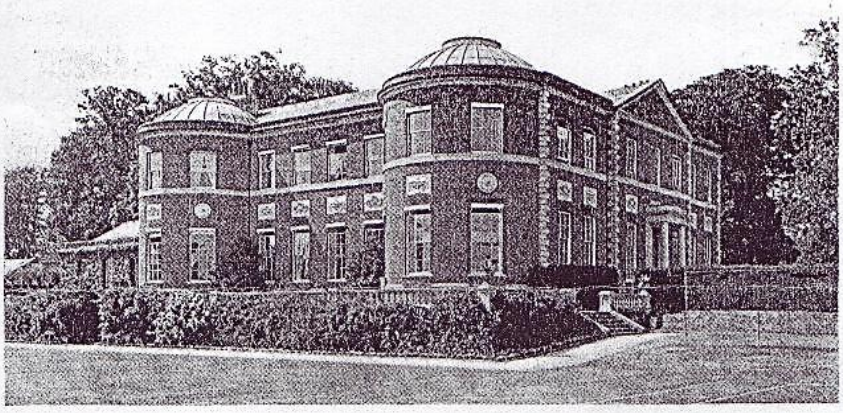
3.—A COADE STONE PLAQUE IN THE EAST FRONT

At least the west range of stable buildings appears also to be due to Wilks, since they are not quite in rectangular alignment with the rest (see plan, Fig. 10). But the belfry block, in which the clock is dated 1792, was certainly built or rebuilt at the latter date, since its elevation is included in the architect's designs for the new house, which we have not yet reached.

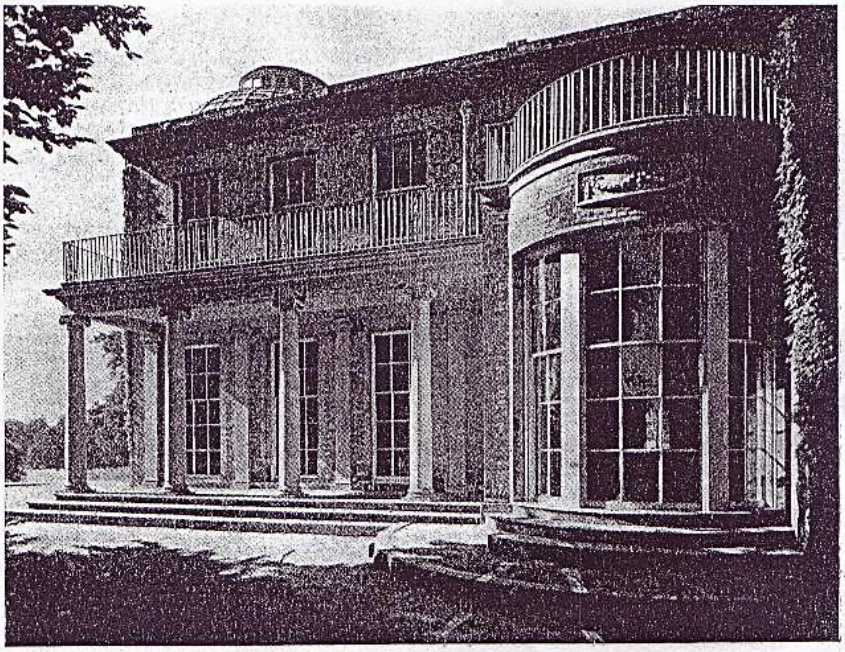
The other turning in the approach leads round to the south front, or rather side, containing the entrance beneath a verandah colonnade (Fig. 2) alongside lofty sash windows of an orangery. The latter is set against and conceals the south face of what I take to be the Wilks house, which has become the service wing and connects with a large kitchen (the arched window lighting it is seen beyond the orangery on the left of Fig. 4). In this view we see most of the house built for Lord Harris at the south-east corner of the courtyard, and of which the architectural "front" is this eastern elevation. Reserving further comment for a moment, we continue round to its north side and find that the colonnade is there repeated (Fig. 6), except for having four bays of single columns, whereas that on the wider south side has three bays, of which the centremost has coupled columns; while the ground-floor corridor from the south entrance, which is the spine of the plan, is here extended forward on its own into a segmental bow of three lights. The purpose of this extension, other than to prolong the vista along the corridor (Fig. 13), was to give access to the study and Justice Room contained in the single-storey eastern range of



