The Landmark Trust

THE WARREN HOUSE

History Album

Written & researched by Caroline Stanford

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The Landmark Trust Shottesbrooke Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 3SW
Charity registered in England & Wales 243312 *and Scotland* SC039205

Bookings 01628 825925 *Office* 01628 825920 *Facsimile* 01628 825417
Website www.landmarktrust.org.uk

BASIC DETAILS

Built	Main structure: 1630s?
	Façade: 1760s?
Listed	Grade II*
Tenure	Gifted freehold
Opened as a Landmark	July 2012
Architect:	Oliver Caroe of Caroe Architecture Ltd
Structural Engineer:	Edward Morton of the Morton Partnership
Main contractor:	Modplan Building & Refurbishment Contractors Ltd of Shefford
Building analysis:	Colin Briden
Ecologist:	Steve Laurence
Archaeologist:	Karin Semmelmann of Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

We would like to thank Nora and Roy Butler of Kimbolton for their unstinting support and facilitation of the project to save the Warren House.

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The Monument Trust
English Heritage
Mr G Ruthen and Mrs S Andrew
The Aurelius Charitable Trust
Mr and Mrs T Bell
Mr S Conrad
In memory of Dr and Mrs J Kilby
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We are grateful to all these organisations and individuals, and many others who supported our appeal, including Guardians of the Warren House, Landmark Friends and Patrons, gifts in Wills, and supporters who wish to remain anonymous.

'Lonely as a lodge upon a warren…'
The Warren House in 2007,
before restoration.

Contents

Inside the Warren House before restoration.

The Warren House - Summary

When the Warren House was given to Landmark by a pragmatic farmer and his wife in 2005, we were delighted to take on what we thought was an 18th-century eye-catcher for Kimbolton Castle, aligned precisely with the Duchess's bedroom in the castle below. It certainly came to play that role, but we later realised that its greatest rarity lay in its survival as a timber-framed warren house, once a recognisable building type of which very few survive unaltered. As a timber-framed survival, unaltered in modern times, it is possibly unique.

Warrens were areas of land set aside from the Middle Ages onwards for rabbit husbandry. Rabbits were first imported into England around 1200 from Spain, and strange though it seems today, they were delicate creatures that needed to be nurtured and protected to survive in the English climate. They were also valuable livestock, prized for both their meat and their skins, and jealously guarded by the lord and his warrener. From these early times, warren lodges were built out on the lonely warrens to accommodate the warrener, also sometimes doubling as a hunting lodge. Rabbits thrive especially in light, well-drained soils and the area of East Anglia known as the Brecklands, further east from Kimbolton, became one of the earliest and longest standing concentration of rabbit breeding. The few surviving medieval warren lodges are also found there, massive stone and flint structures, but all are ruinous today.

Warren houses tend to share a broad typology: tall two storey, single chamber structures built in lonely and commanding spots, often south facing since rabbits prefer warmer slopes. They had one or more fireplaces at a very early date for such features, several windows for surveying surrounding countryside and a well nearby. The ground floor was often strengthened or fortified, since it was here that valuable carcasses and pelts were stored. A spiral stair, often in the SW corner, led to the first floor, where the warrener lived.

It will be immediately apparent that the Kimbolton Warren House shares most if not all these characteristics. The earliest (if slightly ambiguous) reference to a Kimbolton warren is in 1373. However, the original little timber-framed cottage dates not from the Middle Ages but from the revival of interest in rabbit farming that took place in the first half of the 17th century. The Warren House is not shown on an estate map of 1582, but does appear in one from 1673. Tree-ring analysis sadly failed to provide a construction date, but a largely illegible document among the Manchester papers dated 1637 giving the accounts for 'Your Honour's improvements on the heath' provides a highly plausible construction date for the original timber-framed lodge.

