The Landmark Trust

TIXALL GATEHOUSE

History Album

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KEY FACTS

Gatehouse built: c.1580

Old Tixall Hall built: c.1555 by Sir Edward Aston

New Tixall Hall built: c.1780 by Hon. Thomas Clifford

Tixall Hall demolished: 1927

Gatehouse acquired by Landmark: 1968

Architect for 1970s restoration: Lawrence Bond of Bond & Read

Contractors: Sandy & Co. of Stafford

Masons: Walker & Son

Work completed 1977

Stone repairs & refurbishment 2012

Masonry: Midland Conservation Ltd of Walsall

Artist blacksmith: Mark Antrobus of Lichfield

Extensive stonework repairs in 2012 were funded by a generous gift in memory of Dr. Nigel Gilmour (1953-2011), whose passion was gatehouses.

Contents

Tixall Gatehouse after the 2012 stone repairs, with all four weather vanes flying once again. Each vane bears a number, to make up the year '1976', when the first restoration was completed.

Summary

Tixall Gatehouse is one of the first restorations carried out by the Landmark Trust. It was acquired in 1968, just three years after the charity was founded to rescue endangered historic buildings, and give them a new life and a future. The Gatehouse was definitely at risk. After the demolition of Tixall Hall in 1927, it stood abandoned. Its roof, floors and windows had gone, and there was a danger that the walls too would soon collapse. As restored, it gives pleasure to the many people who rent it for holidays, and can also be enjoyed by all those who pass by for the exceptionally fine building it is.

The earliest description of Tixall Gatehouse is found in *Erdeswick's Survey of Staffordshire* of 1598. The author describes how Sir Walter Aston had 'beautified, or defaced (I know not which to say)' the fair house built by his father, Sir Edward, by adding directly in front of it 'a very goodly gate house of stone ...being one of the fairest pieces of work made of late times, that I have seen in all these countries.' According to his descendant, Sir Thomas Clifford, he did this in about 1580.

Old Tixall Hall itself, which dated from 1555, was a typical mixture of stone and timber-framing, such as might have been built at any time in the previous hundred years. The Gatehouse was an example of the latest fashion in architecture, richly decorated with Classical ornament, as learned from the Continent. The quality of the carving is extremely high.

We have no record of how the Gatehouse was divided inside, nor of its use. Two original fireplaces survive on the first floor, so there must have been at least two rooms here, with closets opening off them in the corner turrets. These may have served as lodgings for guests, or for an important household official such as the Steward. The roof terrace perhaps served as a platform from which to watch the hunt in the surrounding deer park. The main function of the Gatehouse, however, was simply to impress, showing off the wealth and power of its owner.

The Astons were an old and respected Staffordshire family. They had lived at Haywood since the 1200s, but acquired Tixall by marriage in 1507. With the building of the new house there, Tixall became their home. Under Sir Walter Aston it was also involved in one of the chief historical dramas of the day. Sir Walter, who was knighted by Queen Elizabeth and served her as Sheriff of Staffordshire and Justice of the Peace, was a staunch Protestant, and keen prosecutor of Catholics. As such, his house was a safe choice when, following the discovery of the Babington Plot in September, 1585, it was felt necessary to remove Mary, Queen of Scots from her prison at Chartley for a short time. She spent two weeks at Tixall before returning to Chartley.

Ironically, Sir Walter's grandson, another Walter, became a Catholic himself. He was ambassador to Spain under James I and Charles I, who made him a Baron. He and his son the 2nd Baron lived in great style at Tixall. They entertained lavishly and were keen patrons of the arts and literature. But times were still dangerous for Catholics: in 1679 Lord Aston was imprisoned in the Tower of London after being accused of involvement in the Titus Oates Conspiracy.

In 1751, the 5th Lord Aston died aged 28, leaving two small daughters. Tixall Hall was left empty for many years and when the younger daughter, Barbara, and her husband, Thomas Clifford, came to live there in 1768, it was all but derelict. They pulled down the Tudor house and, while living in a Georgian addition to it, began work on a completely new house. This was built not on the site of the old one, however, but further to the east, where its outlook was not blocked by the Gatehouse. As a result, the Gatehouse now became an ornamental building in a park landscaped by Capability Brown and William Emes.

Later History

Thomas and Barbara Clifford left Tixall to their eldest son, another Thomas, who was made a baronet in 1815. He completed his parents' work, employing Samuel Wyatt to decorate the new Hall. A scholar and a poet, he wrote a history of Tixall with his brother Arthur. His descriptions of his home, of which he was deeply fond, can also be read as its epitaph, since in 1821 Sir Thomas also inherited from a cousin another great estate, Burton Constable in Yorkshire. He died in 1823 and his son, a second Sir Thomas, decided to live at Burton Constable with his wife Marianne. They put Tixall up for sale in 1833, but not before removing some of the stained glass from its chapel for re-use in the Long Gallery at Burton Constable. Tixall was bought in 1845 by his neighbour, Lord Talbot of Ingestre.

Lord Talbot let Tixall to a series of tenants. His son, the Earl of Shrewsbury, lived there briefly while Ingestre was rebuilt after a fire in 1882. Thereafter it was once again rented out, or left empty, until in 1927 it was demolished. Just the Gatehouse, and the Cliffords' unusual semi-circular stable block, survive to remind us of a long and interesting history.

The Restoration of the Gatehouse

The Gatehouse has been little more than a picturesque ruin since the 18th century. Repairs to the stonework were carried out by a local mason, Richard Trubshaw of Great Haywood, in 1721. Sir Thomas Clifford may have given it a new roof a century later, but by then it had long been uninhabitable. This roof, in turn, fell in during the 1950s. Some work to stabilise the Gatehouse as a ruin was carried out in 1960, but this could only be a temporary solution - buildings seldom survive intact for long as roofless shells, under attack inside and out from the wind and the rain. It was thus with relief that the Shrewsbury estate greeted Landmark's offer to take it on in 1968.

It took some years to raise funds to pay for the restoration, and to draw up plans and have them agreed by the relevant authorities, but work finally began in 1975. The architect was Lawrence Bond, who was working on the conversion of the Stables at the same time. The work was divided into two distinct parts: the repairs, mainly to the eroded exterior stonework (for which a grant was given by the Historic Buildings Council); and the creation of a new dwelling inside.

For the 1970s stonework repairs, a local mason, Mr Walker, was employed. The work took him two years and was carried out with immense skill. As little as possible of the old work was renewed. The original stone had come from a quarry nearby,

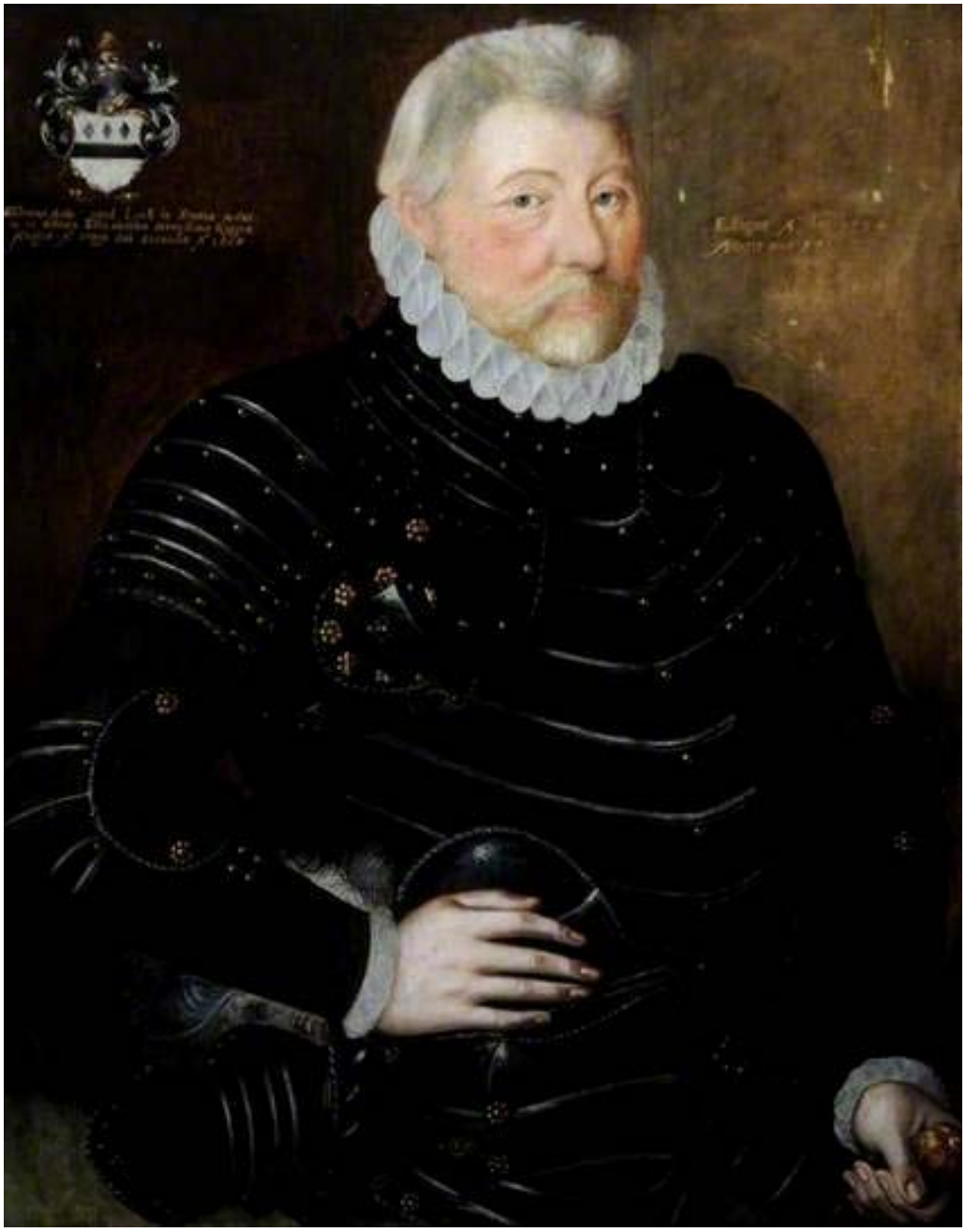
long overgrown. Luckily, some large blocks of the same stone had been used to close ground floor windows in the last century. These were now reopened, so Mr Walker was able to salvage this surplus stone for sections where decay, or damage from the rusted iron cramps of earlier repairs, made renewal unavoidable. All new stonework was fixed with bronze, and resin. New floor and roof structures of steel and concrete were inserted by the main contractors, Sandy and Co. of Stafford, old beam pockets in the walls ensuring their correct height. The new roof was paved in York stone.

The restored accommodation is mainly on the first floor, with extra bedrooms opening off the great open space of the second floor. Elm was used for new floorboards and panelling, in plentiful supply due to the onslaught of Dutch Elm Disease. New doors were hung on surviving pintles. 95 new iron casements were made, and 223 glazed and leaded lights. The restoration was completed in 1976 with the renewal of gilded weather vanes on the turrets. One turret had contained a faceless clock, whose workings were also renewed, but whose original bell still strikes the passing hours.

In 2010, the interior of the gatehouse was refurbished, new bathrooms were fitted and central heating installed to replace the outdated electric storage heaters. In 2102, forty five years after the initial restoration, inevitable weathering of the stonework meant that a major external repair campaign was again necessary. The biggest problem was open joints, where earlier, mostly historic pointing had weathered away, and places where more recent cementitious repairs to the carved embellishment had fallen off due to frost and weather. The south elevation, facing towards the road, had suffered most, but even here we took a conservative approach, repairing joint by joint in lime mortar and reinforcing the carved work with stainless steel pins. Leaking downpipes were also repaired, a more complicated process than it might seem since to replace a damaged top section, all the lengths below it had to be removed first.

On the roof, detached flashings were re-fixed and the leadwork repaired where necessary. A lightning conductor was installed. The opportunity was also taken to replace the weather vanes on the four turrets. These had all dated to 1976, any older ones having vanished before Landmark's acquisition in 1968. Of the 1976 vanes, three had jammed on their spindles and blown down, just one surviving. Luckily, the 1976 full-size drawings were still on file. These were used by artist-blacksmith Mark Antrobus of Lichfield to make three replacements of copper alloy, coated in gold leaf.

The 2012 repairs to the stonework and the new weather vanes were most generously founded as an in memoriam gift for Dr Nigel Gilmour (1953-2011), for whom gatehouses were a particular passion.



Sir Walter Aston (1529-1589), builder of Tixall Gatehouse.
(Burton Constable Hall)

Tixall Hall and its Gatehouse

The Tixall Gatehouse is one of the most important Elizabethan buildings in Staffordshire. It is tall, slender, and typically English, while showing the characteristics of the Italian Renaissance. Unlike most gatehouses, Tixall does not reserve its grandest face for the outside world; both fronts are equally embellished, to dazzle those inside the courtyard as much as those entering it. There is no shortage of information about Tixall, and its owners played their part in stirring events. Written descriptions abound, as do paintings, sketches and prints. They show the evolution of Tixall Hall from Tudor beginnings, through early-18th century alterations, to the urbane villa added by the Hon. Thomas Clifford in the 1780s, with its interiors by Samuel Wyatt, and a park landscaped by Capability Brown and William Emes. This last house was demolished in 1927.

The earliest description of the Hall and its Gatehouse occurs not long after both were built, in Sampson Erdeswick's *A Survey of Staffordshire* of 1598:

> 'Sir Edward Aston builded at Tickeshall a fair house, the first height from the ground very well wrought of stone, the rest of timber and plaster; but it is since beautified, or defaced (I know not which to say), with a very goodly gatehouse of stone, builded by Sir Walter Aston, son of the elder, being one of the fairest pieces of work made of late times, that I have seen in all these countries. '

Sir Thomas Clifford provided more exact information on this and the later history of the building in his *Topographical and Historical Description of the parish of Tixall* published in 1817:

> 'The old mansion, now a ruin, was built by Sir Edward Aston, in 1555, about fifty years after the Tixall estate had come into his family - 'This is plain,' says Mr Loxdale (*Parochial Antiquities of Staffordshire)* 'from the following words cut extremely well in the lower part of a stool of one of the windows, and still very fresh: William Yates made this house MDLV.' The remains show it to have been built in the elegant style of Gothic architecture which prevailed in the reign of Henry VII.'

Like Samuel Erdeswick, Sir Thomas was really more impressed by the gatehouse - as its builder intended:

> 'The gatehouse was built by Sir Walter Aston about the year 1580, just at the period when the architecture of Greece and Rome had begun to be fashionable in England. Our ancestors, with that love of novelty which is common to every age, seem to have been eager to disfigure their old baronial mansions, of which perhaps they were ashamed, by tacking to them porches, columns and other incongruous decorations in the new taste. Sir Walter Aston, however, did not alter the noble residence which his father had built, but he eclipsed, or (to use the expression of Erdeswick) defaced it, by erecting the gatehouse immediately in front, with a wall, reaching from each end of it, to the two corners of the old house; thus forming an enclosed court between the gatehouse and the mansion.'

> 'The gatehouse has three stories, and had a flat roof, covered with lead, protected on each side by an open balustrade. At each of the four corners, is an octagon tower, ending in a dome of an elegant form, tapering to a point, and surmounted by a gilt vane. The point of the tower is about sixty feet from the ground. The main building is fifty feet long and twenty five broad: the interior diameter of the towers is eight feet. The centre of the building, on the ground floor, was an open archway, through which carriages passed to the great hall door; and on either side were lodges for the porters. The two upper stories were divided into apartments for the servants, to which access was obtained by a stone staircase in one of the towers. The windows are large in the old fashion; and on each side of every window, is a coupled column; on the ground floor of the Doric order, supporting a Doric frieze; on the second storey, of the Ionic, and in the third, of the Corinthian.'

If the rooms on the upper floors were intended for servants, they must have been very senior members of the household. No trace of their arrangement survives, neither do any descriptions, or inventories of furniture, but the surviving fireplaces are of good quality. Since there appeared to be only one fireplace on the first floor and no clear evidence of partitions, W. Niven in *Old Staffordshire Houses* (1882) assumed that this floor was originally undivided, forming a single large chamber. However, there were in fact two fireplaces on this storey, one at each end, and it is more likely that it was divided into two chambers of unequal size, or possibly even three, with small closets opening off them in the turrets. A similar arrangement was, no doubt, repeated on the top floor. The rooms would

The gatehouse at Charlecote was built *c*1560 by Sir Thomas Lucy, whose daughter married Sir Walter Aston's son, Edward. The relationship between gatehouse and main house is similar to that originally found at Tixall.

still have been of a good size, and must have formed a grand apartment or set of lodgings, good enough for a guest. Gatehouses did sometimes provide additional accommodation for grand visitors and their households. Alternatively, the steward of a household such as Sir Walter Aston's was likely to be a gentleman, and worthy of a comfortable set of rooms. Perhaps the Gatehouse provided a lodging for him. Estate business would have been carried out there, another common use for gatehouses, in which a manorial court was often held.