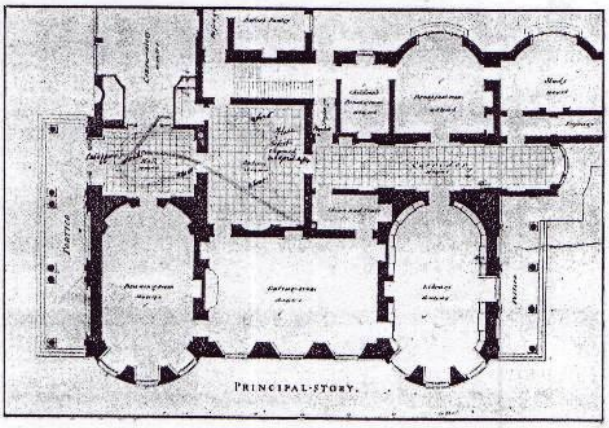
4.—BELMONT, FROM THE SOUTH-EAST, AS ENLARGED BY SAMUEL WYATT, 1792



5.—HURSTMONCEUX PLACE, SUSSEX, DESIGNED BY S. WYATT ABOUT 1777



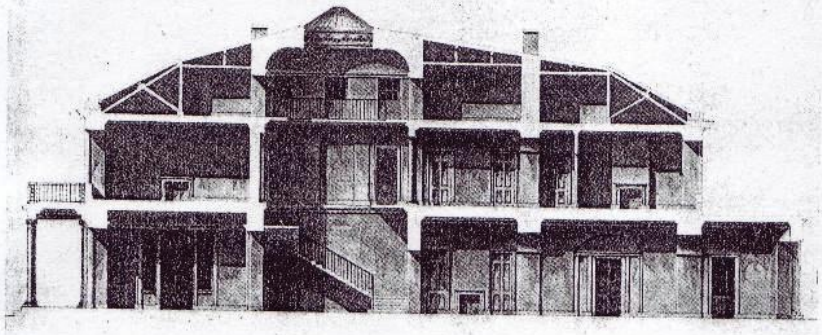
6.—BELMONT: THE NORTH SIDE. The wall facing is yellow geometrical tiles



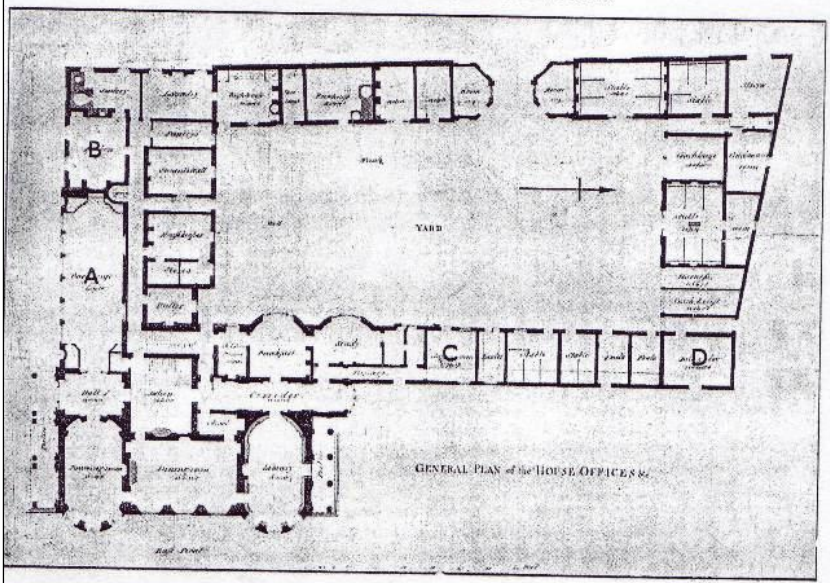
7.—COADE STONE PLAQUE OVER THE CENTRAL WINDOW OF THE EAST FRONT. Belmont (as seen in Fig. 3) is represented among palm trees. (*Right*) 8.—GROUND PLAN OF THE RESIDENTIAL BLOCK ABOUT 1792

the court, into which they look. The study and adjoining breakfast-room have bow windows of room height.

A detailed set of plans, elevations and sections is preserved, and there used to exist a similar set for the decoration of the rooms, both probably drawn out for Harris to study in India. It is significant, however, that there are no elevations of what I regard as the earlier, Wilks, parts; only their plan as adapted. Those reproduced here are the general lay-out (Fig. 10) and the plan and section of the new house (Figs. 8 and 9). None is signed or dated, but their execution supports the stylistic evidence of the building that the architect was Samuel Wyatt, who, about 1777, had designed an almost identical elevation for Hurstmonceux Place, Sussex (Fig. 5). Incidentally, the ground plan shows the serpentine course of a primitive central-heating installation under the floor of the vestibule and staircase hall, stoked at a boiler in the back passage. In a later hand "soot" is written at various points, and "cleaned April 14/14"—presumably 1814. The position assigned to the billiard-room, at the north-east corner of the stable-yard, between the "fowls" and coach-house, was not uncommon at this date; gentlemen were allowed to smoke there. Another point is the provision of a children's dining-room. As Lord Harris had ten, this was very necessary.



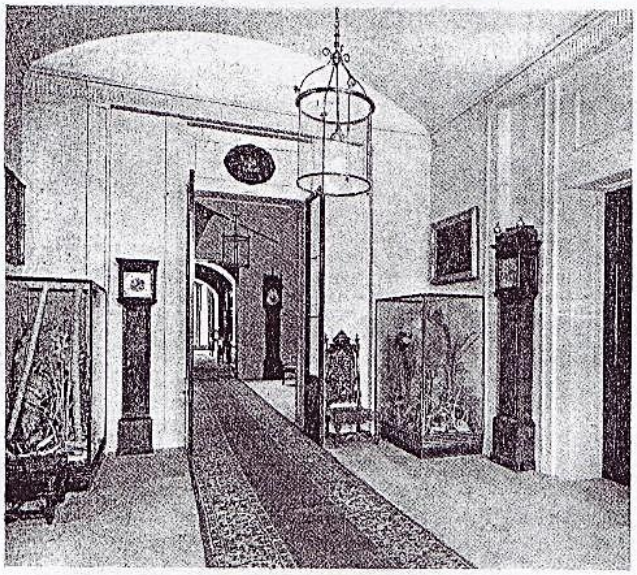
9.—SECTION FROM SOUTH TO NORTH



10.—GENERAL PLAN (*c.* 1792) SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE HOUSE AND COURTYARD. A. Greenhouse, B. Kitchen, C. Justice Room, D. Billiard-room