The Warren House has always been associated with Kimbolton Castle and its place in full view on the escarpment made it ideal to bring into service for the 4th (or possibly 5th) Duke of Manchester's enhancement of his park under the advice of Joseph Spence. The greatest 18th-century architects, Sir John Vanbrugh, Nicholas Hawksmoor, Thomas Archer and Robert Adam all contributed to the castle's magnificence that we see today. It seemed highly likely in prospect that one of them might have been responsible for designing the elegant stone and brick façade that now dresses the humble warrener's cottage. The full footprint, complete with porch, is clear on an estate map of 1763. In fact we have found no firm evidence of the involvement of any of these architects, or of an explicit link with the similar lodge, Priory Cottage, which stands to the east of the Warren House. A drawing showing alternative options for the frontage of a lodge in the

Manchester Papers at the Huntingdonshire Record Office provides circumstantial links with the *office* of Robert Adam: it is in the same bundle of documents, and on the same paper, as the drawings Adam did for his work on the gatehouse and castle from the 1760s, but there is no evidence that it came from his hand (or mind). The drawing may just as well relate to a refurbishment as to original construction of the lodge.

More plausible clues to the elevation's origin are masons' marks discovered on a scattering of the ashlar blocks to the front elevation during the restoration, 'signatures' to identify the work of those who dressed the stone. These are in addition to the strange circular scribings in the spandrels of the arched window (all are visible only in raking light). The same masons' marks have been found at both Apethorpe Hall and Kirby Hall, where the Thorpe family's masons from Kingscliffe quarries are known to have worked. This raises the exciting possibility that at least two of the same masons also worked on the fabric of The Warren House, and that the stonework was perhaps salvaged from works undertaken at Kimbolton Castle in the early 17th century. We hope to be able to fund comparative stone analysis between the castle and Warren House to validate this hypothesis.

Despite its new role as picturesque eyecatcher, our scrutiny of the fabric of the Warren House provided no evidence at all of any polite use internally. It seems it remained a humble gamekeeper's cottage. It achieved fame of sorts by appearing in the *London Illustrated News* in the 1880s as backdrop for late Victorian shooting parties. It continued to be lived in as an estate cottage until after the War (despite also being requisitioned by American airmen who used the airbase that was created on the plateau behind in the 1940s). Eventually, its lack of services and remoteness led to its abandonment, which led in turn to dereliction, partial collapse and vandalism. Sold by the Manchester estate to the Boots Pension Fund in 1975, the Fund twice applied for permission to demolish it due to the cost of repair, and it was only thanks to local lobbying with the help of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Ancient Monument Society that the lodge survived. The Fund carried out some repairs in the 1980s, rebuilding the parapet, re-roofing, demolishing the outshot to the rear and putting pebbledash on the exterior. This at least stabilised the building.

In 1997, the Warren House was bought with surrounding farmland by Mr & Mrs Convine. In 2005, the Convines generously gave Landmark the building and access to it. It was a number of years before the Warren House came to the top of Landmark's project list, but work finally began in summer 2011. The rear extension, demolished in the 1980s, was rebuilt in hempcrete, a building material that combines hemp fibre with hydraulic lime to produce environmentally friendly, breathable, highly insulating fabric. This extension has an entrance lobby and bathroom on the ground floor, and kitchen and store on the first floor.

The building was re-roofed and the upper courses of the porch and chimneystack rebuilt. Inside, the restoration was guided by the Warren House's former use as a warrener's or gamekeeper's dwelling. A small window was introduced to the bedroom on the ground floor (which originally had no windows). The hearth has been enlarged to its original dimensions and a spiral staircase has been reconstructed in oak in the original position of the stairs. The façade, certainly planted onto the timber frame at a later date, was tied back in and stabilised.

The Warren House's future is now secure, to see and be seen within the landscape.