Sir Walter's son, Edward, married the daughter of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote Park near Stratford-upon-Avon at about the time the Gatehouse was being built. At Charlecote there is an earlier gatehouse which could have inspired that at Tixall, although it is on a smaller scale, is less embellished and has only two corner turrets.

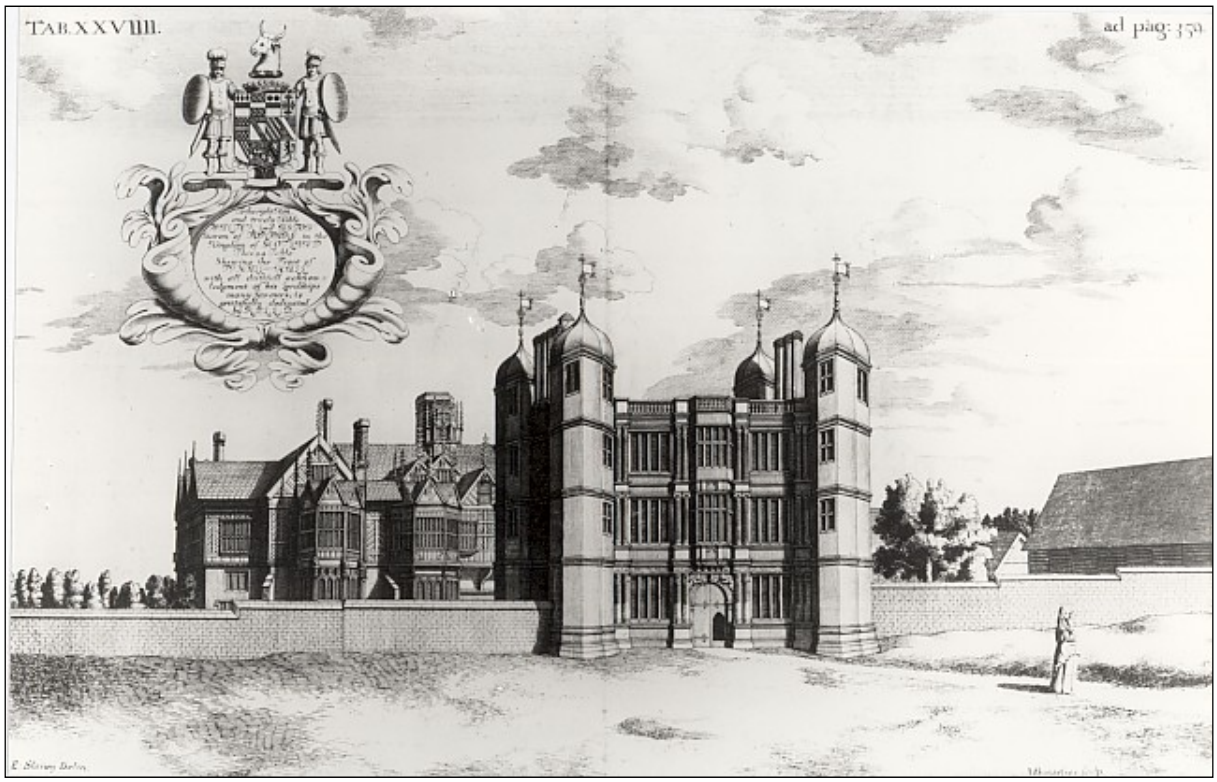
There were other influences too in the contemporary buildings of Robert Smythson, the so-called ‘high houses of the Midlands’, of which Wollaton Hall near Nottingham, built between 1580 and 1585, is the supreme example. Tixall’s four corner turrets echo those at Wollaton, and both buildings have the same bands of windows so characteristic of the late Elizabethan great house architecture. Both also adapt the Classical detail of Serlio with cheerful abandon, such that both hint at Classicism but neither reflect the careful formality of ancient proportion.

The 1580s saw the flowering of this uniquely English style of architecture. A comparison of the Gatehouse with the Hunting Tower at Chatworth, built c.1570, shows how rapidly styles were evolving in these years.

The Hunting Tower at Chatsworth *c.* 1570 has corner turrets like the Gatehouse, but presents a much plainer aspect.

The stone carving on the Tixall gatehouse is superb and it is possible that one or more of the craftsmen involved were men who worked at Wollaton in 1582-85, men such as Christopher Lovell, John Rodes and Christopher Rodes. When so few 16th-century designers' names are known, it is always tempting to attribute to one of them any building that resembles a known work, but geographic coincidence should not be taken too far. Mark Girouard in *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (1983) does not include the Gatehouse among his list of unattributed Smythson works, and in the absence of clear evidence nor should we.

What is more certain is that such master works influenced others interested in architectural design, whether as patrons or as Master Masons, and that the designer of Tixall Gatehouse was fully aware of contemporary architectural fashion. Classical detail was immensely popular with the Elizabethans as a form of decoration for their buildings, derived from books of architecture published in the mid-16th century by Serlio or the Fleming Hans Vrederman de Vries. Sir Walter Aston may well have owned or seen copies of such works. More than ordinarily splendid or accomplished houses were also very influential and craftsmen or surveyors would go to see them, and make drawings of doors and windows, or



The earliest known view of Tixall Hall, one of a series of beautifully detailed engravings of Staffordshire houses from Dr. Robert Plot's Natural History of Staffordshire of 1686. Note the flanking estate walls and the two groups of chimney stacks, serving multiple hearths (another sign of the building's high status). The scars where the park wall was bonded into the walls of the Gatehouse are still apparent today: intriguingly, they are to the rear, houseward side of the Gatehouse rather than (as would be logical) towards the front elevation. The design of the present weather-vanes on the Gatehouse is based on those illustrated here.

details of decoration. Wollaton, still astonishing to us today, must have drawn the interested to it in droves; and its details would have been copied in buildings that had no direct connection with its architect.

Yet this English use of the elements of Classical architecture simply as applied ornamentation was surprisingly shortlived. Fifty years later, with the dissemination of Andrea Palladio's *Quattro Libri di Architettura (Four Books of Architecture)*, and under the influence of pioneers such as Inigo Jones, the structural rhythms of Classical architecture became more deeply absorbed, to emerge even before the Civil War as a complete system of building that affecting both plan and proportion, and influenced the whole of architectural thought.

Dr Robert Plot in *A Natural History of Staffordshire* writing in 1686, only a hundred years or so after the Gatehouse was built, might be describing buildings from another world - in a way that one suspects the Elizabethans would have been unable to do, when thinking of their late medieval forbears:

> The Gatehouse of Tixall Hall, the seat of the right honourable Walter, Lord Aston, an eminent Encourager of this design [his book], is a curious piece of stonework, well worthy of notice; and is here presented together with the house, to the reader's view. It is remarkable that the windows of the house, tho' very numerous are scarce two alike; and so 'tis at Chillington, the seat of the ancient family of the Giffords. It is observable likewise that the tunnells of the chimneys in both these houses are very numerous, the hall chimneys at Chillington having no less than 8 tunnells to one hearth. The fretwork of the tunnells also in both seats being so very various, that scarce two agree: whence it is easy to collect that the beauty of the structure in those days (which seems to be temp. Henry 8) did not consist as now in uniformity, but in the greatest variety the artist could possibly show.

Plot also provides the earliest view of the Hall and its Gatehouse, shown opposite. The latter still has its original weather vanes, and groups of slender chimneys on the end elevations, which contributed greatly to the effect of height, and added interest to the skyline. These appear to have been taken down in the later 18th century. Before that, much else had happened at Tixall.

Aston family tree – in outline

Randulph de Astona, lived in the reign of Edward I

|

Roger de Aston, obtaind manor of Haywood and Longdon 1260

|

(7 generations at Haywood)

|

Sir John Aston K.B. Thrice Sheriff of Staff, also of Leics. & Warwicks.
m. Joan, daughter of Sir Thomas Bowles, a baron of the Exchequer

|

Sir Walter Aston, builder of the Gatehouse (1529-1589)
m. Elizabeth, daughter of Sir James Leveson of Lilleshall
(their 4th son was ancestor to 6th Baron Aston)

|

Sir Edward Aston (d. 1597) whose estates in
Staffs, Berbys, Leics & Warwicks provided £10,000 pa.
m. Anne, only daughter of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote

|

Sir Walter Aston (1583-1639) K.B. Baronet 1611, Baron Aston of Forfar 1627
m. Gertrude, daughter of Sir Thomas Sadler of Standon, Herts

|

Walter, 2nd Baron, d. 1678, a staunch Royalist. Inherited Standon 1660.
m. (1629) Lady Mary Weston, daughter of Richard, Earl of Portland K.G.
Lord High Treasurer of England

|

Walter 3rd Baron 1633-1714
m. (1st) Eleanor, daughter of Sir Walter Blount

|

Walter 4th Baron, d. 1748
m. Lady Mary Howard, sister of Thomas, Duke of Norfolk

|

James 5th Baron d. 1751
M (1742) sister of George, 14th Earl of Shrewsbury

|

Barbara, d. 1786, who inherited Tixall
m. Hon Thomas Clifford, d. 1787, younger son of 3rd Baron Clifford
(the title of 6th Baron Aston passed to her distant cousin; on the death of the 9th Baron in 1845 the title became extinct).

|

Sir Thomas 1762-1829 Baronet 1815 Assumed the name of Constable in 1821
m. Mary, daughter of John Chichester of Arlington, Devon

|

Sir Thomas Aston Constable of Burton Constable, 1806-70, who sold Tixall

The History of Tixall Hall and its Owners

The Aston family

The Astons, who built Tixall, were an old Staffordshire family. In his *Book of Worthies* of 1662, Fuller remarks that 'a more noble family, measuring on the level of flat and inadvantaged antiquity, is not to be met with; they have ever borne a good respect to the church and learned men.'

In 1257 Roger de Aston was granted the hereditary mastership of Cannock Chase, with the right to 'the umbles[1] of all deer killed thereon' and a number of loads of wood every year. He, and his descendants, lived on the neighbouring estate of Haywood. They acquired Tixall in 1507, when Sir John Aston married Joan Littleton, an heiress. Her family had bought the manor not long before from the heiress of the Wasteneys, who had held it from the 12th century.

It was Sir John's son, Sir Edward, who built the first house at Tixall in 1555. His monument is in the church of St Mary, Stafford. He shares it with his second wife, Jane and it records that 'In building Tixall House her Helping Hand, From first to last this lady did expand'). It was their son, Sir Walter Aston, who added the gatehouse.

Walter Aston was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1560 for his bravery at the siege of Leith, when English and Scottish troops joined forces against the French guards of the Queen Regent, mother of Mary Queen of Scots. An ardent Protestant, he became Sheriff of Staffordshire and a Justice of the Peace.

By 1579 Tixall had become the centre of anti-Catholic activity in Staffordshire. Several of the local Catholic gentry were arraigned by Sir Walter and sent to Stafford gaol. They were all released except for their priest, Father Sutton. As a J.P. Sir Walter cross-questioned him, getting so angry that he hit him with his staff and knocked him down.

[1] 'Umbles' were the offal, hence 'to eat umble pie.'

When the case came up before the assizes, Sir Walter insisted upon giving evidence against Father Sutton, saying that he would resign from the bench if it was not accepted. The priest was duly convicted to be hung, drawn and quartered. He was hanged, but was:

> Cut down very lively, for he stood upon his feet and after being dismembered spoke these words: 'O thou bloody butcher, God forgive you.' Then, calling upon Jesus and Mary, he expired.

Tixall and Mary Queen of Scots

Six years later, Mary, Queen of Scots, was in Staffordshire, the prisoner of Elizabeth I. Mary was Catholic and as Elizabeth's cousin, her heir, if, as became increasingly likely, the Virgin Queen failed to produce children. After her abdication from the Scottish throne in favour of her one-year old son James in 1567, Mary fled to England, where she was an inevitable a focus for those discontented with Elizabeth's Protestant regime. From 1568, Mary was imprisoned on her royal cousin's orders, moved from house to house to reduce the risk of rescue or rebellion. Tixall, as a big house belonging to a staunch Protestant, was considered as a possible home for her. On September 21st 1585 Elizabeth's Secretary Sir Francis Walsingham wrote to Sir Amias Poulet, Mary's keeper:

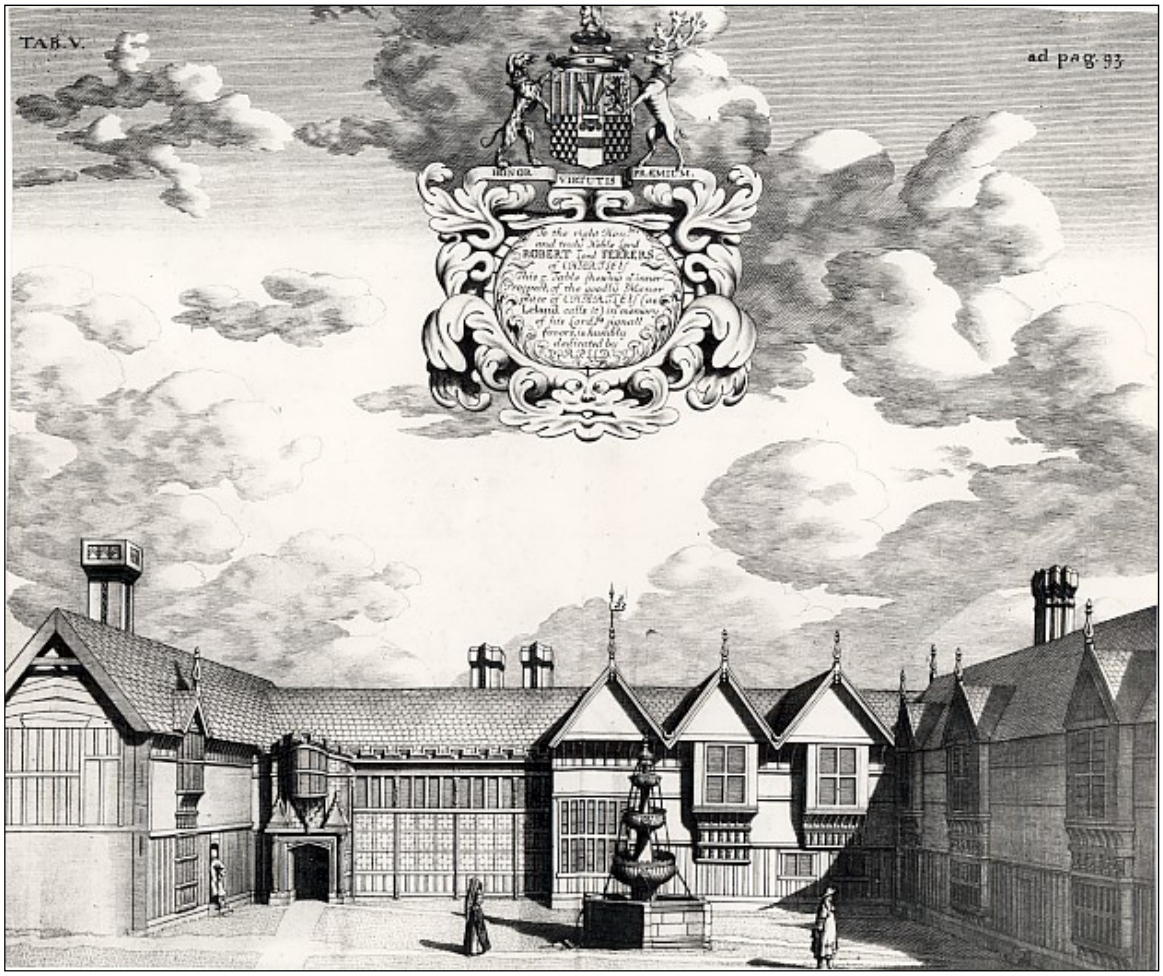
> Her Majesty … hath thought upon Sir Walter Aston's house, a very fair hou se and fit in any sort for that Queen [Mary], which is meant shall be borrowed of him and Beaudesert, the Lord Paget's house, lent him to lie in. Wherefore Her Majesty's pleasure is you should view the said house with all convenient speed.

Sir Amias duly made the visit, though 'with some difficulty' as he was 'touched with gout of late.' In his reply to Walsingham he mentions the Gatehouse and describes the Hall, and gives a glimpse into the life of the household there as he describes everything that Sir Walter claimed he would have to overturn in order to be able to entertain Mary. Sir Amias advises against using Tixall because it was difficult to defend and would cause Sir Walter great inconvenience – and also because 'in my simple opinion it shall not stand with her Majesty's service to overthrow such a household as this is, in this [Catholic] infected shire as the

world goeth at this present.' Walsingham agreed, and Mary Queen of Scots was taken instead to Chartley Hall, a few miles north. (Their correspondence is given in an appendix).