What is most striking about the design of the house itself is Samuel Wyatt's skilful handling of bowed features in an irregular but cleverly balanced composition. Both he and his younger brother James had been using the bow theme since the 1770s—at Heaton, Doddington (Cheshire), Baron Hill and Goodwood among other places. It may well be that Belmont as re-shaped was conceived to be approached obliquely as in Fig. 4, when the bowed east front would be seen; but there is no question of the entrance having ever been other than at the side. Accordingly the function of the "front" in the composition is really to deny axial approach and to be a decorative screen linking the two colonnaded sides, its bows with their surmounting domes acting as the hinges. In both the side elevations the domes also play an important part in helping to balance these irregular compositions. Their entire lack of symmetry yet meticulous Classical treatment show how Samuel Wyatt was reacting to the growing taste in the 1790s for picturesque design and practical planning. The verandah-colonnades, which are so valuable to the composition, may well have been stipulated by the client, accustomed to them by his long military service in America and India; and the little lantern windows above the domes, which do not occur at Hurstmonceux or elsewhere, have been provided for enjoyment of Belmont's prospects.

The whole new block is faced with ochre yellow geometrical tiles simulating gauged brickwork—much used in the late 18th century, especially in Kent. That this facing was used here for choice and weather-tightness, not for economy, is proved by the walls' being of 3 ft. brickwork. It is for fear of dislodging the tiles that the ancient growth of ivy has been suffered to remain on the east front, though strictly trimmed. For it is this side which Wyatt decorated with some of the choicest surviving products of the Coade stone factory, as he had also Hurstmonceux Place. There the plaques had been of urns or plain roundels; here they are of festoons of foliage, one of which is dated 1792, or exquisite *putti* symbolising the seasons (Fig. 3), while above the middle

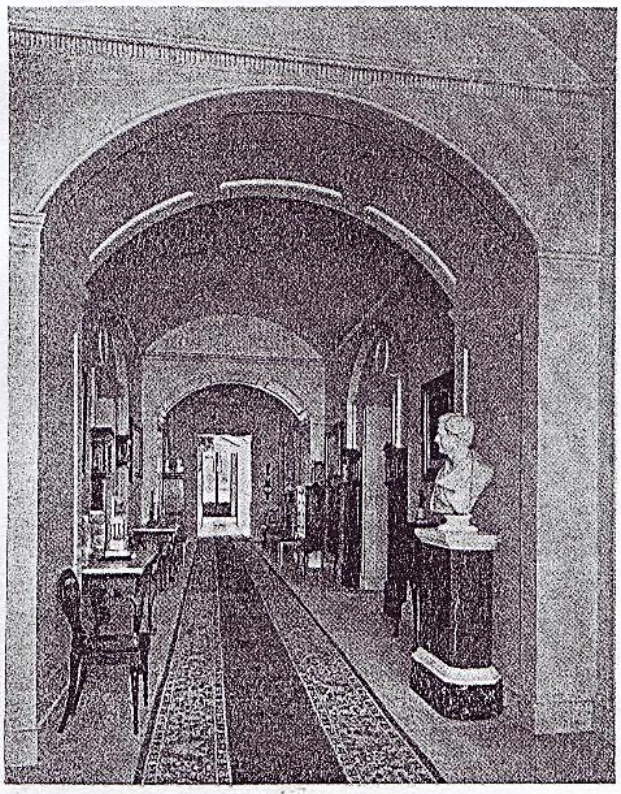


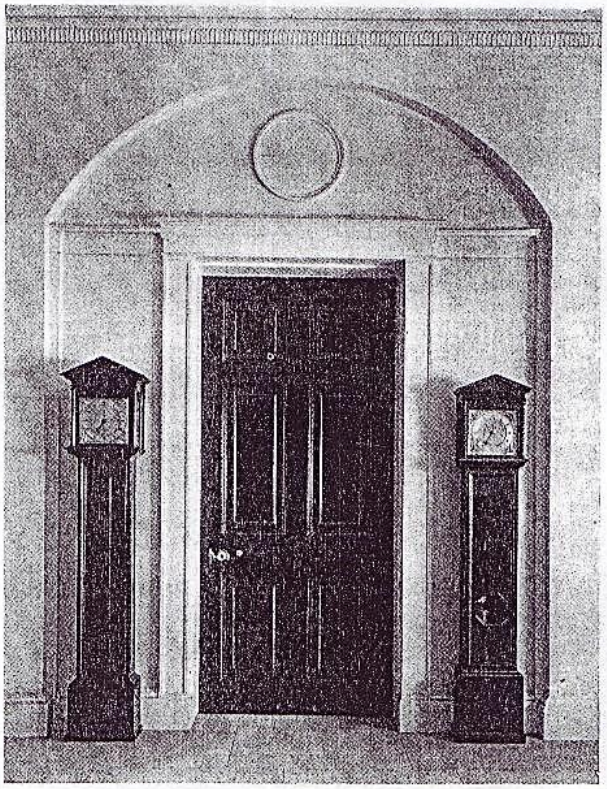
11.—THE ENTRANCE VESTIBULE IN THE SOUTH FRONT. (*Right*) 12.—THE STUFFED KATHIAWAR LION WHICH STANDS IN THE VESTIBULE

window is a specially made piece in which a lady (India?) reclines on a "brick" plinth containing guns, her arm resting on a capital, and scans a plan of Belmont, the south-east view of which appears among palm trees in the background (Fig. 7). Of Coade stone also are probably the Ionic capitals of the columns, over each of which the plain wrought-iron railing of the balconies has a light cast ornament characteristic of the Wyatts and repeated in the main staircase.