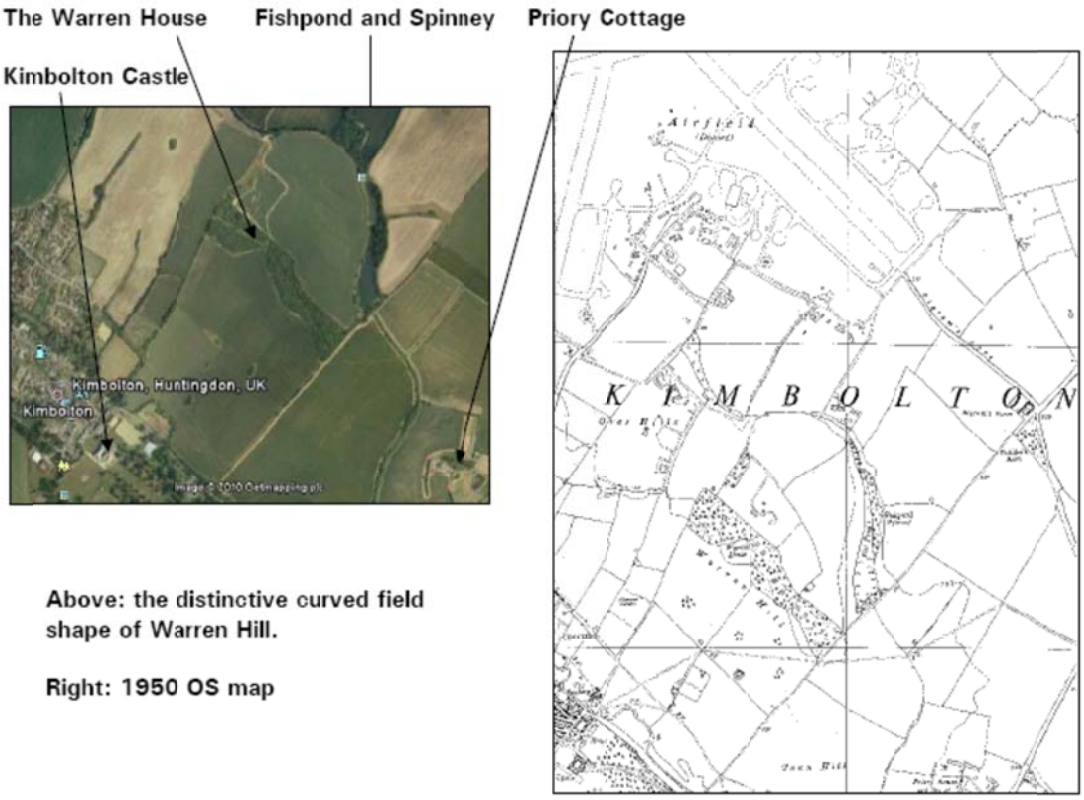
Introduction

When we took on the Warren House, battered and still largely encased in cementitious pebble dash, we at first assumed that its primary role had always been as folly or eyecatcher for Kimbolton Castle. However, as so often for historic buildings, the clue to its real significance lay in its name. It soon became apparent that the Warren House is a very rare (possibly unique) timber-framed survival of a once common building type – the warren lodge. It certainly came to play that additional role of eyecatcher, but the starting point for understanding it must take us back to its original form and purpose. As will become clear, the timber-framed cottage behind the elegant stone and brick façade probably dates from the 17th century, and the façade from the mid-18th century. However, its building typology takes its place in a sequence that dates back to the Middle Ages – from the arrival in the British Isles of a certain long-eared, soft-pelted quadruped. The fuller context of the importance of rabbits is explored in a later chapter, but we will begin with the history of this Kimbolton Warren House.