While Mary was at Chartley the Babington Conspiracy was developing, plotting her rescue. That year, 1585, Parliament passed the Act of Association, which provided for the execution of anyone who would benefit from the death of the Queen if a plot against her was discovered. This meant that even if she were an unwitting participant, Mary could be executed if a plot was initiated that could lead to her accession to the throne of England. In a tangled tale of double agents, ciphers and letters smuggled to and fro in barrels of beer, Walsingham monitored and partially orchestrated the plot developed by Babington and his co-conspirators to assassinate Elizabeth and place Mary on the throne. Walsingham intercepted all the letters that passed between Mary and the conspirators; but Mary knew how precarious her position was and was ever wary and discreet. To convict her, her faithful retainers Nau and Curle needed to be taken away for interrogation and Mary's apartments had to be searched, and for this she had to be removed from Chartley for a few days.

Sir Amias Poulet told the unsuspecting Mary that she had been asked to go hunting at Tixall where, according to Sir Edward Southcote's *Narrative*, the park was a noble one, five or six miles about, with five or six hundred head of deer. They rode over to Tixall (it was only three miles away) but when they were in the park, instead of meeting fellow hunters, they were met by Sir Thomas Gorges, Queen Elizabeth's emissary. He carried off her secretaries, Nau and Curle, to the Tower of London, while Mary was taken into Tixall, where she was kept for two weeks.



Chartley, where Mary Queen of Scots was staying when she was brought to Tixall

Miniature of Mary, Queen of Scots, while in captivity, by Nicholas Hilliard.

These were desperate days for Mary, who must have realised that her endgame was approaching. When she was being moved from Tixall, outside the Gatehouse, Mary,

> said with a loud voice, weeping, to some poor folks which were there assembled 'I have nothing for you, I am a beggar as well as you, all is taken from me.'

Mary was returned to Chartley. A month later she was taken to Fotheringay and on February 8th 1587 she was executed by order of her cousin Elizabeth.

Literary Astons

Sir Walter Aston died in 1589 and was succeeded by his son, Edward. As we have heard, Edward was married to Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Lucy ('Justice Shallow') of Charlecote, before whom Shakespeare was brought for poaching. Anne and Edward seem to have lived at Charlcote before he inherited Tixall, for their son, another Walter, was 'born and reared' at Charlecote.

This Walter (1583-1639) emerges as a man of spirit, intelligence and feeling and he rose higher than any of his family. He was a minor at his father's death and was taken as a ward by the powerful lawyer, Sir Edward Coke. Wardship of fatherless heirs was still a valuable court perquisite, for the marriages that could be arranged as well as the income from estates before the ward came of age. Walter, who was worth £10,000 a year, a vast sum, was made a Knight of Bath at James I's coronation in 1603, when the poet Michael Drayton was his squire. The tale goes[2]

Walter needed horses for the coronation. He rode over to borrow these from a Mr Sadler at Standon, at his daughter Gertude's instigation. Walter promptly fell in love with Gertrude, and declared his affection when he returned with the horses after the coronation. They married, secretly and without consent, 'before he was of age.' Coke was furious and Walter had to pay him £4,000 compensation – and a further £500 to a certain young lady who served his mother, to whom we may

[2] B. H. Newdigate, *Michael Drayton & his Circle* (1941), p.149.

Walter, Baron Aston of Forfar (1583-1639)
(Staffs County Buildings Collection)

Thomas Pennant, who visited Staffordshire in the course of *A Journey from Cheshire to London* (1782) saw this at Blithfield: "[Lord Aston] appears with a firm countenance, short hair and whiskers; in a black dress, laced with gold on the seams, and graced with a triple gold chain." He describes him as having been resolute and prudent, and having a great knowledge of the importance of English trade with Spain.

infer he was already partially promised. It was to be a long and happy marriage, with numerous children.

Walter was made a Baronet in 1611, being also a companion to Prince Henry, James I's charismatic eldest son who died tragically early in 1612 aged 18. What would have happened to England in the 17th century had Henry not died young, and his younger brother Charles had therefore not come to the throne, is one of virtual history's great questions

Sir Walter was also a generous patron of the arts. Michael Drayton dedicated several poems to him. In his lovely celebration of England's rivers, *Polyolbion,* Drayton described the River Trent 'by Tixall graced, the Aston's ancient seat, Which oft the Muse hath found a safe and sweet retreat', suggesting he himself stayed at Tixall. Sir Walter also knew Isaak Walton, author of *The Compleat Angler,* who gave him copies of his books.

Between them, Sir Walter and his son and heir, Walter, 2nd Lord Aston, collected a large library of 4,000 volumes, and they both lived at Tixall in magnificent style, described here by Edward Southcote, a grandson of Walter:

> He had the vogue of the whole county as much the most noble housekeeper in it. His table was magnificently served - three courses the year about, and twenty dishes at each course. And the twenty serving men who carried the dishes affected to stamp louder than was needed, which made a noise like a clap of thunder every course that was carried up. In waiting behind my Lord's chair stood every day his gentleman, his house steward, his chief park keeper, and a footman ready to fetch the guests that my Lord called for. And he was very curious in his wines. He would never have aught but hunted venison at his table, and all through the season there as at least one buck killed a day and most commonly a brace. When they had all dined there was nothing carried back; but the leavings were thrown into a tub which two men took immediately on their shoulders to the court gate where they every day served forty or fifty people with it.

The Astons were by now immensely wealthy, although according to Thomas Pennant, Lord Aston in 'supporting the dignity of his character and the honor of his country' dissipated much of his wealth. Some of this expenditure must have occurred in 1617, when James I visited Stafford and stayed at Tixall Hall for two

nights. Before his arrival the Earl of Pembroke wrote to the Sheriff of Staffordshire:

> Sir, His Majesty taking notice of an opinion that the burning of ferne doth drawe downe raine and being desirous that the country and himself may enjoy fair weather as long as he remains in these parts, His Majesty hath commanded me to write to you to cause all burning of ferne to be forborne until His Majesty bee passed the county.

Despite these precautions, the King arrived in a downpour.

In 1619, Sir Walter was appointed James I's ambassador in Spain, a post he occupied from1620-25. These were years of rapprochement between the English and Spanish Courts, to the suspicion of many in England. Sir Walter played his part in the protracted negotiations for a marriage between Charles, then Prince of Wales, and the Infanta of Spain. During these negotiations, Sir Walter gained the favour of the Prince, who 'addressed him in letters as Honest Wat.' The negotiations came to an end in 1625, when Charles married Henrietta Maria, youngest daughter of Henri IV of France. Charles came to the throne in 1626 and the next year created Walter 1st Baron Aston of Forfar. In 1629, he became Keeper of the Mulberry Garden, planted by James I on the site of what is now Buckingham Palace, to feed the silkworms in James's quest for indigenous English silk.

In 1635 and somewhat reluctantly, the 52 year-old Lord Aston returned to Spain as Ambassador. His wife and family had previously converted to Catholicism while there, and Lord Aston now did so too. With a Catholic queen consort in England, and the increasingly High Church practices of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Aston is representative of the increasingly polarised religion as the country approached the social breakdown that led to Charles I's execution. From this time forth, the Aston family of Tixall, such staunch Protestants during Elizabeth's reign, became Catholic recusants.

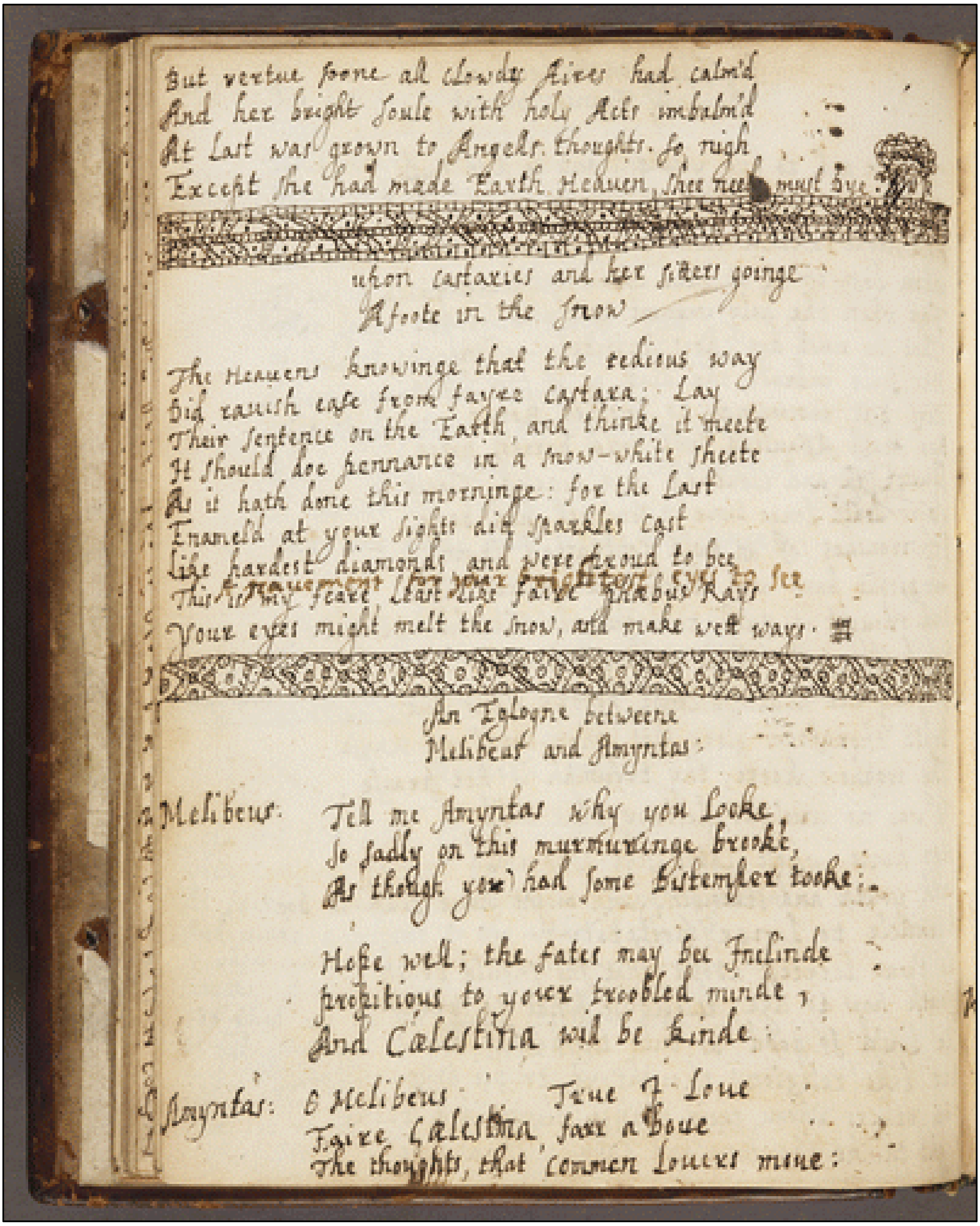
Such decisions were not taken lightly, and risked divisions whatever the mood of Charles's Court. Lord Aston set out his reasons to a friend in a letter:

> My dear Friend, whereas there hath been much friendship and kindness betwixt us for so long a time, I hope it shall not break us on this occasion of changing my religion. Howsoever, I am, thank God, so resolved that I had rather lose the best worldly friends that ever I had than change again from what I am…I did not rashly make this change, nor on a sudden, but upon the best consideration and judgement that my wit could reach unto. And although I was at first very fearful and loath to forsake that religion in which I was brought up, and lived so long, yet when I found so many reasons for it, I resolved, without any further delays, to betake myself to that faith and belief…'[3]

Lord Aston then sets out his reasons for his conversion based on the scriptures, an interesting insight into the theological grounds for such conversions. In his view, the Bible says that Christ's church will last until the world's end; it predicts a continual succession of pastors (the Pope), and it states that heresies will arise that must be condemned. 'None…appertain to the Protestants', wrote Lord Aston, 'Therefore they are not the church of Christ.' Martin Luther and his followers started Protestantism a mere hundred years earlier: 'I thought surely, that either the true religion was never in England, or else that the Protestants could not be it.' It was no doubt a thoughtful and conscientious religious conversion, near treasonable a generation earlier and now made easier by the prevailing atmosphere at Court, where a decade earlier Charles I's French Catholic Queen, Henrietta Maria, had employed Inigo Jones to build her own private chapel beside St James's Palace. Sir Walter and his family's conversion set the Aston family on a new path for the next 200 years.

Recent scholarship has also associated Sir Walter with the poet John Donne, and suggested that Sir Walter was something of a poet himself. The same was true of one of his younger sons, Herbert, and especially his youngest daughter,

[3] About 1810, Arthur Clifford, to whose elder brother Tixall had passed through their mother, daughter of the 5th Lord Aston, found in an old trunk a mass of 17th-century poetry and letters, which he subsequently published as *Tixall Poetry* and *Tixall Correspondence.* This extract is from Letter XVI in the latter.


But vertue soone all clowdy Aires had calm'd
And her bright soule with holy Acts imbalm'd
At last was grown to Angels thoughts. so nigh
Except she had made Earth Heaven, shee needs must dye.

upon Castaries and her sisters goinge
Afoote in the snow

The Heavens knowinge that the tedious way
Did ravish ease from fayer Castara: Lay
Their sentence on the Earth, and thinke it meete
It should doe pennance in a snow-white sheete
As it hath done this morninge: for the Last
Enameld at your sights did sparkles cast
Like hardest diamonds and were proud to bee
A pavement for your brightest eyes to see
This is my feare least like faire Phœbus Rays
Your eyes might melt the snow, and make wett ways.

An Eglogue betweene
Melibeus and Amyntas:

Melibeus: Tell me Amyntas why you looke
So sadly on this murmuringe brooke,
As though you had some distemper tooke:

Hope well; the fates may bee inclinde
propitious to your troubled minde,
And Cælestina will be kinde:

Amyntas: O Melibeus True I love
Faire Cælestina farr above
The thoughts, that common lovers move:

Hand A (Constance's hand) in Constance Aston Fowler's miscellany of verse, discovered in a chest in the attic at Tixall in the early 19th century.

(Huntington Library ms. HM904, fol. 28v.)

Constance Aston Fowler. Constance compiled a private anthology, commemorating the poetic activities of her circle. This poetical commonplace book has survived, an interesting and rare example of the circulation of largely religious poetry in manuscript within provincial Catholic circles. One of the hands in the manuscript book is thought to be that of Sir Walter, who may have written the first poem in an otherwise blank book he gave to his daughter.

The experience of the so-called Tixall group of literary Catholics also corrects any view that Catholics were still a seriously persecuted minority in the 1630s.

In 1638, by now in his mid 50s, Lord Aston requested his recall from Spain. The same year he wrote to a future daughter-in-law, Catherine Thimelby, on her marriage to his son Herbert:

> I cannot promise you success, for I am not master of it, but you may rest confident, my care and utmost endeavour shall not be wanting. You come into a family, although united in trew affection one with another, yet divided in the condition of our fortune, my wife in one place, my son Aston in another, and I in a third; and in the worst a poor suitor at court with a painful infirmity for my companion.'

The 'painful infirmity' was kidney stone, of which he died the following year, 1639.

The Civil War

It hardly needs saying that at the outbreak of war in 1642, and as a Catholic, Walter, 2nd Baron, declared for the King. Tixall, like many other great houses, became for the time a military headquarters. In a letter to his son, one Edward Southcote later described how:

> During the Civil War the [Royalist] Earl of Northampton was quartered at Tixall. A strong party of the rebels arrived at Hopton Heath, which almost adjoins Tixall House park pale. Northampton had a sharp dispute with them, but in the middle of the action his horse put its foot in a rabbit hole, was brought to its knees and when in that posture he was killed outright by one stroke of a halbert upon his head.

> The next day after this defeat, the victorious rebels plundered Tixall house, our noble lord being then a commander in Lichfield and nobody in the house but my Lady Aston and my mother, who was about five years old; but the officer had so much humanity as to order my lady should have no disturbance given her in her chamber which was the only room unplundered in the whole house. When they had eaten and drunk all and packed up everything that was portable, they marched off about six in the evening and then my lady sent to beg a little new milk of one of their neighbours and a skillet to boil it in, which was all the breakfast, dinner and supper that day.

The Titus Oates Conspiracy

After the Restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, Tixall became the principal centre for the Catholic gentry of Staffordshire. Through this association, and because, by chance, Lord Aston had a dishonest steward, it became the scene of events connected with the so-called Popish Plot which unfolded between 1678-81. A turncoat Catholic and perjurer, Titus Oates, working with a fanatically anti-Catholic clergyman called Israel Tonge, falsely accused numerous Catholics of plotting to assassinate the King.

The dishonest steward was Stephen Dugdale, who had been cheating the Tixall estate for years. When the 2nd Lord Aston died in 1678, and his son Walter inherited, Dugdale was afraid that his dishonesty would be discovered, so he decided to flee. However, the country was in a state of anti-Catholic hysteria following the false revelations of Titus Oates, and Tixall, being a Catholic stronghold, was being watched by the military.