The front door is the nearest of the three french windows under the colonnade in Fig. 2; the other two were dummies. It opens into an oblong vestibule (Fig. 11), typical of Samuel Wyatt in its restrained but scholarly neo-Classicism, which is the first of several compartments forming the spinal corridor. The way through to the staircase hall is flanked by a splendidly mounted lion and tiger, shot by the 4th Lord Harris—best known in his other rôle of doyen of English cricket—when Governor of Bombay. These specimens are integral ornaments of an historic Anglo-Indian home, the lion (Fig. 12) additionally interesting as one of the now rare Indian or Kathiawar species. The corridor, seen in the section (Fig. 9), and a detail of Wyatt's sensitive handling of it, are illustrated in Figs. 13 and 14. The latter includes examples of the present Lord Harris's important collection of clocks: on the left a *grande sonnerie* grandfather by Joseph Knibb; the other by Henry Jones in a superb marquetry case.

(*To be concluded*)





13.—THE MAIN CORRIDOR OF THE WYATT BUILDING LOOKING SOUTH. (*Right*) 14.—A DETAIL OF THE CORRIDOR, WITH TWO NOTABLE CLOCKS

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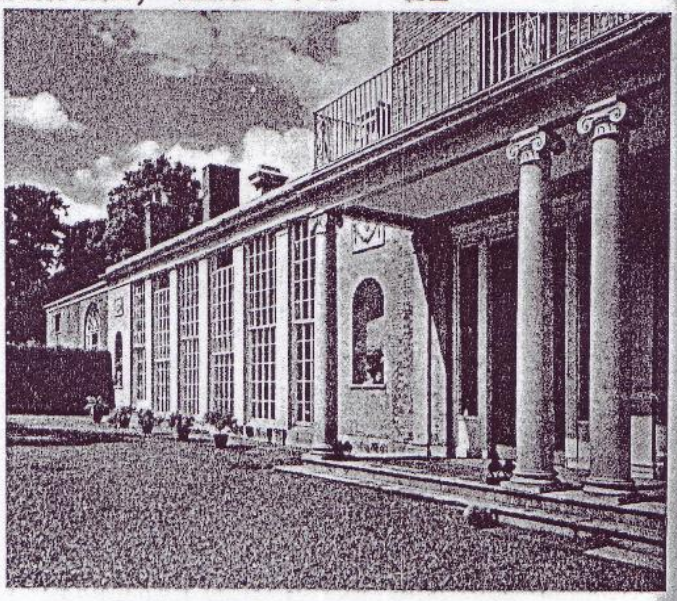
BELMONT PARK, KENT—II

THE SEAT OF LORD HARRIS

By CHRISTOPHER HUSSEY

The house, enlarged and reconstructed by Samuel Wyatt for the 1st Lord Harris in 1792, illustrates in its contents a remarkable record of family service to the British Empire.



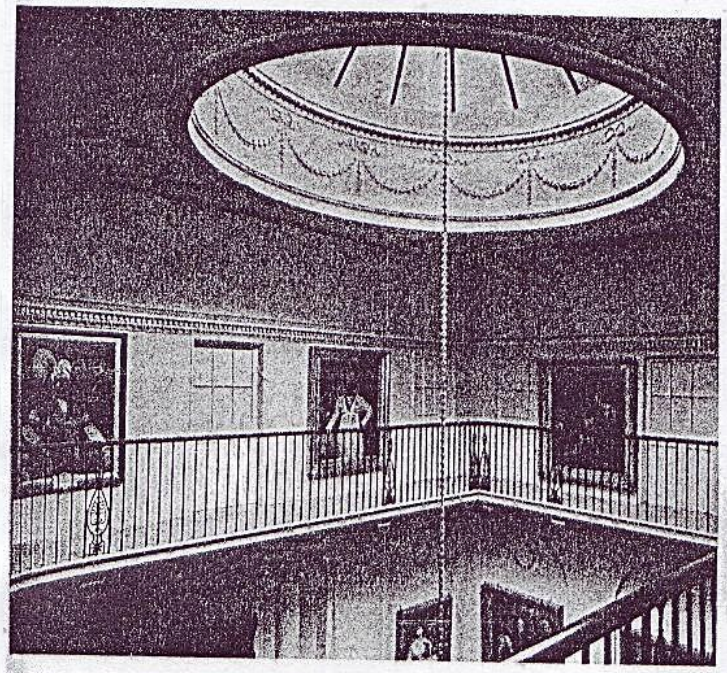
LIEUT.-COLONEL GEORGE HARRIS, though he had proved himself a brave and capable officer during five years' campaigning in America, had, he himself said, "risen from nothing"—his father was curate of Brasted—and had no means of enriching himself. So his being able to buy Belmont in 1780 was no doubt due to his marriage in the previous winter to Ann Cartaret, daughter and heiress of a Mr. Charles Dixon, of Bath. Shortly afterwards his regiment, the 5th ("Shiners"), was quartered for some years in Ireland; then, rather than accompany it again to America, he thought of "selling out and settling in Canada." At this juncture General Medows persuaded him to join his staff in Bombay and even insured his life, for the benefit of his wife and family, for £4,000. It therefore seems unlikely that the Harrises could, during these years, often have seen, still less have occupied, their house in Kent, the vendor of which, Colonel Montresor, seems to have continued as their tenant till he settled elsewhere in 1787. The term in India, where Harris served under Cornwallis against Tippoo Sahib, was to be rewarding. When Medows came home in 1792 he could bring with him £40,000, due to Harris's capable management of his affairs, and, although history is silent on the point, it is likely that his A.D.C. benefited considerably also, because he put in hand, if he had not already begun, the virtual rebuilding of Belmont, as described last week.