The History of Kimbolton Warren House

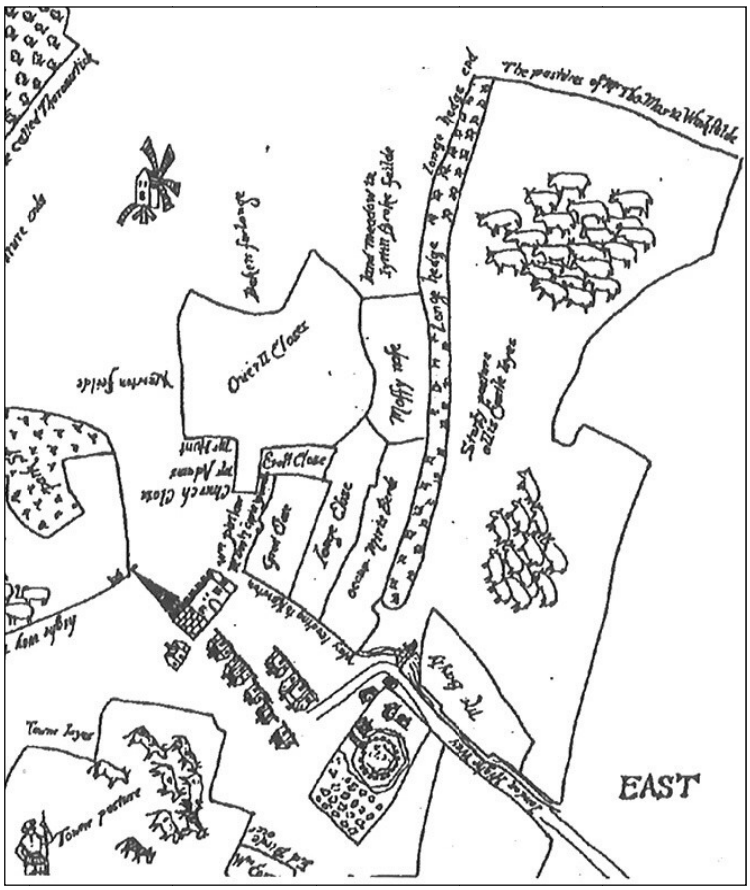
There may have been a rabbit warren at Kimbolton from as early as the 14th century. The first reference dates from February 19th 1373, when Edward III's Calendar Rolls record the 'Commitment to the king's esquire, William de Risceby, of the keeping and survey of the king's castle of Kymbalton, together with the park, the hay, and the whole warren there, until further order.'[1] However, the use of 'warren' here is ambiguous, since originally 'warren' could refer to more general hunting rights than its more modern usage as land set aside for the breeding of rabbits.

[1] Cal. Fine R. 1369-77, p.206. Edward III



Above: the distinctive curved field shape of Warren Hill.