Dugdale was arrested as he made his escape and was taken to Stafford Gaol. He was questioned, and at first said he knew nothing of any Catholic plotting; but when he was offered a free pardon for any offence had committed if he co-operated, he thought of his guilt concerning his master's money and gave false evidence. He indicted Lord Aston, in fact a loyal subject of Charles II, who was sent to the Tower; and several of the Tixall servants, who were sent to Stafford Gaol, though they were later released. Lastly, Dugdale accused Lord Stafford, an

intimate friend of Lord Aston's, of plotting against the King. Stafford was arrested and tried in the House of Lords. Dugdale's story, which he told at the trial, went like this:

> I have been frequently acquainted, while I was a servant at my Lord Aston's, with my Lord Stafford coming to my Lord's house in the country. And, my Lord having been there several times, I came to such intimacy, by Mr Evers' (the chaplain's) means, that my Lord would frequently discourse with me. About the latter end of August or some day in September, my Lord Aston, my Lord Stafford and several other gentlemen, were in a room in Lord Aston's house and by means of Mr Evers, I was admitted to hear for encouragement. And there I heard them fully determine that to take the life of the king was the best way they could resolve on as the speediest means to introduce their own religion.
>
> Sometime in September, my Lord being at Mr Abnett's house in Stafford, my Lord Stafford came to Tixall upon a Sunday to hear Mass. I meeting him at the outer gate as he alighted from his horse, he said to me, it was a sad thing they could not say their prayers but in a hidden manner; but ere long we should have our religion established.
>
> After that my Lord Stafford was some times at Stafford and some times at Tixall. I will not be positive to a day, but I think about the middle of September he sent to me to come to his lodging, I think by his page or him that waited upon him in his chamber. He was arising and dressing. He sent his men out and with many fair speeches offered me five hundred pounds to kill the King.

Stafford's description of this startling interview was very different. He said that indeed he had been staying at Tixall in September, because on the 21st the great footrace at nearby Etching Hill would take place. Running footmen were hired at these races and he was looking for a runner for Lord Danby. On that morning Stafford said:

> I was in my bed, and my servant (with me twelve or fourteen years) told me Stephen Dugdale dared not ask to go to the race, because my Lord Aston was angry with him for meddling in races. Would I get leave for him? I was not over-willing. I knew Lord Aston would not refuse me, but he might perhaps take it ill to be asked. But I sent for Dugdale and asked him some foolish questions - who would win etc. I promised to ask for leave for him to go with my servant to show him the way. Dugdale stayed in the room while I dressed. We were not alone one moment together.

Dugdale also maintained that he had heard a treasonable conversation when he was in the gardens at Tixall, hidden behind a great oak that stood beside the Bowling Green. The tree, which came to be called Stafford's Oak or Oates' Oak, was east of the hall, and was still standing in 1908.

Oates, corroborated by Dugdale's false claims of a plan to murder the King, swore that he had delivered to Lord Stafford a commission from the Pope to be paymaster general of an army to be raised against Charles II. Even though witnesses later admitted to being bribed heavily by Dugdale to produce their evidence, Stafford was first attainted in 1678 (losing his title and lands) and then found guilty and executed in 1680.

These must have been very anxious times at Tixall, a strange reversal of fortunes in comparison with the loyal Protestantism of the Gatehouse's builder and the departure of a weeping Queen of Scots a century earlier. Lord Aston remained in the Tower till 1685, when, on application to Parliament, he was discharged. He became Lord Lieutenant of the county and in the revolution of 1688 held Chester castle for James II. He died in 1714.

(In his *Natural History of Staffordshire* of 1686, Robert Plot recounts an intriguing tradition that it had been known for it to rain frogs on the Bowling Green at Tixall. 'They have appeared so thick, that it had been difficult not to tread on them in walking… They have sometimes been found in great numbers upon the Leads of the stately Gatehouse there; whither how they should be brought otherwise, has to be thought equally strange as that they should come thither by rain; it being very improbable that they should either crawl up the walls or leap up the stairs.' Landmark has experienced no such phenomenon.)

Tixall in the eighteenth century – Trubshaw and Baker

Until the Roman Catholic Relief Act in 1829, recusancy[4] brought with it restrictions in public office for Catholics, and heavy taxes were levied on them. The Astons were never again to attain the status of their 17th-century predecessors. They had also inherited a house and estate at Standon in Hertfordshire, and spent much of their time there. This did not stop them planning improvements at Tixall.

Work seems to have taken place in several different stages. Sir Thomas Clifford, writing in 1817, attributes it all to his grandfather, the 5th Lord Aston:

> About the year 1748 James, fifth lord Aston, enclosed a great part of the rabbit-warren (400 acres, lying west of the house). He also determined to erect a new mansion on the ruins of the old one; and for this purpose cut down the most valuable oaks, leaving however quite sufficient for beauty and shelter. He lived only long enough to erect a quadrangle, containing excellent offices, and some good bed-chambers; so that at his death in 1750 (sic), the old residence remained nearly as it was when first erected.

The new quadrangle was built beside the old house, and to its east, rather than on top of it, and it may in fact have been begun some time before, under the 4th Lord Aston. In the 1720s a local Master Builder, Richard Trubshaw of Haywood, was employed on a number of jobs at Tixall. In 1721 he built 'a new lodge at Tixall Park', and later worked on what appears to be the Gatehouse: in his diary (now lost) he gives an estimate for 'Building the great Archway … cutting coats of arms, rails upon parrapet etc.'

How extensive these repairs were it is difficult to say, because they were carried out in the same Tixall stone as the original. In 1976, however, we discovered that several of the capitals were fixed to the columns by iron rods. These would not have been used in 1580, and may have been the means by which Trubshaw secured replacements of his own.

[4] Recusancy: refusal to participate in Church of England services or to swear the Oath of Supremacy, which included loyalty to the Crown as Head of the Church.

Walter Aston (1660-1748), 4th Lord Aston of Forfar with his wife Anne and their children by Richard von Bleeck, 1725. The 4th Lord Aston repaired the old Hall and Gatehouse, and may also have started work on the new house.

Certainly, according to the source for the reference to Trubshaw's diary ('Stafforda' in *A Guide and History of Ancient Haywood,* 1924), the estimate was followed by a series of sketches of the Classical Orders, perhaps reference for or record of the Gatehouse.

Whatever his work on the Gatehouse, in 1729 Trubshaw 'began to pluck down the East Front of Tixall' [Hall] - presumably with the intention of replacing it with a new one, a job of which he was quite capable. Trubshaw (besides being of gigantic stature was and a champion wrestler) was one of those adaptable figures of 18th-century construction, both architect and builder, and quite often surveyor and master mason as well. He worked for many of the Staffordshire gentry, and in neighbouring counties too. Dr Howard Colvin writes of one house he suspects is by Trubshaw that it 'establishes its architect as the author of a vernacular baroque style comparable to that of the Bastards of Blandford.'

His descendant, Susanna Trubshaw, who compiled *Family Records* in 1876, records that he had a collection of architectural books, including Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus.*

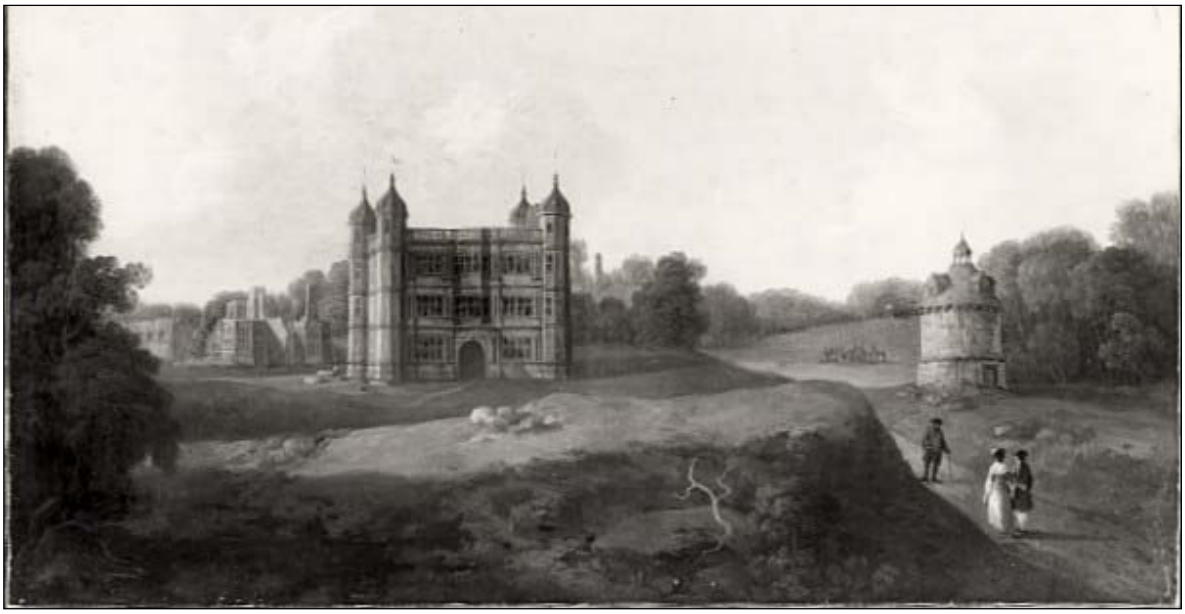
How much work he did in 1729 we don't know. Lead and oil were paid for later that year, but there is no other entry that year. Further work was carried out for Lord Aston in 1738. What seems most likely is that only a single east wing of the new house was built at this time, and that it was, as Sir Thomas Clifford says, the 5th Lord Aston who expanded this into a quadrangle after his father's death in 1748.

Richard Trubshaw had died in 1745. His son Charles had taken over the business, but in 1751 Lord Aston employed another architect in 1751 to draw up plans. This was William Baker of Cheshire, who had a flourishing country house practice in the Midlands. According to his Account Book, the commission from Lord Aston took him 5 days, for which he charged 5 guineas.

Baker seems to have done no more than draw up plans. It was Charles Trubshaw who executed and supervised the work, over the following year. The final account had to be submitted to Lord Aston's executors, however, because he died of small pox in August, 1751, aged just twenty eight (a fact noted by William Baker in his book). Items listed by Baker were bricks for the new house, and the walls to the Court; flagging for the Court and passages; a chapel; a staircase 6ft wide; a coach- house and stables; 72 feet of an old Battlement, new-set; and an 'Astragal round ye building.'

Lord Aston had been married to Barbara Talbot, sister of the 14th Earl of Shrewsbury. Their two daughters were joint heirs to his property. The title Baron Aston of Forfar passed to a remote cousin and then became extinct. The Tixall estate was settled on the younger daughter, Barabara, and with her marriage a new family enter the scene.

Tixall in the 18th century, one of a pair of paintings, said to be at Burton Constable. Most of the old hall is by now largely roofless and ruinous. It has been previously thought that the range to the right was Richard Trubshaw's new wing, added c1730, but this seems unlikely given the degree to which vegetation has encroached, and the Gothic style of the window for which a date of c1730 would be too late – and too early for the later 18th-century fashion for the Gothick. More plausible is that this pair of paintings was done to record the scene before work began on the new hall, rather than that they show the new wing.



The second painting, somewhat fancifully picturesque in the landscaping, since the Gatehouse does not stand on such a platform. The surviving lower floor of the Tudor house can be clearly seen, as well as a pleasing dovecote. The dovecote and most of the old hall were demolished by the Hon Thomas Clifford in the 1830s, leaving only some picturesque fragments.

The Cliffords at Tixall, and a new house in a new landscape

Barbara Aston married Thomas, the youngest son of Lord Clifford of Chudleigh. He was a 'posthumous' child, born after his father had died, and was largely brought up in Paris, by his mother. He completed the rebuilding of Tixall Hall, and demolished all but a fragment of the Tudor mansion. He also consulted Capability Brown, and employed William Emes, on the landscaping of the park.

The Cliffords had twelve children. The eldest son, also called Thomas, was made a baronet in 1815. He loved Tixall, and continued his father's improvements there. With his brother Arthur (discoverer of the chest of 17th-century papers), Sir Thomas wrote *A Topographical and Historical Description of the parish of Tixall*. This was published in Paris in 1817, and was dedicated to HRH Charles Philip of France, who had visited Tixall and spoke of it 'in most flattering terms of approbation.'

Sir Thomas, therefore, is the best person to describe his father's improvements:

> After the death of Lord Aston, and during the minority of his two daughters and co-heiresses… the house at Tixall was for many years neglected and forsaken. In the year 1768, Barbara, the younger daughter, being of age, a division of his estates was made between the two sisters; in consequence of which her husband, the Hon Thomas Clifford, obtained possession of the house and estate of Tixall. He soon found that the upper stories of the mansion were unsafe to inhabit. He was therefore compelled to retreat into the quadrangle above mentioned, in which he lived several years. At length he determined on adding a new house to this quadrangle, the shell of which was completed in 1782, but the upper apartments only were finished and inhabited at the time of his death, which happened in 1787.[5]

Sir Thomas does not say who the architect of this new house was. When he goes on to describe the interiors, he says that they were 'fitted up' by Samuel Wyatt, with no implication that Wyatt had already designed the exterior. Wyatt's interiors may, indeed, have been commissioned by Sir Thomas himself after his father's death, when the main rooms were complete. For the exterior, it is of course possible that the Cliffords went to the third of the Trubshaw dynasty,

[5] *A Topographical and Historical Description of the Parish of Tixall* (Paris,1817)

A 19th-century print of the new mansion at Tixall, completed in the 1770s by Thomas, the youngest son of Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, who married the last Lord Aston's daughter Barbara. It was a not especially successful foray into provincial Classicism, with a nod to Palladio via Isaac Ware but limited understanding of Classical proportion and rhythm. The gatehouse stands to the left, with the ruins of the old house still beyond.

Of interest too are the two stone lions atop the single storey wings flanking the portico, made of Coade stone. This was a highly durable fired ceramic material, more durable than natural stone and promoted by the eponymous Mrs Eleanor Coade and her associates from a manufactory in Lambeth from 1769 until the mid-1830s. Mrs Coade employed the finest sculptors of the day to produce the moulds for her wares, and the Tixall lions are typical examples of their high quality. After Tixall Hall was demolished by the Cliffords in 1829, the lions were sold. They are said to have moved first to the Lilleshall Monument near Church Aston in Shropshire. This obelisk was erected by grateful tenants in 1833 in memory of the 1st Duke of Sutherland of Lilleshall Hall, and was flanked by the two lions (said to be the Tixall ones) and two griffins. After a violent thunderstorm, the beasts were removed. The Sutherlands sold the Lilleshall estate in 1917 (which includes the ruins of Lilleshall Abbey), and after the Second World War, Lilleshall Hall became a National Sports Centre. The Coade lions now grace the east lodge.

James, who followed on from his father in 1772, and was later County Surveyor.

The Hon. Thomas did more than rebuild the house, however:

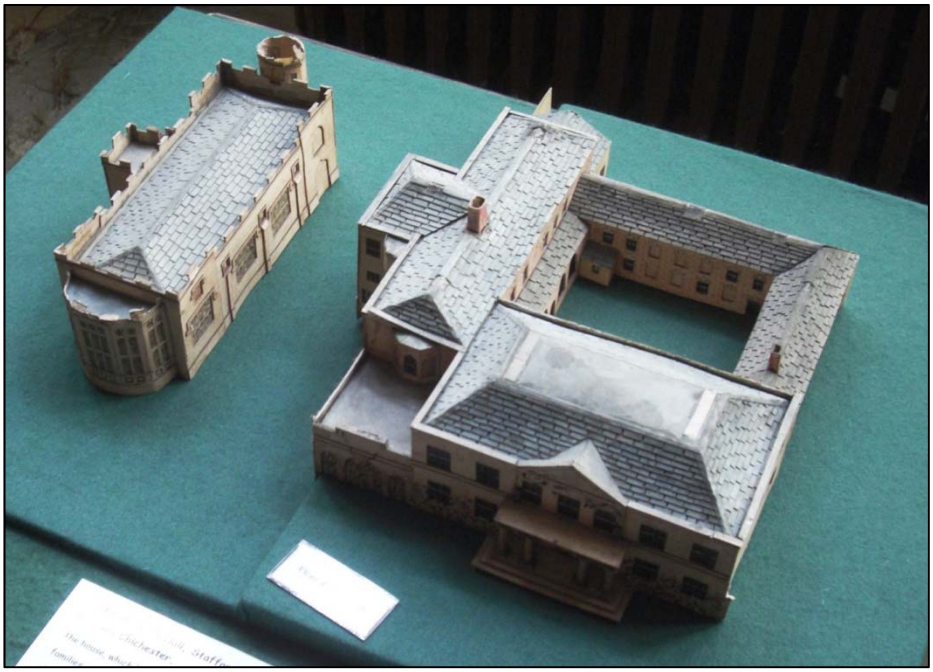
> Some years before he undertook this building, he erected behind the house, new coach houses and stables; and formed a complete farmyard with suitable conveniences: having previously removed the old stables, and dovecote, which stood in the front of his intended new house. He also demolished several cottages which obstructed the prospect, and screened the churchyard, parsonage and remainder of the village from the eye by judicious plantations. He filled up two large ponds which were immediately behind the house, destroyed the old garden, which occupied the slope on the west side of the ancient mansion, and formed another at a more convenient distance. The approach to the house he altered entirely, and for this purpose he caused a handsome stone bridge to be built over the river Sow at Hollisford. In the progress of these improvements, he was assisted by the taste and judgement of the celebrated Brown, and his pupil Eames.[6]

Capability Brown was paid for advice in 1774, having already worked for Thomas Clifford's elder brother at Ugbrooke in Devon. According to Sir Thomas, Brown urged his patron to build on a new site, where the higher ground would give a more extensive view - advice which was clearly disregarded. It is in fact likely that the final designs, and the work itself, were left to William Emes, a well-established landscape gardener in the Midlands and Derbyshire.