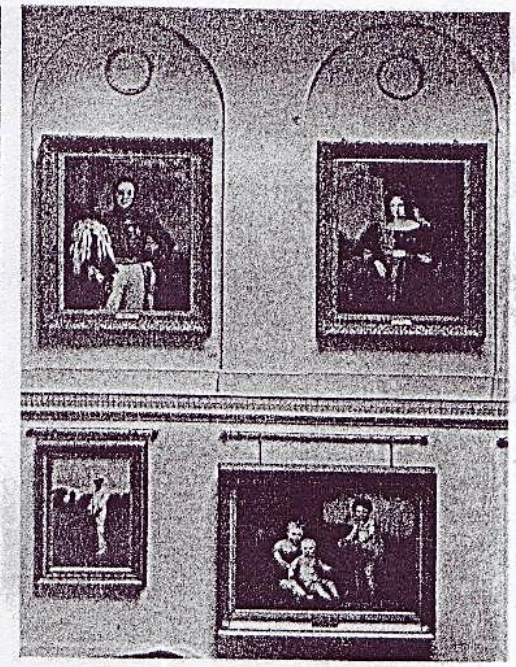
1.—THE ORANGERY AND THE MAIN ENTRANCE IN THE SOUTH SIDE

2.—THE STAIRCASE, LOOKING WEST. The walls are hung with family records of 150 years' service to the British Empire

Samuel Wyatt's problem was to enlarge a modest mid-Georgian house that seems to have had a large stable court in its rear into a family mansion suited to an officer accustomed to the spaciousness of Indian life, and which should enjoy the prospects which had given the place its name—Belmont—but of which the earlier house apparently took no advantage. He accordingly placed the new block at the south-east corner of the court, at right angles to the existing house, which he converted into its office quarters. Col. Harris may have demanded the ample verandahs, and his lady the large greenhouse or orangery for exotic plants. This Wyatt placed beside the entrance (Fig. 1) facing south and so as to mask the front of the earlier house, cleverly making, with the south end of the new block and its colonnade, an irregular neo-Classical composition. The orangery opens off the entrance hall and, really containing orange trees, besides climbing geraniums and bushy begonias among other pleasant things, is regularly used as a delightful garden-living-room—partly because it is the only one with a south aspect.

But possibly before the house was finished Major-General Harris, as he now became, in 1794 returned to India, this time taking his wife and family. And this time glory was to be added to wealth. He commanded and administered the Madras Presidency, 1796-1800, and Wellesley made him Commander-in-Chief against his old enemy Tippoo. The operation ended triumphantly with the storming of Seringapatam, where the General's son, young William George (aged 17), was among the first into the breech, and the fighting death of Tippoo. Harris received the thanks of Parliament and Tippoo's beautiful swans' down hat decorated with brilliant feathers (Fig. 8); also his sword and buckler, which hang in the armoury, a room opening off the upper gallery of