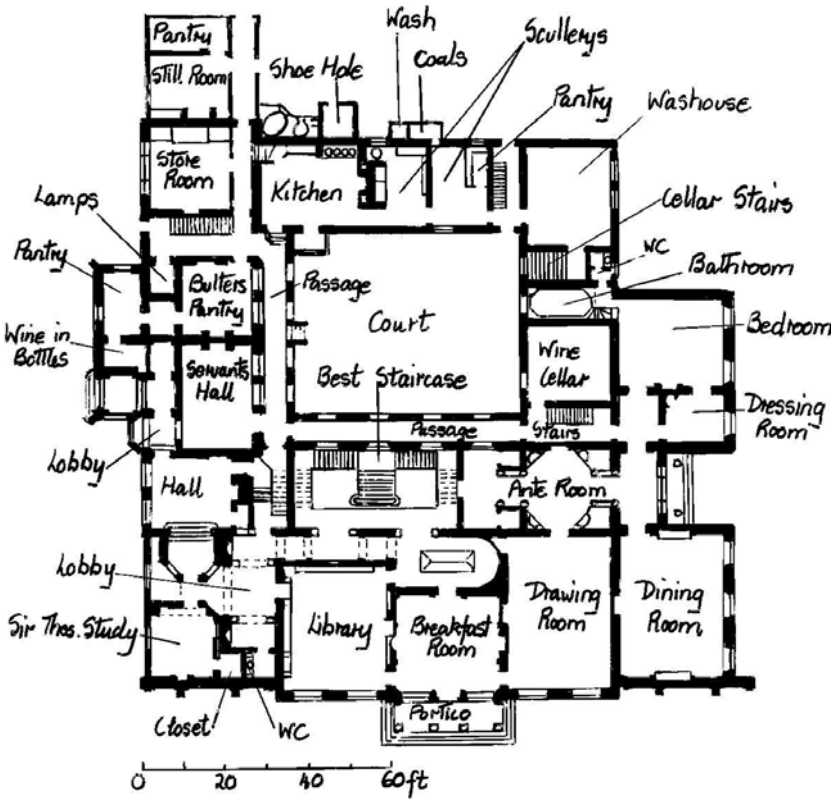
These landscape improvements included an unusual example of a landowner working with a canal builder:

> But Tixall is indebted to a fortuitous circumstance, for one of its most beautiful features. About the year 1766, was undertaken the navigable cut called the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, which passes for more than two miles through the parish of Tixall. The Hon Thomas Clifford had the canal widened in this part of its course, into the breadth and sweep of a noble river; which appearance, or that of an inland lake, it now presents, when seen from the house, or the grounds about it. To bring this fine object more into sight, he removed, at a great expense, a bank of rock which obstructed the prospect from the house, took down a great many fences and threw the intervening ground between the house and the water into the form of a beautiful sloping lawn.[7]

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.



Model of the new Tixall Hall and the chapel erected in 1827, made in the mid 19thC by Miss Eliza Chichester, whose sister Marianne married Thomas Clifford Constable in 1827. The chapel was dismantled and moved in the 1840s. (Burton Constable)



Annotated floorplan* of the ground floor of the new mansion, transcribed from an original at Burton Constable.

* http://www.tixall-ingestre-andrews.me.uk/tixall/txhllpl.html

Neale's engraving of 1820, showing the new mansion across the widened canal, part of the Hon Thomas Clifford's landscape improvements. This stretch of the canal is still known as the Tixall Wide. A trellis-work veranda was later added to the portico.

Engraving by J Buckler, *c*1830, showing the Gatehouse now flanked by both mansion and chapel.

Tixall chapel, designed by Joseph Ireland in 1827, in its original setting just behind the Gatehouse. When the Cliffords left Tixall for Burton Constable in 1835, they left an acre of ground to local Catholics and this chapel. The chapel was dismantled stone by stone, and, a little modified, re-erected as St John the Baptist's Catholic Church in Great Haywood.

Sir Thomas Clifford's castellated Keeper's Cottage and Tea-Room(Both paintings hang on the walls of the Gatehouse)

Sir Thomas (or perhaps his brother Arthur) continues with a more detailed description, which it is worth including, since so much has changed since:

> Tixall House ... occupies altogether a considerable extent of ground; but the only part fully exposed to view is the south front. It is built of Tixall stone, and is ornamented with a portico of four columns, of the Doric order; the shaft of each column being a single solid block of stone, 15 feet in length. The front is extended by a screen on each side, decorated in a like manner with Doric columns and pilasters, which serve to conceal the offices, and to give consequence to the building; the whole forming a facade of 144 feet. Each screen is surmounted by a large pedestal, on which were placed, a few years ago, two lions couchant, from Coade's manufactory at Lambeth. The elegant simplicity of the architecture of the front, together with its situation, never fails to strike every beholder with pleasure.... The whole of the new house is well connected with the old quadrangle, and there are some good rooms in it, besides a neat, luminous, modern chapel. In the gallery, which connects the old and new part of the house together, there are many family portraits and other paintings.

Naturally, he goes on to mention the remains of the old house:

> These are principally the south bow window of the great drawing room, richly decorated on the outside, with roses, lozenges (one of the armorial bearings of Aston), and other Gothic ornaments.
>
> The internal decoration of this drawing room was very singular: the lower part of the walls being wainscotted, while the upper part exhibited the naked stone, tastefully adorned with sculptured panels, with the heraldic shields of the founders, and the initial letters of their names, all of stone, and rising in low relief from the sides of the room.... The east window is a kind of oriel, and the ceiling is elegantly ornamented with various emblematic devices....
>
> The walls of two smaller rooms are likewise still standing, but they have now no roof but the thick branches of the ivy, and no floor but its fallen leaves. Nothing can be more delightful, than to contemplate in the different seasons of the year, or at different times of day, the mingled effects of light and shade among these dilapidated, ivied walls. But, above all, on a clear, moonlight night, when all around is still; and when the recollections and emotions, which such a scene is calculated to excite, are awakened and exalted by the solemn, congenial serenity of the nocturnal heavens - it is then that fancy and feeling will exert their influence and take full possession of the mind and heart. [8]

[8] Ibid.

Arthur Clifford concludes with a long poem, *A Midnight Meditation Among the Ruins of Tixall*, which begins:

> 'How sweetly on that mouldering tower,
> How sweetly on that ivy-bower,
> Whose branches through the ruins creep,
> The Melancholy moon-beams sleep!
> Bright Queen of Heaven! Thy solemn light
> Softly soothes my wakeful sight,
> To milder feelings tunes my breast,
> And lulls my throbbing heart to rest....'

And so it continues, for many more lines of archetypally Romantic sensibility, still sufficiently regarded for it to be part of the British Library's Historical Print Editions. It is a fitting elegy for Tixall Old Hall as life moved on to the new mansion.

The Granvilles at Tixall

Having read Sir Thomas and Arthur describing their home with such eloquence and fondness, you would expect to hear that they spent most of their time there. On the contrary, during the same years that the book was being written, the house was let to tenants - albeit tenants of a very superior kind.

In 1811 Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, MP for Stafford and a younger son of the Marquess of Stafford, rented Tixall as his country seat. He was later to be Ambassador to Paris, and has the distinction of being the man whom the assassin of Britain's only murdered Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval, had intended to shoot, in 1812. In 1809, when already well-established in his political and diplomatic career, he had married Lady Harriet Cavendish. They wished to establish a home for themselves and their family (which was to include two older illegitimate children of Lord Granville's by Harriet's aunt, Lady Bessborough) in the county, where they could also entertain on a grand scale.

As a younger son, he could not afford to build such a house, and the only family property available, at Lilleshall, was no more than an enlarged farmhouse. (This link perhaps also helps explain the eventual departure of the Coade lions to Lilleshall). Lady Bessborough, who corresponded regularly with both her former lover and her niece, urged them to turn this, with minimum expense, into a 'small Gentleman's house: it would be so much better, so much more creditable, than a hired place.' But Tixall, so near to Stafford, proved more attractive - though little cheaper: Lady Bessborough commented that they must be ruined with the cost of furnishing it, presumably because the existing Aston furnishings were so ancient.

Harriet Granville (her husband became Viscount Granville in 1815) was one of the great letter-writers of the early 19th century (a new edition of her letters, edited by Virginia Surtees, was published in 1990, under the title *A Second Self*). The Granvilles spent much of their time on a constant round of visits to other country

The ruins of Old Tixall Hall, sketched in 1838

houses, in London or, as soon as it was possible, in Paris, but she was always happy to return to Tixall and the children. 'Tixall is in radiant beauty' she wrote in 1812, 'all over roses, rain, sunshine, and a new fireplace in the hall. I really do love it beyond expression.' Sometimes it was a quiet retreat - 'I long for the repose of Tixall' - but at others it was filled with guests: 'I am delighted to find Tixall so popular, for though I know people would always say so to me, yet they really appear to enjoy it, and I myself do think it so comfortable that I cannot help giving credit to those appearances.'

From another source we learn something of the life led there with the Granvilles, because, along with the numerous members of their family, and friends such as George Canning, another Prime Minsiter, one of their visitors was the diarist Charles Greville. He stayed there in November, 1818.

> I never remember so agreeable a party - le bon goût, les ris, l'aimable liberté. Everybody was pleased because each did what he pleased, and the tone of the society was gay simple and clever .... Nothing could exceed the agreeableness of the life we led at Tixall. We breakfasted about twelve or later, dined at seven, played whist and macao the whole evening and went to bed at different hours between two and four .... Littleton was the greatest inner and Granville the loser. I wrote a description of the macao in verse .... The next morning Luttrell[9] came down with a whole paper full of epigrams...Thus we trifled life away.

Granville seems to have spent much of his time at Tixall shooting, his main interest besides politics and gambling. However he found time to dip into books in the library, as he wrote to Lady Bessborough:

> We have a pleasant sort of old library, for besides many of the modern and useful books, there are a great many odd old books that I never met with before. Tonight I have been reading one called On the Government of Wives, wholesome and pleasant advice to married men; it is full of strange stories.

Unfortunately neither of the Granvilles describes the house as they found it, although Harriet once compares the English Garden at Mount Edgecumbe in Cornwall with the plantation at Tixall, 'with magnolia and arbutus, large trees and benches and comforts in abundance.' Then, in 1819, they rented Wherstead in

[9] NOT the builder of Landmark's Luttrell's Tower, who died in 1803.

Tixall in the last days of Sir Thomas Clifford, who seems to have spent more time there towards the end of his life and commissioned a family chapel in 1827. This sketch was made for the sales particulars prepared by his son in 1833.

When the 1827 chapel was dismantled to become the Catholic Church at Great Haywood, the east window and its stained glass were reserved. It is said they were installed in the Long Gallery at Burton Constable (above), although work continues to confirm this.

Suffolk instead; Granville now being in the House of Lords, they had no need for a constituency residence, and preferred to be nearer London. Later that year, when staying at Sandon, they went 'against my earnest entreaties' to have a last look at Tixall: 'I prefer Wherstead, but I spent seven of the happiest halfs of my life there and I was so terribly overcome, that I could not command myself.'

Sale of the Tixall Estate

Sir Thomas Clifford had concluded his description of his father's activities at Tixall in 1817 with the words:

> Since that period, the whole of this property has continued in a progressive state of improvement; and the present possessor finds himself seated in the centre of a well cultivated estate, lying nearly in a ring fence.

But, as we have seen, this tenant did not spend much time within this ring fence, and it was about to be broken more completely; indeed the Cliffords' history of it was perhaps a way of saying farewell. In 1821 Sir Thomas unexpectedly inherited the large Yorkshire estate of Burton Constable, near Hull, from distant Catholic cousins, the Constables. He changed his name to Clifford Constable, and divided his time between the two houses (there was another fine library at Burton Constable). In the words of *Country Life,* 'this cadet of a West Country family found himself lord of two great domains.'

Sir Thomas Clifford Constable only enjoyed such status for two years as he died in 1823 in Ghent. His son and heir, Thomas Aston Clifford Constable succeeded to Burton Constable aged just 17 and with his uncle George, drew up plans for a chapel at Tixall by architect Joseph Ireland - since 1791, the Catholic Relief Act had allowed Catholics to worship freely provided they registered their places of worship. At his coming of age in 1827, Thomas married his cousin Marianne Chichester. The couple then departed on an extended honeymoon in Europe, accompanied by Marianne's sister Eliza. Sir Thomas decided from Ghent that one great domain was enough and put the Tixall estate up for sale. The Clifford

The Mansion House is built of Tixall Stone, ornamented with a portico of four columns, of the Doric order, the shaft of each column being a single block of stone. The rooms are of noble proportions, the entrance hall being 24 feet square, the library 28 feet by 24, and the eating rooms 36 feet by 24, and all of them 16 feet six inches high. The offices, in which there are some good rooms, form a quadrangle, and are well arranged and connected with the house. The view from the portico is one of the most pleasing in the county. The foreground is one continued lawn, gently sloping from the house to a spacious lake of water, formed by the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Navigation, which runs through the Estate for two miles, and which has been widened in this part of its course into the breadth and sweep of a noble river; on the right is

THE VENERABLE GATE-HOUSE OF TIXALL,

through which is approached

THE BEAUTIFUL STONE CHAPEL:

on the left, which is the eastern approach to the house, are some large and shady trees, beyond which are the LODGES, and the village of GREAT HAYWOOD. The STABLES, which have been lately built of stone, at great expence, form a crescent behind, and at a short and convenient distance from the house, and have boxes and stalls for 40 horses, with rooms for coachmen and grooms, and coach-house for ten carriages, vaulted underneath. The DOG KENNELS have also been lately built, with every convenience, and will contain two Packs of Hounds, with House attached, for the Huntsman and Whippers-In.

The soil, on the Eastern part of the parish of Tixall, is well adapted for the growth of wheat—on the Western side for Barley and Turnips—on the middle and principal part is a rich Loam, adapted to every kind of husbandry,—and on the South, South-West, and South East, is a most valuable tract of rich meadow Land, stretching three miles in extent, and watered by the rivers Trent and Sow, the latter river forming the boundary of the Tixall Estate.

The Proprietor is the Lessee of the TITHE and GLEBE of the Parish of Tixall, for the life of the present Incumbent, and the Purchaser will have the benefit of the Lease, subject to the payment of the annual reserved rent of £200 per annum.

The Estate has a southern aspect in the fine and fertile vale between Wolseley and Stafford, nearly within a ring fence, and throughout well wooded and watered. The limits of an advertisement preclude the possibility of entering into a detailed statement of the advantages possessed by this property, which has been called the garden of Staffordshire; but it may be observed, that no Estate in the county has been brought before the public, for the last half century, which can be put in competition with it.

The FISHERY is extensive and excellent, and the SHOOTING is unequalled, lying between the strictly preserved sporting grounds of the Earl Talbot and the Earl of Lichfield, whose magnificent woods form a picturesque object in the surrounding scenery of Tixall, and the wild and romantic knolls upon Cannock Chase (upon which part of the Estate has right of common) are within sight of the Park, which is well stocked with Deer.

A small part of the Land in Haywood, containing about 60 Acres, is held under the Subchanter and Vicars Choral of the Cathedral Church of Lichfield, on a Lease for 21 years from the 27th March 1832, (which has been renewed on the payment of a fine every 7 or 14 years) at the rent of £4 per annum.

Other parts of the Lands in Haywood, containing about 110 Acres, are Copyhold of the Manor of Haywood, at annual rents of £2. 17s. 5½d. and on the payment of the same sum upon death or alienation.

All the Estates in Tixall, and the remainder of the Estates in Haywood and Colwich and Stowe, are freehold.

The Land Tax upon all the Estates in Tixall, except the Glebe, has been redeemed. The Land Tax on the Glebe is £2. 18s. and on the remaining part of the Estates £71. 4s. 5½d.

The Tenants hold from year to year.

Tixall is in the centre of Staffordshire and of England, distant from Lichfield 13 miles; Stafford 4 miles; and Stone 10; and the Liverpool and Chester Mails pass daily within a mile of the house.

Sales particulars of 1833, with accompanying map

Map from the 1833 sales particulars

Constables returned to settle at Burton Constable, laden with treasures acquired on their travels – and deeply in debt Joseph Ireland, the chapel's architect, took Thomas Aston Clifford Constable to Court and won the case. In May 1833, Tixall was put up for sale, possibly because of his indebtedness. It failed to reach the reserve price and was withdrawn. Charles Chetwynd Talbot, 2nd Viscount Ingestre, whose estate was adjacent to Tixall, was a bidder and he remained interested for another 12 years. Talbot finally bought Tixall in 1845 after the Clifford Constables had safeguarded both the chapel and the interests of the local Catholic population by dismantling the chapel re-erecting it on an acre of ground which he gave to the Catholic community in Great Haywood. From an oration by the Reverend George Spencer at the laying of the foundation stone of the relocated chapel, renamed St John's Church, it seems that it was the Protestantism of the Talbots that lay behind its relocation. [10]

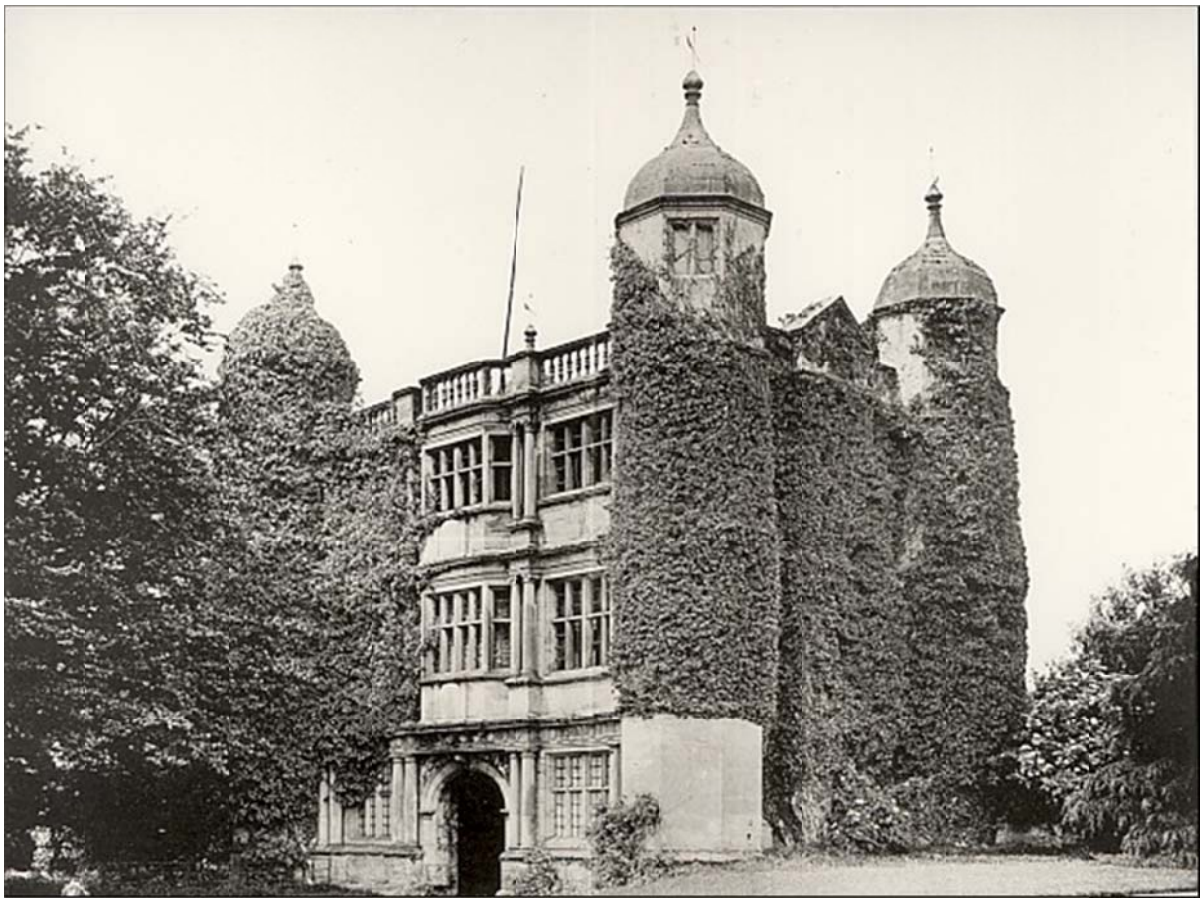
The chapel was re-erected there, albeit in modified form since Thomas Constable reserved the painted glass in the chapel, and the canted window at the east end of the chapel did not make it to Great Haywood either. Its stones ended up as a garden folly until they were retrieved in 1985. What is left of this window now stands in the church garden of St John's Church. There is a theory that this window was in fact a remnant from the old, Tudor Tixall Hall and in 2013 a local project is seeking to reconstruct it from surviving fragments of stone and computer graphics. Meanwhile, expert assessment of the date of surviving glass at Burton Constable is still awaited.[11]

It was another twelve years before the Tixall estate was finally sold, in 1845, to a neighbour, Charles Chetwynd Talbot, 2nd Earl Talbot, of Ingestre Hall.
Soon afterwards Tixall Hall was let to Mr James Tryer, J.P. He was succeeded by other tenants, and for a time the Earl of Shrewsbury (3rd Earl Talbot had

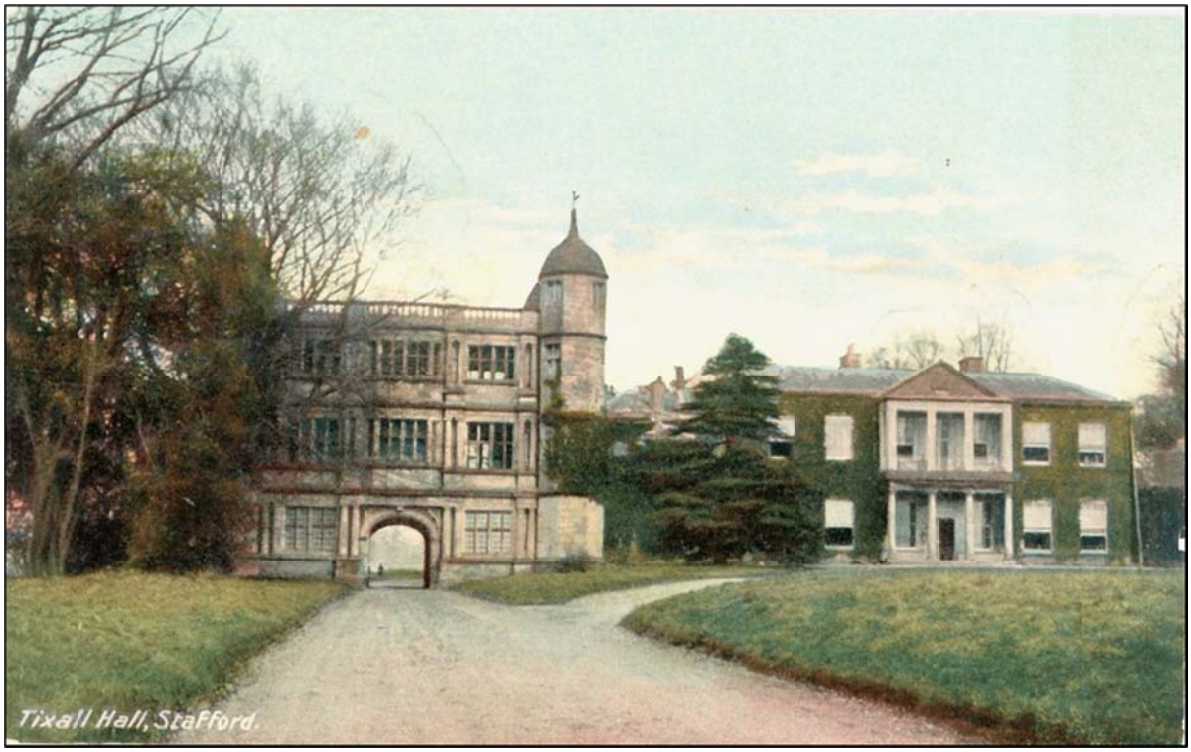
[10] In 1988, a pavilion at Ingestre Hall, perhaps also the work of a Trubshaw, became another Landmark so reuniting, in a manner of speaking, the two estates once more. Ingestre Pavilion remains in our care today.
[11] My thanks to Annette and Alan Bloor for sharing there research into Thomas Aston Clifford Constable.

succeeded his cousin as 18th Earl of Shrewsbury in 1856) lived there himself, while Ingestre was rebuilt after a fire in 1882. After the First World War, however, the house appears to have been left empty.

The Shrewsburys had many other houses to maintain, and in 1927, after the death of the 20th Earl in 1921, and during the minority of his grandson, the 21st Earl, Tixall Hall was demolished. Only the stables were left standing, together with Sir Walter Aston's great Gatehouse.



Early 20th-century photos. The old postcard (below) provides a rare photographic record of Tixall House.



Later History of the Gatehouse

It is impossible to say when the Gatehouse fell out of use. As has already been suggested, when originally built it was probably intended to provide extra accommodation; and it no doubt continued to do so during the days of lavish entertaining by the 17th-century Lords Aston. The main room might also have served, as with so many gatehouses, for the occasional sittings of the manorial court, a use that sometimes survived into the 18th century. The likelihood is that the rest of the building has been standing empty (or perhaps it would be more realistic to say has provided useful space for storing lumber), since at least 1700. Presumably it was in need of the repairs carried out by Richard Trubshaw in 1721. Whether it was then intended to bring its interior back into use, or whether it was regarded already as a venerable ruin, is again impossible to say. No inventories survive to tell us if it was furnished, and no one describes activities within it. All the known depictions show it freestanding and without

Curiously, Sir Thomas Clifford implies in his description of it in 1817 that it had at that time no roof. He certainly talks of the accommodation in it as a thing of the past. It is quite likely, in fact, that he re-roofed it himself, as the only way of keeping it standing at all. The floors may have been maintained, so that the building could safely be explored, and the view from it enjoyed. The chimney stacks at either end were taken down at about the same time, and replaced with a curious pediment. The turrets were given new weather vanes.

A roof there certainly was in 1951, when the architect David Nye visited Tixall for the SPAB. However, the lead had been stripped off shortly before, and the surviving beams were to collapse soon afterwards. All floors and partitions, even the glazing, had gone. Some work was done soon after 1960, to stabilise the building as a ruin. The last remains of roof and floors were stripped out, and the walls were capped in brick and concrete. This staved off immediate danger, but was not a long- term solution. The walls were still exposed to wind and rain on both faces, so that the stonework continued to deteriorate.

When the newly-founded Landmark Trust approached the Trustees of the Shrewsbury estate, therefore, suggesting that it should take on the Gatehouse, the offer gladly was taken up, and the sale was concluded in April 1968.

The Gatehouse in 1961, roofless and floorless as a consolidated ruin.

Eroding stonework in 1971. Crumbling buxom angles keep watch inwards, knights guard on the external approach.

Mr Walker examining the decaying stonework in 1971. Note the cast iron dowel, possibly a Trubshaw's work, or else dating from c 1817. The corrosion of such pins, as they expand and so crack the stone, has been an ongoing concern.

The Restoration of Tixall Gatehouse

Although the Landmark Trust bought Tixall Gatehouse in 1968, it did not at that time have the resources to undertake its repair, and it was five years before an architect was appointed to draw up plans. It was another two years before these had been completed, and all the necessary permissions obtained from the Local Authority, and from the then Historic Buildings Council, which also gave a generous grant towards the cost of repair. The architect was Lawrence Bond, of Grantham, who was then supervising the conversion of the 18th-century stables for residential use, the stables being the only building to survive from the two former halls.

The repair of the exterior stonework, and the creation of a new dwelling inside the shell, were carried out as separate operations. For the stonework repairs, a local mason, Mr Walker, was employed. In the words of the architect, 'he was one of those rare craftsmen who understand the Architect's philosophy of renewing only what is necessary to prevent the spread of decay, or to replace losses which interrupt main lines and features of the design.' Minimal repairs and renewals were gradually carried out over a two year period, most of which are still clearly visible.

The Gatehouse is built of Tixall stone, which came from a quarry just to the west of the park. Sir Thomas Clifford in 1817 described it as yielding to none in England for the beauty of its grain and colour. He added that 'it is soft, and easily wrought when first taken out of the ground, but after it has been exposed to the air it becomes hard and durable', as witnessed by the fact that the carved detail on the old buildings at Tixall 'exhibits no marks of the injuries of time' – nor, we may assume, was it yet blackened by the fumes of the Industrial Revolution.

By 1975, the injuries of time, and of damp and frost, were more obvious, and the stone in places was badly decayed - although not nearly as badly as might have been expected. No freshly quarried Tixall stone was available for Mr Walker (as it

The ground floor windows had all been carefully blocked with Tixall stone.

must have been for Richard Trubshaw) to make this damage good. Luckily, however, some large blocks had been used, probably in the early 19th century, to block the ground floor windows. These windows were to be reopened and so Mr Walker was able to make use of this surplus stone for his repairs.

Apart from damage caused directly by exposure to the elements, considerable harm had been done by the expansion, due to rusting, of iron dowels and cramps that had been used (probably by Trubshaw) for fixing capitals to columns on the main fronts, and also in the balustrade around the top of the building. Where this had happened, and the stone was badly cracked, the dowels had to be sawn out, and replaced in bronze. Wherever possible the original stone was then refixed, using epoxy resin; inevitably in a number of places the insertion of new stone (including whole Doric capitals and some Ionic volutes) was unavoidable.

Meanwhile new floor and roof structures of steel and concrete had been inserted by the main contractors, Sandy & Co of Stafford. The floor heights were determined by the original beam pockets which were visible in the walls. The roof was then given a layer of asphalt, and paved with reclaimed York flagstones, to provide a more durable surface than lead.

When Landmark took on the building, both the ground floor and turret windows were blocked. 110 window lights had to be unblocked in all, and then 95 new iron casements made, and glazing for 223 lights. Two sorts of glass were used to prevent too uniform an effect - Antique Reamy and Cordelais. The ground floor windows still had their original ferramenta, or iron bars, and these were retained. The doorways leading from the staircase also had their original irons still, on which the new doors were hung. The ironwork on the doors themselves was made specially.

The Gatehouse stood open to the sky.

The accommodation was mainly to be on the first floor, which could be kept reasonably enclosed and therefore warm. The top floor is in intriguing, with its large fireplaces at either end. They do not, however, necessarily imply that the floor was once divided. It was left as a single huge space, with extra bedrooms and a bathroom in the turrets. The doorways leading into these turrets had also been blocked, and had to be opened up again.

The first floor was more completely fitted out for Landmark use. The floors are of elm boards, except for the kitchen which has Staffordshire tiles. The panelling in the sitting room is also elm, of which sadly there was a superfluity in the early 1970s due to Dutch Elm disease. The double aspect of the central area is important historically, and any obstruction through division is deliberately avoided. The bedrooms each have their bathroom in a turret, as the original rooms might have had an adjoining closet. The walls, where not panelled, are limewashed.

On the ground floor, walls were put back on either side of the carriageway, in the same position as the original ones. The carriageway itself, like the roof, is paved with reclaimed York stone.

The first floor is complete, but materials can still be lowered by crane through the open roof and upper floor.

The second floor is finished and now awaits the roof.

Trying out the stem of the new weather-vanes on a repaired cupola.

Scaffolding down, but some casements still to be fitted.

**A crane was used to lower materials into the building,
to avoid having to use the narrow staircases.**

The turrets roofs were basically sound, apart from the stone finials, which had gone, along with the weather vanes. Both were replaced, and the domes repointed. Some of the joints between the stones had widened, and so were grouted and packed with slate and repointed. The new weather vanes were based on those shown in Plot's engraving, rather than their 18th-century replacements.

The North-West turret had originally held a clock. While the work was being carried out, the workings of this were found, stored at Shugborough. These turned out to be too worn to re-use, except for one bell. The clockmakers, Smith of Derby, installed a new electrical mechanism, retaining only the bell - with a night silencing device. Elm louvres were fitted in this turret, instead of windows.

In 1975 the gatehouse was, of course, without water or electricity supplies. Running water was one of the first essentials for the work, in fact, since experiments in washing the stone were to be carried out (though in the end only a very limited amount was done). Both services had to be laid on specially, but could be shared with the new houses in the stables. A new drive had to be laid too, leading off the main drive. Only the minimum amount of land around the building was fenced in, so that its still seems to stand in a field. The repair of the gatehouse was completed in April, 1977. During the next year or two some unsolved problems emerged. The worst of these was the penetration of damp into the turret rooms, due mainly to inadequate rainwater disposal. Water from the roof was discharged through spouts, and when it rained heavily, water was blown against the walls, and was seeping through them. The solution was to replace the spouts with downpipes. The walls of the turrets are quite thin, and even without the damp, the rooms were very cold. The next improvement was therefore to line them with wood, so that, ‘they could be used, without hardship, in both winter and summer’, as we promised optimistically in the 1990 update of this album. In 2012, Landmark’s ongoing programme of improvements for those who stay in our buildings as well as the ongoing maintenance needs of the Gatehouse prompted the next instalment in this building’s long history.