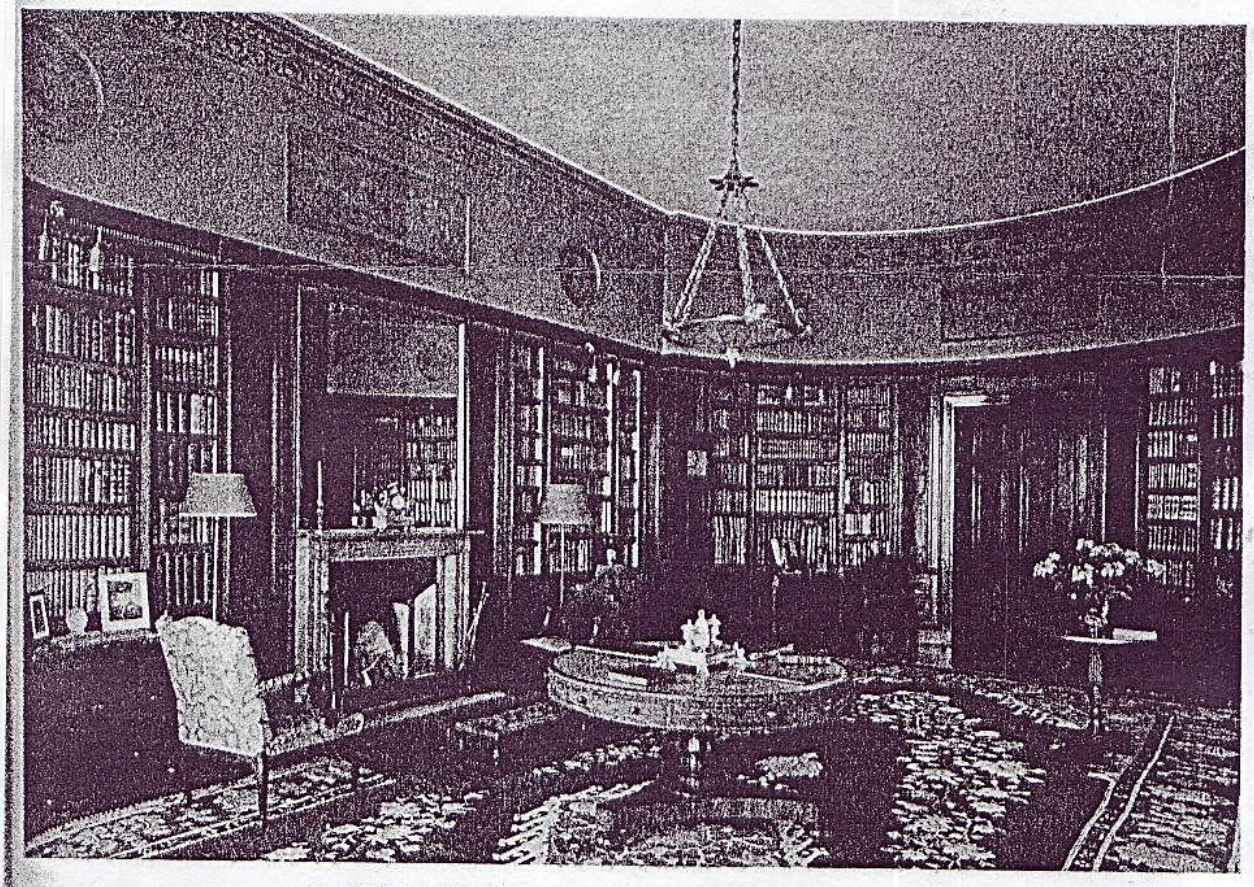




1.—THE GALLERY ROUND THE TOP OF THE STAIRCASE HALL. (*Right*) 4.—ON THE WEST STAIRCASE WALL. The 2nd Lord and Lady Harris hang above; below are their children, next to the 4th Lord Harris, the famous cricketer

the staircase hall at Belmont (Fig. 3). He shortly returned with these trophies to enjoy at last the delightful house Samuel Wyatt had built for him, to "live nearly 30 years at Belmont respected and beloved by his neighbours" (as his monument in Throwley Church describes), and in the year of Waterloo to be created Baron Harris.

An enchanting and also in both senses remarkably large family group—it is 10 ft. wide and omits two sons then serving abroad—was painted by A. W. Devis in 1802 (Fig. 7). All the children are the good General's, except the two sons-in-law on the