Some structural anomalies in the Gatehouse

There are various anomalies within the fabric of the Gatehouse for which we may never arrive at definitive answers, but that continue to puzzle both the Landmark team and those who stay there and contribute to the Log books.

To begin on the roof, the balustrades are not bonded with the turrets. The key 1686 engraving shows there were balustrades already in place by this date, so seem to have been a primary feature. Perhaps they were taken down and rebuilt, whether by Trubshaw c1729, or during the construction of the new house, or by Sir Thomas Clifford c1820. The 1686 engraving also shows two clusters of chimneys. These are still in place in the early 18th-century painting at Burton Constable, but gone by the time of the sketch in the1833 sales particulars. Whenever the chimneys were removed, the masonry projections containing the erstwhile flues were capped with triangular pediments. Another unexplained puzzle is the scar on the inner roof parapet moreorless in line with this pediment, suggesting that at some point in the Gatehouse's history, there was a pitched roof – strange when the turret stairs are so clearly configured for access to the roof, and when one of the main purposes for such buildings was the viewing platform for the views and activities below.

Then on the first floor, to the right of the stair turret door there is a blocked alcove (now used for coat pegs) with identical mouldings to the door to the stair. In the alcove are pintles for an outward opening door and this can be read as a blocked opening on the exterior. Where did this staircase lead and for what purpose? A roof walk?

On the ground floor, both rooms on either side of the archway originally had fireplaces, each of which has been broken through by the creation of a doorway. The west of these survives, the east is blocked. The NW turret has a blocked doorway facing north; the SW turret has a doorway facing west. There is no

ground floor entry directly into the SE turret. Why and when were these doorways created – and blocked? The answer may relate to access to estate offices and services and their areas (the Almonry *c*1612 at Old Campden House in Chipping Campden, for example, had ground floor doors leading to both a henyard and a bleaching garden, divided by a wall) or to the changing use of the various chambers as dwellings or for storage as the Gatehouse's status declined. We may well never find out.

Examples of anomalies at Tixall: top blocked doorways on ground and first floors on the east elevation, with masonry scars where earlier walls were keyed into the gatehouse; bottom, blocked doorway in the NW turret.

2010 refurbishment and 2012 repairs

Notwithstanding our optimism with regard to the lining of the turrets in 1990, twenty years later we acknowledged Tixall to be one of our colder Landmarks, especially its turret rooms, with visitor requirements for warmth also increasing. We spent considerable time considering whether we could convert the magnificent second floor to make it part of the Landmark accommodation, but were ultimately defeated by the cost of this – it would have been an entire project in its own right, even if desirable. For now, we restricted any change on this floor to lifting the 'chess board' of paving slabs installed in the 1970s to prevent inappropriate use of the chamber, and which we had long regretted.

Instead, there was comprehensive internal refurbishment and refurnishing of the rest of the Landmark accommodation. Oil-fired central heating was installed throughout, replacing the outdated electric storage heaters. We considered, and would have preferred to install, a renewable energy system, but this would have required unsightly external circulation units. Ultimately, we felt this would unduly disfigure the exquisite exterior – an example of the difficult clash of principles sometimes encountered in historic conservation. All three turret bathrooms were stripped out, dry-lined for insulation and fully renewed. The sitting room was refurnished, internal joinery freshened and re-waxed, and the whole accommodation was redecorated.

By 2012, it had become clear that further repair and conservation was needed for the Gatehouse's fine external stonework. The 1970s restoration campaign had withstood the past forty years well enough, but its reliance on cement for some of the repairs was not entirely to more recent conservation standards. In places, water trapped behind this impervious material was causing the stone to crumble. The many iron rods embedded within the stone as part of still earlier repair phases also continued to corrode and in some cases split the stonework.




Examples of stonework decay and damage. Some of the 1970s cementitious repairs, like the plinth bottom right, had stood up well. In such cases, there was no need to replace.

One of Mr Walker's capitals, standing up well to the passage of time.

The scale and detailed complexity of this task made it beyond the scope of routine maintenance, and so Tixall was included in our 2012 Landmark Fund appeal, a fund established for just such extra-ordinary needs. As a result, we were very grateful to receive an extremely generous donation in memory of Dr Nigel Gilmore, a lover of gatehouses, which funded the external works in their entirety.

Midland Conservation Ltd of Walsall were instructed to carry out the repairs and in summer 2102, trial works took place of mortar samples and pointing techniques. This demonstrated that it would not be feasible to do the work from cherry pickers as originally hoped, and that the Gatehouse would have to be entirely scaffolded. This took place in September. Such a big area of scaffolding takes time to erect, so repointing at the lower levels progressed upwards behind the scaffolders, even if the result was that the top lifts came down almost as soon as they were up.

The most widespread problems were open joints, where earlier, mostly historic pointing had weathered away, and places where more recent cementitious repairs to the carved embellishment had detached through frost and weather. The south elevation, facing towards the road, had suffered most, but even here a conservative approach was taken joint by joint, rather than wholesale renewal. Leaking downpipes were repaired, a more complicated process than it might seem in that to replace a damaged top section, all the lengths below it had to be removed first.

On the roof, detached flashings were re-fixed and the leadwork repaired where necessary. A lightning conductor was installed. The opportunity was also taken to replace the weather vanes on the four turrets. These had all dated to 1976, any older ones having vanished before Landmark's acquisition in 1968. Of the 1976 vanes, three had jammed on their spindles and blown down, just one surviving.

The ashlar blocks are beautifully dressed and fitted with very tight joints, making repointing a painstaking process.

Cracking in the carved stonework called for fine grain filling with lime mortar.

Stainless steel pins were used to tie in loose or detached fragments.

Landmark's surveyor for the West Midlands, Richard Burton, discussing the work with the masons from Midland Conservation.

Details of the stonework from the scaffolding.

We still had the 1976 full-size drawings on file, and these were used by artist-blacksmith Mark Antrobus of Lichfield to recreate three replacements of copper alloy, coated in gold leaf.

The Gatehouse is one of the grandest and architecturally most distinguished of the buildings owned by Landmark, and happily one that is easily enjoyed from the outside by the passer-by, as well as those who help its future by choosing to stay inside it. Its care is a long term commitment, to which we will undoubtedly return in future decades. Now as then, the Gatehouse will continue to serve as a reminder of a most interesting house and some remarkable families, a focus for information otherwise scattered and easily forgotten – and for some very good stories and happy memories.

Caroline Stanford 2013

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Appendix: Letters written in 1585 & 1586 concerning Mary Queen of Scots' imprisonment at Tixall

Sir Amias Poulet, Mary Queen of Scots' keeper at Chartley, received detailed instructions from Sir Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth's secretary and head of her secret service; and he wrote equally detailed replies. The Letter-Books of Sir Amias Poulet, which contain this correspondence, are now in the Public Record Office; they were edited by John Morris in 1874, and most of the following letters are reproduced from that work.

The first one, however, has not, so far as we know, ever appeared in full, in print. In it Sir Amias argues against the considerable charge of housing Mary at Tixall; he describes the house and mentions the Gatehouse, which must have been brand new. (There is a copy of the letter, framed, in the Gatehouse).

Letter from Sir Amyas Poulet to the Right Honourable Sir Francis Walsingham, Her Majesty's Principle Secretary

Sir,

Although this Q.(Mary) being advertised that Chartley was environned with water did not mislike therwith, yet following your direction signified by yor lres of the XXIth of this present which came to my hande the XXIIIth of the same, I repayred the next morowe to Mr Bagots house, and from thens taking Mr Bagot with me, to Sir Walter Aston, who profereth all service possible to her Mate', and without respect to living or lyfe will never refuse to obaye willinglye all her highenes commande-ments, but prayeth moste humblye and as far as he may without offence, to be excused of this intended remove, to wch purpose he alleadgeth such and so manye reasons as cannot be answered in my simple opinion any other way than by authoritye.

He sayeth that he hath upon the point of a hundred persons uprising and downlying in his house, he is sufficientlye provided of corne, haye, grasse about his house, and of all other things necessary for so great a familye, he hath three score milch kyne, three ploughes of Oxen, and one of horses whose labour must provide hym of corne for the next yeare.

If he shall remove to Beaudesert he must sell his kyne because there is no grasse there, he must sell his ploughes of oxen, because there is no use for

them at Beaudesert, and here they may not remaine without greate discommmoditie to the newe household, he must set out all his grounds as well arable as pasture in this dead tyme of the yeare when no man will take them, he must remove all his household stuff even to the least stoole (?),because there is nothing but bare walls at Beaudesert, he must live there upon the peney(?) for all his provisions, and finallye for want of a Brewhouse and Breweinge vessells shall have no means to provyde drinke for his familye, by reason that there is no common Brewehouse in any Taverne in this countrey. Yf her Mate' shall not be satisfied with these reasons and that he shal be commanded to remove: he submitteth hym selfe wthall humbleness to her good pleasure, onlye he prayeth that yt may be lawfull for hym to disperse his familye, and to retire hym self with hys wife and children to London, there to live as he may. Touchinge the state of the house, I can saye no lesse but that it is verye sufficient in respect of great Chambre, parloure, lodginge, hall, butterye, and cellar, but the kitchin is lesse than sufficient for this Queene, so as there is no kitchin at all for her great familie, and I do not see any rooms that can be made fitt for that use. The two sides of the house betwene the gatehouse and the hall have no other strength than a little lowe pale, as likewyse the kitchin and dayrye are open upon the fields, and the building of the one and the other lowe and weake; he hath his water by a pump, and sometimes it is troubled, to his great annoyance; he hathe roome only for XX or XXI horse, wch might be supplied by the stalls, and yet not without charge if his ploughe oxen were sold. This is all that I can say unto you touching this house, referring the same to your better Consideration, I will onlye add this one word for the discharge of my dewtye, that in my simple opinion yt shall not stand wth her Mate service to overthrowe such a houshold as this is, in this infected Shire as the world goeth at this present. And thus I take my leave of you beseeching God to increase you in fortune and honour. Written the XXVIIth of September 1585.

Your most assured poore friend

A. POULET

I may not forbeare to put you in remembrance once againe for Mr Bagots lre of asseptance because I have bene touched with the gowte of late, so as I have made these two journeys to Chartley & to Sr Walter Astons house wth some difficultye, and therfore do feare that yt will increase upon me.

On August 3rd 1586 Sir Amias wrote to Walsingham from Chartley, saying that he had seen William Waad (Wade). Wade was an agent of Walsingham's,

employed to spy on Mary, and was to help with her removal to Tixall and the abduction of her servants, Nau and Curle:

> Sir, - I heard from Mr. Waad yesterday, at six after noon, and this morning I met with him in the open fields, where I conferred with him at good length, as may appear by these notes inclosed.
>
> *Enclosure in Poulet's handwriting*:
>
> A memorial for Mr William Waad.
>
> 1. That her Majesty doth think meet Sir Amias Poulet should consider in what sort the Queen his charge's writing might be best seized, whether remaining there or removing her to some other place under the colour of hunting or taking the air.
>
> > This Queen will be easily entreated to kill a stag in Sir Walter Aston's park, where order being taken with her, some gentlemen of credit may be sent forthwith to possess her chamber and cabinets in this house, and to remove out of them the gentlewomen which they shall find there.
>
> 2. That he also consider how Curle and Nau may be best apprehended, and in what sort.
>
> > It seemeth meet that Nau and Curle be apprehended at the very instant of the challenge made to this Queen.
>
> 3. That there shall be some especial gentleman sent from hence to conduct them up, if he find none other or shall so think meet.
>
> > I would not advise that this shire should be unfurnished of any gentleman of trust and credit, but that two gentlemen be sent from above to take charge of the conducting of Nau and Curle, thereby to keep them from conference. Pasquier is half a secretary and much employed in writing, and perchance not unacquainted with great causes.
>
> 4. That he consider whether it be not fit to remove her, and to what place he shall think meet she should be removed; what necessary persons are to be retained about her, and in what sort she shall be kept.
>
> > The cabinets and other places cannot be duly searched unless she be removed, because the doing therof will require some leisure, and she cannot be lodged in any other place in this house than where the cabinets are. Three gentlewomen, her master cook, her panterer, and

two grooms of her chamber may seem to suffice in the beginning of this remove, which may be increased when things shall be settled.

5. To advertise in what sort he thinketh meet she should be removed, and under what guard.

Sir Walter Aston's house seemeth for many causes the fittest for this remove, who may convey her directly from his park to his house with the assistance of my horsemen and others. I think he will require to be assisted with my guards of soldiers, who may take their table and lodging in the village adjoining, and because the house is of no strength, if I were in Sir Walter Aston's place I would require some stronger guard.

6. Whether he have not already sufficient commission for the calling of the assistance of the well-affected gentlemen unto him, and if he have not, then to advertise what further commission he will require.

I have already her Majesty's commission for the levying of forces in very ample manner.

7. Whether he do not think it meet to have some special gentleman sent from hence to acquaint that Queen with the cause of her Majesty's attempts towards her.

I do not see how any man here can take knowledge of these secrets, and therefore meet to commit the same to some gentleman to come from you.

8. That some servant of his own be sent up with all speed with his resolution touching these points, as also such other matters as he shall find requisite to receive information from hence. That the party that shall be sent be in no sort made acquainted with the matter.

One of my servants cometh herewith, utterly ignorant of these things.

9. That her Majesty hath thought meet you should stay there to assist him wherein he may have use of you.

Mr Waad stayeth here, but Mr Bagot's house being much resorted unto, he retired to the house of a gentleman of meaner calling of his acquaintance.

10. That he would carry a watchful eye over his charge, and that in such sort as he may engender no suspicion.

This shall be performed as near as I may.

11. That the extraordinary posts be commanded to use more diligence, and to that purpose to keep two horses at the least in the house for the packets.

It seemeth meet that this order come from you, and I will also require it.

12. To signify his opinion touching the gentlemen in that county, and in other counties next adjoining, who are well affected and fit to be used for this service.

I have lived as a prisoner in this country and therefore not well acquainted with the state thereof, but I have conceived upon good experience a very good opinion of Sir Walter Aston, Mr. Bagot, and Mr. Gresley, all three neighbours to this house. Mr. Trentham is one of the lieutenants of this shire and of very good report, but I have had little to do with him.

13. To consider what order shall be taken with the unnecessary number of her servants, especially with young Pierrepont.

Although I take Mr. Melvyn to be free from all practices, and indeed liveth as a stranger to his own company, and hateth Nau deadly, yet I think meet that he be removed from his mistress to some gentleman's house, as likewise Mrs. Pierrpont; who may be sent, the one to Mr. Trentham, and the other to Mr. Bagot, directly from Sir Walter Aston's park. The residue of the servants may remain in this house until further order shall be taken.

Walsingham's letter, dated August 9th, covers much the same ground:

Instructions for A.P.

You shall, with all convenient speed as you may, under the colour of going a hunting and taking the air, remove the Queen your charge to some such house near to the place where she now remaineth as you shall think meet for her to stay in for a time, until you shall understand our further pleasure for the placing of her. And to the end she may be kept from all means of intelligence, we think it convenient you give order that such as are owners of the house where you shall place her for a time shall be removed, saving such persons as are to furnish all necessaries of household, of which number there should be no more left remaining in the house than necessity shall require.

You shall return [to] Chartley from the place where you meanwhile remove her, cause her servants Curle and Nau to be apprehended and to be

delivered to the hands of some trusty gent. of that county, or the counties next adjoining, such as you shall know to be discreet, faithful, and religious, to conduct them to London with some convenient guard, where there shall be order given for the bestowing of them.

You shall also take order with the said conductors to see them brought up in two several troops, and to have an especial care that they may be kept from conference with any person in their way towards London, and to appoint, in places where they shall lodge, good standing watches to be kept in the night season.

You shall, immediately after she shall be departed from Chartley, search all such papers as shall be found either in her own lodging, or in the lodging of any that appertain to her (taking care that all secret corners in the said lodging be very diligently sought), to be seized and to be put up in some bags or trunks, as by you shall be thought meet. In execution of which service we think it very convenient for many respects that you should use, besides our servant Waad, two principal gentlemen of credit either of that county, or of some shire of the counties next adjoining; for which purpose we think John Manners the elder and Sir Walter Aston very meet to be used, if they shall [be] found in the country, or some of like quality, whom we would have in no sort made acquainted with the said service until the said Queen shall be removed, and they brought to the place when and where it shall by you [be] thought meet to be performed.

You shall cause the said gentlemen, together with Mr. Waad, to seal [with] their seal of arms the said bags or trunks where the said letters and papers shall be placed, and to send up two of their trusty servants, together with Waad, with the said writings.