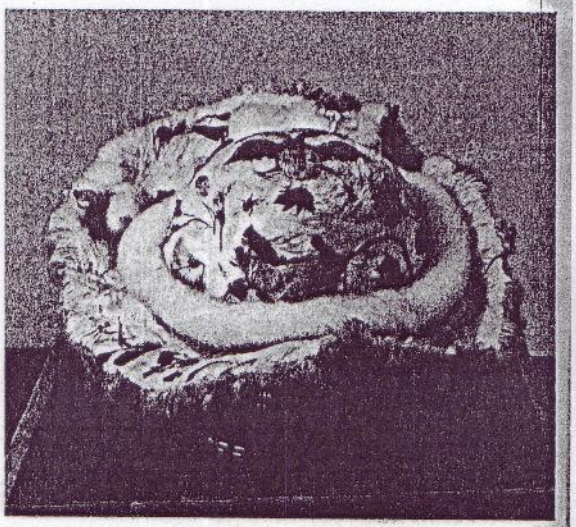


5.—THE LIBRARY, WITH GRAINED WALNUT WOODWORK

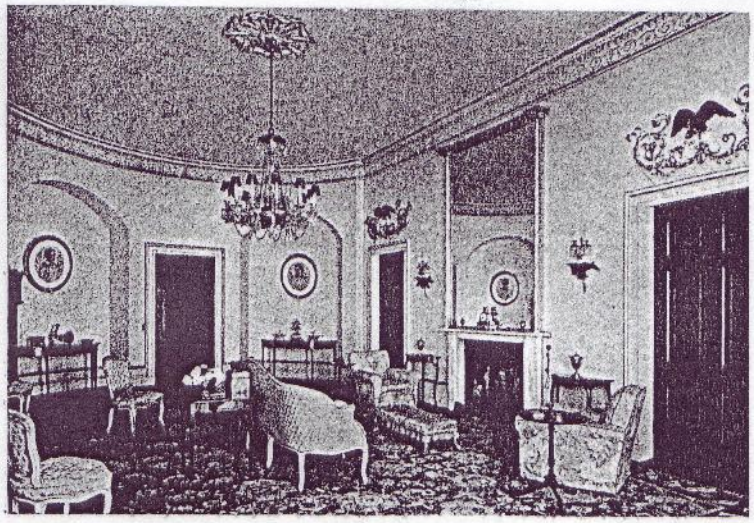
left. But some overpainting has taken place, for William George—the splendid officer in Black Watch uniform—is wearing the Waterloo Medal and also the magnificent sword presented to him by his brother officers of the 73rd after that battle. (Made by Osborn and Gunby, the blade damascened with gold and in a silver scabbard gorgeously enriched with military scenes, it reposes in a show case at the foot of the stairs among the family's stars and ribbons.) There are several other portraits of William—for example, on the staircase (Fig. 4)—but decidedly the most original, also by Devis, is that depicting him at the age of 12 (in 1794, just before he sailed with his father to India) jumping the gates of Richmond Churchyard, Yorkshire (Fig. 13). Why he did so is another story and so, unfortunately, must be that of his very unusual and successful war, which took him to Canada, the Cape, China, Prussia and Antwerp, when most of the British Army were in the Peninsula, but duly got him to Waterloo, where he distinguished himself and was wounded. A natural athlete in his youth, he attained the rank of Lieut.-General, the Cross of Hanover, and, as had his father, Colonelcy of the 73rd (now the 2nd battalion The Black Watch), but, almost alone of his family, never governed an Indian province. Succeeding his father in 1829, he died in 1845.

The tattered Colours of the 73rd hang on the staircase, and so does an amusingly naïve portrait of his children, painted at Antwerp probably in 1814 (Fig. 4). The elder son, George Francis Robert, became the friend and contemporary of Elgin, Dalhousie and Charles Canning and, like them, served as pro-consul. First at Trinidad, where he found and married his wife, daughter of the archdeacon there, in the Gothic Trinity Church at Port of Spain, of which a painting hangs at Belmont. Then in 1854 he was appointed Governor of Madras, where his historic achievement was to withhold Southern India from joining in the Mutiny and so to liberate its troops for the operations required by Canning in the north. On the staircase gallery (Fig. 3) the presence of two interesting Indian portraits, of the Maharajas of Mysore and Travancore, is due to him or possibly his son. The 4th Lord Harris is rightly represented at the wicket (Fig. 4) in the little portrait of him (in stiff collar and cuffs) by Chevalier Taylor (1903). As captain of Eton (1870), of Kent (1875-89), of England in the first historic Test Matches against Australia (1879, 1880 and 1884), and on the committee of the M.C.C., he came to hold "a position of authority and influence in the cricket world to which cricket history can furnish no parallel." His public services culminated as Governor of Bombay, 1890-5, where, between more serious acts of duty, he introduced

6.—THE ORANGERY, LOOKING TOWARDS THE ENTRANCE VESTIBULE



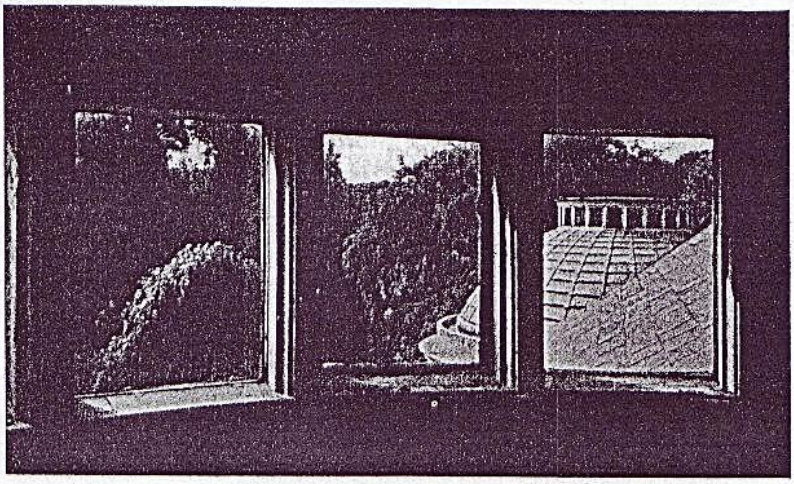
7.—GENERAL LORD HARRIS OF SERINGAPATAM WITH HIS FAMILY. By A. W. Devis, 1802. 8 ft. by 10 ft. (*Right*) 8.—TIPPOO SAHIB'S FEATHERED HAT. Width 15 ins. Taken by the 1st Lord Harris at Seringapatam, 1799