You shall do well, during the time of her abode in the place and house to the which you shall remove her, to cause some substantial watches to be kept both about the house, as also in the town next adjoining, wherein we doubt not but that you will have an especial regard to use the services of such the justices and gentlemen in that county as you shall know to be well affected, giving them especial charges to make choice of well affected men to be employed in the said watches, and not such as are known to be recusants, or otherwise ill affected.

And in case you shall see cause, for the better strengthening of yourself, to use some other well-affected gentlemen in the counties next adjoining, you may therein use your own discretion, for which purpose we have sent unto you certain letters ligned by us, referring the direction of them to yourself.

And whereas our meaning is not that hereafter she shall have such number of attendants upon her person as she hath heretofore had, we think meet, therfore that you make choice of so many of her train, both men and

women, as you shall see only neddsry to attend on her person. And for the rest of her train, we think it convenient that they should be kept together at Chartley, in such sort as there may be no access had unto them until you shall understand our further pleasure how we shall afterwards think meet they shall be bestowed.

For your better assistance in this service, we have thought good to send unto you this bearer our servant, Thomas Gorge, one whom we know to be most faithfully devoted to us, to be by you used in such sort as shall appertain to one of his place and calling. We have in no sort made him acquainted with the cause of his employment, but have referred him to receive directions from you, who we think meet should deliver as much in speech with the said Queen as is expressed in our letters to you.

Endorsed - August 9, 1586. Instructions for Sir A. Poulet.

Queen Elizabeth herself wrote to Poulet endorsing Walsingham's instructions:

Queen Elizabeth to Poulet

Right Trusty &c - We having of late discoverd some dangerous practices, tending not only to the troubling of our estate, but to the peril of our own person, whereunto we have just cause to judge both the Queen your charge and her two secretaries, Nau and Curle, to have been both parties, and assisting in a most unprincely and unnatural sort, and quite contrary to our expectation, considering the great and earnest protestations she hath heretofore made of the sincerity of her love and goodwill towards us. Our pleasure therefore is, that you first cause the two secretaries to be apprehended, and to be sent up unto us under good and sure guard, and that you do presently remove the said Queen unto some such place as by you shall be thought meet, and there to see her securely kept, with so many only of her train to tend on her person as by you shall be thought necessary, until you shall understand our further pleasure therein.

Endorsed - a minute of a letter to Sir A.P.

The plan worked and is described in the following letter from d'Esterval, a previous French ambassador to Scotland, to Courcelles, who was the present one:

Monsieur - ayant fait mes affaires à Londres, je suis venu en ce lieu de Rye pour me trajeter a Dieppe, dont je ne veux partir sans vous avertir de ma bonne santé.

> Toutefois pour faire savoir comme se passe le faict de la Royen d'Ecosse que j'ay appris plus particulièrement depuis vous avoir écrit a quelques jours, que Sir Amias Poulet mena la dite Dame Royen pour aller à la chasse, ou s'étant acheminée avec tous les siens, mesdames Nau et Courles ses secrétaires, Gorges l'aysne la vint trouver et lui fait entendre qu'il avait charge de la Royen sa maitresse la mener à une maison a trois lieues de Charteley, nommé, Tixsal, qui est à Sieur Edouard Haston, et aussi de se saisir des personnes de Nau et Curle, ce qui la mit en telle colère qu'elle l'outragea fort de paroles et sa maîtresse: mesdames voulust que les siens se misent en défense. Toutefois Gorges étant le plus fort, Sir Amias Poulet la mena ou il avait chargé, et Gorges emmena ses secrétaires. Pendant lesquelles entrefaites il y avait un secrétaire du Conseil, nomme Wade, à Chartley, qui fouilla tous les papiers de la dite Dame Royen, des quels il saisit et les fait mener avec les prisonniers, et vantent que ce sont les plus secrets et importants.

(D'Esterval confuses Sir Walter Aston with his son, Edward)

The next two letters from Sir Amias to Walsingham were written from Tixall, during the fortnight that Mary was imprisoned there:

> Sir - Among many other great favours received from you of late, I account this the greatest that your friendly or rather partial report hath wrought in her Majesty to good acceptation of my poor service, as hath appeared by her most gracious letters: and as the comfort is singular which I have received by the same, so may it please you to think that I account my obligation herein towards you so much the greater, and so I must remain your debtor.
>
> Whereas you refer to my consideration, my continuance here or my remove to Chartley, only requiring that the house there be first duly searched, which hath been done effectually by Mr Waad and the other commissioners; I see now no cause at all of our longer abode here, but rather just reason of our return to Chartley, as well in respect of Her Majesty's charge, and in avoiding the trouble of this country in extraordinary watching and warding about this house, besides the watches and wards in all the towns adjoining; as especially for better surety of this charge, the house of Chartley being of far better strength by reason of the water than this house is. I am therefore resolved to return to Chartley as soon as I may, and to that purpose to crave the assistance of the well-affected gentlemen of these parts, for the furnishing of one hundred horsemen at the time of the remove.
>
> I must confess to you that I am very willing to remove the Priest, and yet I will not take upon me to discharge him and to set him at liberty without especial direction from you, and indeed I do not think it meet that he be set at liberty to return into France until the matters in hand were somewhat overblown. I will therefore remove him to Mr Gresley's house, where he

shall remain until it may please you to resolve what shall be done with him. If I should leave him at Chartley until this lady's arrival there, he would not be removed without great difficulty.

It may please you to remember to send your direction touching Mrs Pierrepont, Melvin, and Pasquier, who are bestowed with Mr Trentham, Mr Bagot, and Mr Littleton. I will not fail according to your direction to advertise her Majesty as soon as I may, of all the circumstances of the proceeding sithence the pretended hunting, although doubt not but that her Highness hath been duly informed before this time by Mr Gorge and Mr Waad of all things done before their departure, and sithence this lady's coming hither, I have not spoken with her or seen her.

It may please her Majesty to believe that I have had so good experience of Mr Darrell's faithful devotion to her Highness' service, and of his cold affection towards this lady, as I would sooner commit the charge of the company at Chartley unto him than to any other in these parts, and I know he hath discharged it faithfully. I can assure you that this people hath had no intelligence at all sithence their coming hither, to which purpose I kept them from pen, ink, and paper, and the next day after my arrival here did remove Sir Walter Aston's servants who served to deliver necessary things. This lady hath not gone out of her chamber and gallery, and none of her people have gone beyond the hall door sithence their coming hither. I do not intend having any speech with this lady during my being here, but after my next speech with her, it is likely I shall have some great matter for you.

It may please you to write two or three words of thanks in her Majesty's behalf to Sir Walter Aston, which surely he hath well deserved, as knoweth the Almighty, to whose blessed tuition I commit you.

From Tixall, the 22nd of August, 1586.

Your most assured poor friend,
A. POULET

_____

Sir, - Forasmuch as you required me by order from her Majesty to advertise her of that which hath passed between this lady and me in the execution of this late charge, and also how she hath behaved herself sithence the apprehension of her secretaries, I have considered that the sooner I performed this duty the better it would be, although indeed there hath fallen out nothing worthy of her Majesty, and therefore I send you enclosed herein my letter to her Highness. It may please you to consider what shall be done with Nau's servant, who is of this country, and came to his service from Mr Pierrepont, and with Curle's servant, who is a Scot, they both being now unprofitable here. And touching the residue of the Scottish family, I think

good at my next convenient leisure to send you a note of their names, surnames, and charges, whereupon you may consider to reserve and to remove as you shall think meet.

It is intended that this lady shall remove to Chartley this next morrow, as here this household can have no long continuence without imminent danger, and extreme charges to her Majesty in many things this winter, by reason that provisions have not been made beforehand. I hear of traitors that are carried towards you every day. God be thanked for it, to whose merciful tuition I commit you.

From Tixall, the 24th of August, 1586.

Your most assured poor friend,

A. POULET

On returning to Chartley, Sir Amias wrote describing the manner of Mary Queen of Scots departure from Tixall, and the scene outside the gatehouse:

Sir - This lady was removed hither the 25th of this present, conducted by Sir Walter Aston, Mr. Bagot, Mr.Gresly, Mr. Littleton, Mr. Chetwynd, and others to the number of one hundred and forty horses at the least. At her coming out of Sir Walter Aston's gate she said with a loud voice weeping, to some poor folks which were there assembled, 'I have nothing for you, I am a beggar as well as you, all is taken from me;' and when she came to the gentlemen she said, weeping, 'Good gentlemen, I am not witting or privy to anything intended against the Queen.' She visited Curle's wife (who was delivered of child in her absence), before she went to her own chamber, willing her to be of good comfort, and that she would answer for her husband in all things that might be objected against him. Curle's child remaining unchristened, and the Priest removed before the arrival of this lady, she desired that my minister might baptize the child, with such godfathers and godmothers as I would procure, so as the child would bear her name; which being refused, she came shortly after into Curle's wife's chamber, where laying the child on her knees, she took water out of a basin, and casting it upon the face of the child she said 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,' calling the child by her own name, Mary. This may not be found strange in her who maketh no conscience to break all laws of God and man.

At her coming hither, Mr Darrell delivered the keys, as well of her chambers as of her coffers, to Bastian, which he refused by direction from his mistress, who required Mr. Darrell to open her chamber door, which he did, and then this lady finding that her papers were taken away, said, in great

choler, that two things could not be taken from her, her English blood and her Catholic religion, which both she would keep until her death, adding further these words - 'Some of you will be sorry for it,' meaning the taking away of her papers. I was not present when these words were spoken, but no doubt they reached unto me, in what sense she only knoweth. I may be sorry for others, but I know there is nothing in her papers that can give me cause to be sorry for myself.

I considered that Mrs. Pierrepont's maid would be unnecessary her, and that remaining in this house until the coming hither of this lady she might not be sent away afterwards without peril. I therefore removed her to Mr. Chetwynd's house, where she remaineth until you have resolved what to do with Mrs. Pierrpont.

I consider that you are overwhelmed with business, and therefore I am loth to trouble you with any unnecessary matter from hence, of which kind I must confess all the premises to be, and yet I think agreeable with my duty advertise you of this lady's remove hither, which I would have done sooner, but that I thought she would have desired to have spoken with me after her coming hither, wherein I perceive I am much deceived, and that she is not hasty to see me or speak with me, only she sent to know if I would convey her letters to her Majesty, which I refused, saying that no letters should pass out of this house without order from above, and I do not doubt but that upon the examination of her servants some good occasion will be ministered to deliver some message unto her which may give her just cause to write. She made the like proffer at Sir Walter Aston's house, which I then also refused, and prayed your direction therein.

I trust you do remember to consider, as time will give you leave, what shall be done with Pierrepont, Melvin, and Pasquier, thinking assuredly that you shall find good cause to command Pasquier to be brought unto you.

And thus I leave you to the mercy and favour of the Highest.

From Chartley, the 27th of August, 1586,

Your most assured poor friend,

A. POULET

Other Buildings at Tixall [12]

Tixall Mews – Grade II

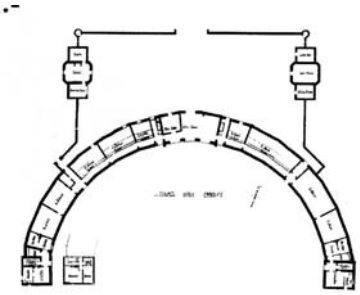
The early 19th century stables for the 18th-century Hall at Tixall, built by Thomas Clifford. They are built of local sandstone with mullioned windows and a slate roof.

In 1833 they were described as 'lately built of stone at great expense, forming a crescent behind, and at a short and convenient distance from the house.'

The centre is two storeyed, embattled and with a Gothic portico. It originally served as the coach house for 10 carriages and has vaulted cellars. On either side are the ranges of originally single storied, stables which had stalls for 40 horses, with a two storied embattled tower at either end for grooms, coachmen and other servants. The buildings were converted to residential use in the 1970s.

The Bothie at Tixall Mews – Grade II

This was originally one of a pair of buildings behind the stables, called garden houses in the official listing description, but probably used to house servants or agricultural labourers. The other building was demolished to make room for a potato store by a previous owner.



Tixall Farm – Grade II

The brick farmhouse and farm-buildings were listed when they were sold for development in the 1980s. They are a good example of an early 19th or late 18th century purpose-built model farm.

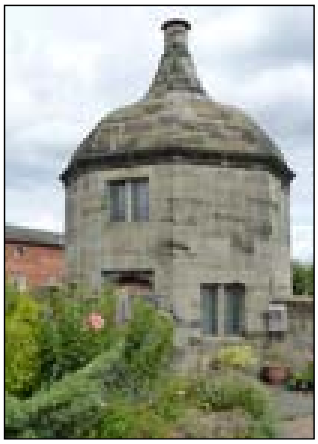
Originally there was a long range of roadside buildings with a central entrance tower and dovecote, leading to an enclosed yard surrounded by barns and other single storey buildings, leading through a further archway up the hill to the farmhouse behind.

[12] Reference: The British Library
pages.britishlibrary.net/tixandrews/tixall/txlstd.html

The yard used to contain additional buildings including a large cowshed, which were demolished when the buildings were converted to residential use in the 1990s.

Prominent beside the road at the east end is a large an impressive contemporary 'Dutch' barn with 5 brick arched openings.

Bottle Lodge – Grade II



This is a curious octagonal lodge in ashlar stone with an ogee stone vaulted roof. There is a central stone chimney, moulded stone eves, mullioned windows and a cambered stone doorway. The current dome is dated 1807, although curiously echoes the Gatehouse turret and an earlier date does not seem implausible.

The building stands at the roadside opposite Tixall Farm, at the Tixall end of the bridleway connecting Tixall to Great Haywood, where the Astons and Cliffords held further land and property. Bottle Lodge was previously known as the Upper Lodge, with the Lower or White Lodge, at the Haywood Mill end of the Bridleway.

The chimney was straightened when the building was restored a few years ago for use as rented accommodation, with single rooms upstairs and downstairs. In the 19th century it was used to house the local shepherd with his children sleeping in the farm buildings on the other side of the road.

The Temple or Rotunda – Grade II

This originally stood in the Wood Field at Ingestre and was moved to Tixall in the 1960s when the Ingestre Estate was sold. It has been attributed to Capability Brown, who is known to have carried out Work at Ingestre in the mid 18th century. It is described as an open, stone, domed Structure of octagonal plan with Doric or Tuscan columns and enriched entablature.

Tixall Obelisk – Grade II (An Ancient Monument) Error! Bookmark not defined.

A hexagonal sandstone obelisk with a stepped base, inscribed with the date 1776 and Stafford 3½ miles, it also gives mileages to Lichfield and London. It was probably erected when Thomas Clifford re-routed the road which used to run straight through the village on the edge of Tixall Park, to the south around the

outside of his new walled garden.

Tixall House – Grade II (formerly Tixall Cottage)

A colourwashed brick building in the local Regency manner with tiled roof, brick chimneys and casement windows. The central door has a wood bracketed hood and a rectangular fanlight. It is thought to date from the early 19th century.

The extensive gardens include the old walled garden and glasshouses of the 18th century hall, and are bounded by a high beech hedge.

Telephone Kiosk in Tixall Village – Grade II

This is an example of the K6 type telephone kiosk, designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and made by various contractors in cast iron. It is a square kiosk with a domed roof, decorated with un-perforated crowns at the top of the panels.

Dairy Bridge – Grade II

An ashlar faced bridge with a single small Gothic arch, moulded pilasters on both sides and a heavy coped parapet. On the east side is the inscription 'HIC VER PERPETUUM' - Here everlasting spring. It is thought to be 18th century, built by Thomas Clifford as part of his reorganisation of the estate to serve as a carriage route to the hall, over a walkway to his new walled gardens.

Holdiford Bridge – Grade II

An ashlar bridge over the River Sow with 3 spans and segmental arches, the central higher than the others. There are moulded stringcourses on both sides. Holdiford Road originally crossed the river below the Dark Lantern at Shugborough and passed near what is now Lock Farm. The river crossing was moved at the request of Thomas Anson, and at the expense of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Company when the canal was built in 1772.

Brindley's Aqueduct – Grade II

A four span stone aqueduct with segmental arches carrying the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal over the River Sow to the west of Holdiford Bridge. The stone is reputed to have come from the small quarry at the entrance to Old Hill in Holdiford road.

The aqueduct was originally built on dry land to the south of the river, and the river was then diverted under it.

The Village Hall formerly Tixall Church School

The village hall is not listed but stands within the Conservation Area in the centre of the village opposite the church. It was built in 1850 on land given by Lord Shrewsbury. The school closed in the early 1900s and in the 1950s the building was extended.

The Stone Seats on Tixall Road

These seats are now listed, and lie outside the Conservation Area. They were erected in memory of Thomas Hartshorne who built and lived at the new Brancote Farm, replacing the Old Farm nearer the river. He had put up wooden seats for travellers to rest on their way to and from Stafford.