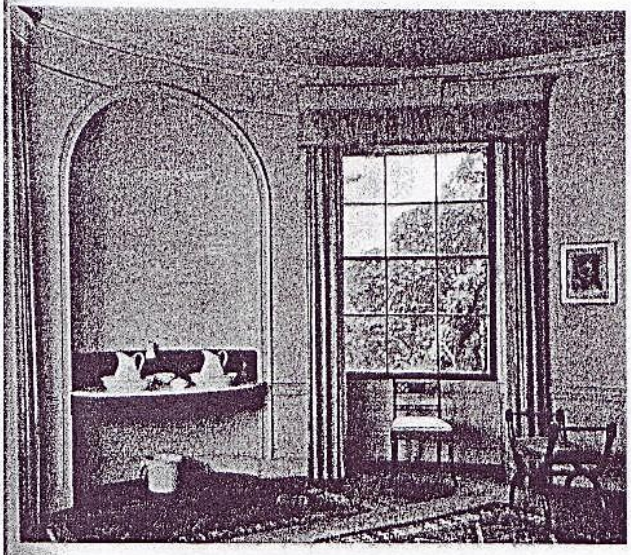
9.—THE DRAWING-ROOM, LOOKING WEST

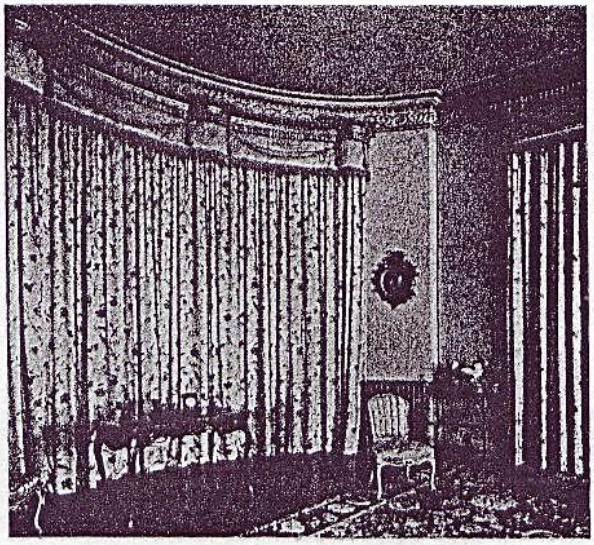
est cricket to India. At Belmont his most valable contribution is the carpets woven to his rder: the superb silk Persian in the drawing-om (Fig. 9) and all that in the extensive corri-ors and staircase. This is of an excellent pattern soft crimson ground, woven in an old factory Ahmedabad which he re-established.

The central staircase, rising the full height the building on its east-west axis and occupy-g the main section of the north-south corridor hat is the spine of the plan, is the principal nternal feature of Samuel Wyatt's design, and ypical of the Wyatt style at this date. The space ast of the corridor is filled by the three principal ooms, the dining-room, containing the big Devis roup, in the centre. Both the drawing-room Fig. 9) and library (Fig. 5) flanking it have their nner ends shaped to the same curve as their indows contained in the two bows of the front. hose of the drawing-room (Fig. 12) have curtains white silk painted with a floral pattern, intro-uced when the room was redecorated in the '30s nder the care of the late Basil Ionides. A cer-ain amount of Victorian alteration to the rooms ad taken place and their restoration to Wyatt's



10.—IN THE NORTHERN DOME OF THE EAST FRONT

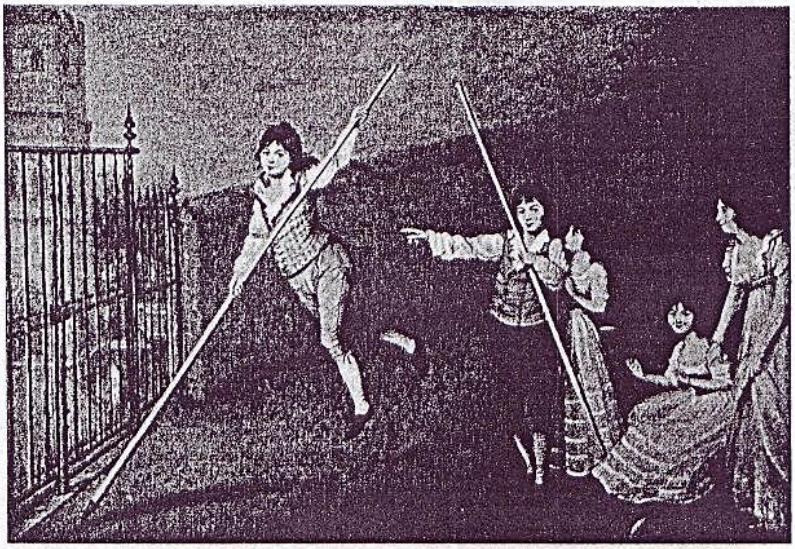




11 and 12.—IN A BEDROOM ABOVE THE DRAWING-ROOM (*right*). Examples of Wyatt's internal treatment of the bows in the east front

eo-Classicism is due to Lord and Lady Harris. hus the gilt scrolling with ebonised eagles over wo of the drawing-room doors, though possibly s its original positions, was found put away. ut the library had not been touched, preserving he shelving and panelling grained walnut, and he *café au lait* walls with painted plaques in igned relief. Recently the cornice was found to ave been partly gilt and has been so restored. everal of the interiors, like the elevations, owe heir pleasing character to Wyatt's partiality for ows and to his sure treatment of their curves. n Lady Harris's bedroom, over the drawing-oom, the original washhand-stand fixture emains in the alcove which he provided for it etween the windows (Fig. 11); and another hotograph (Fig. 10) shows how he handled the attern windows of the round attics in his domes.

Lord Harris, who succeeded his father in 932, gained the M.C. in the 1914-18 war, in hich he was wounded, and, as with others of he former "governing class," has found support-ng the home of his fathers a sufficiently exacting nd rewarding task. How well he and Lady arris have succeeded these photographs wit-ess, while Belmont's record of a family's service o the Empire during 150 years could scarcely be ettered as an example of what country houses nd their contents stand for to-day.



13.—WILLIAM, 2nd LORD HARRIS, JUMPING THE GATES OF RICHMOND CHURCHYARD. By A. W. Devis, 1794. 42 ins. by 61 ins.