Right: 1950 OS map



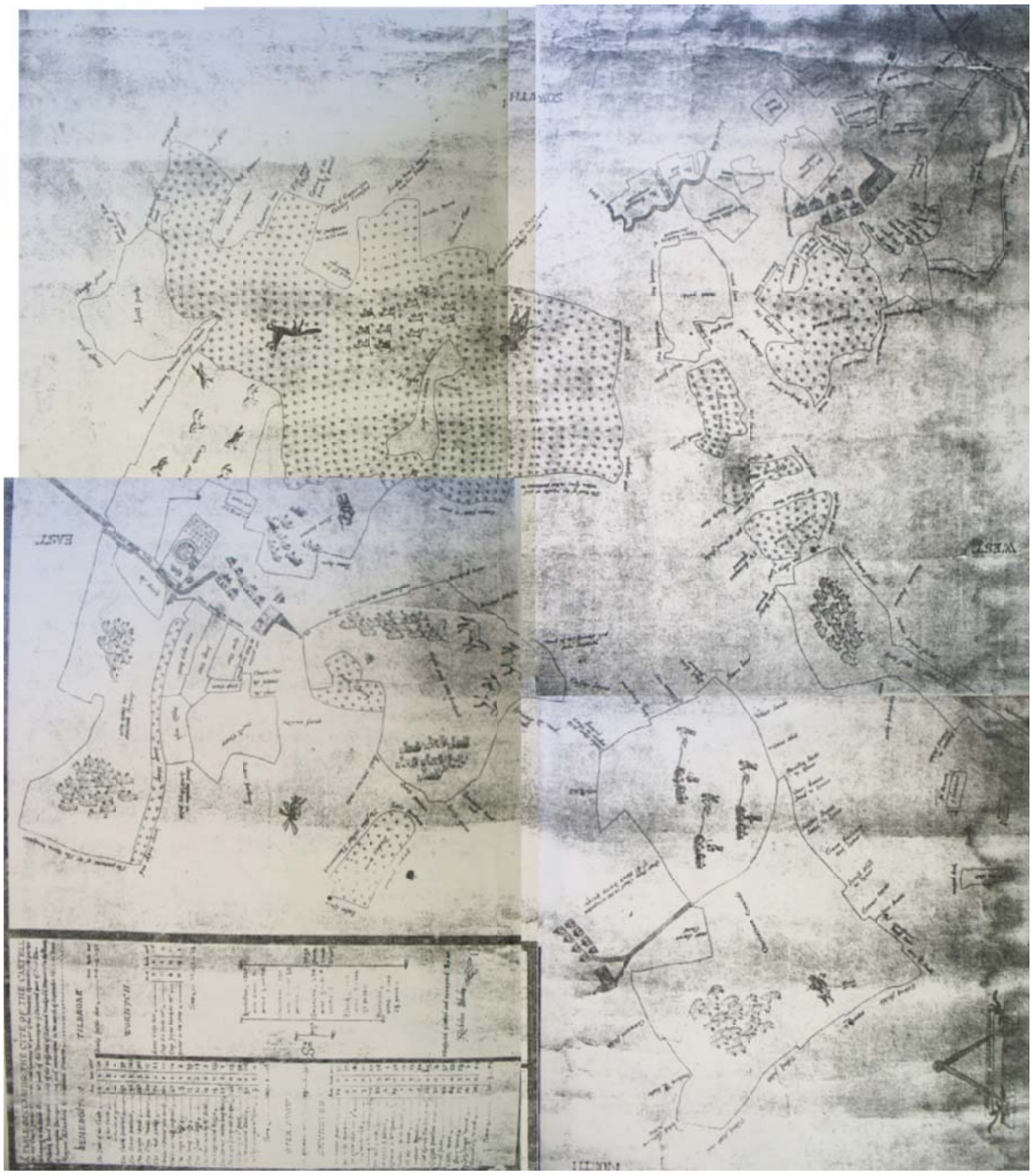
Detail transcribed from the 1582 Bleake map, showing Warren Hill without a warren house.

Then on 20th November 1522, the Manor of Kimbolton was granted by Henry VIII to Sir Richard Wingfield, again including 'the park of Kymbalton and warren with liberties of park and warren to the same castle and manor…'[2]

Today, Kimbolton counts as a village, but in the Middle Ages it was a prosperous market town, grouped around a castle. The first castle was built around 1200, when a market charter was granted and the town laid out on its regular plan. It is not inconceivable that a rabbit warren existed by 1373, but if a warren lodge was built to manage it, it has long since disappeared. The story of Kimbolton Castle is told in a later chapter, and for the Warren House, we pick up the tale with a lively estate map of 1582, the Bleake Map which is interesting because it does *not* show the Warren House.[3] This suggests that the lodge was almost certainly not built at this date. The 'long hedge', a distinctive feature on later maps, is already shown. Cattle are shown grazing on the Warren Hill in front of the Warren House site, which is inscribed 'Stonely pasture, all is Castle Lyes [leas or pasture],' referring to the neighbouring Stonely estate, formerly a priory but suggesting that the land is already within the castle estate (the land behind the Warren House site is marked 'The property of Mr Tho Maria Winkfield' [Wingfield]. (The Stonely estate was not acquired by the castle until 1655 and is discussed later.)

A clasped side purlin in the roof of the Warren House led our building analyst Colin Briden to suggest a late16th- or early17th-century date for its construction and we had high hopes that dendrochronology (dating by tree ring analysis) would unlock the mystery of the construction date of the timber-framed cottage. Unfortunately, the timbers in the cottage were found unsuitable for analysis. By the end of the 16th century, the estate was heavily encumbered by debt, which perhaps argues against much activity on the estate at this time.

[2] Pat Roll, 14 Hen. VIII, Part 2. m. 22.
[3] Drawn detail, Bedford & Luton Archives & Record Office FAC75 (original map in private ownership).

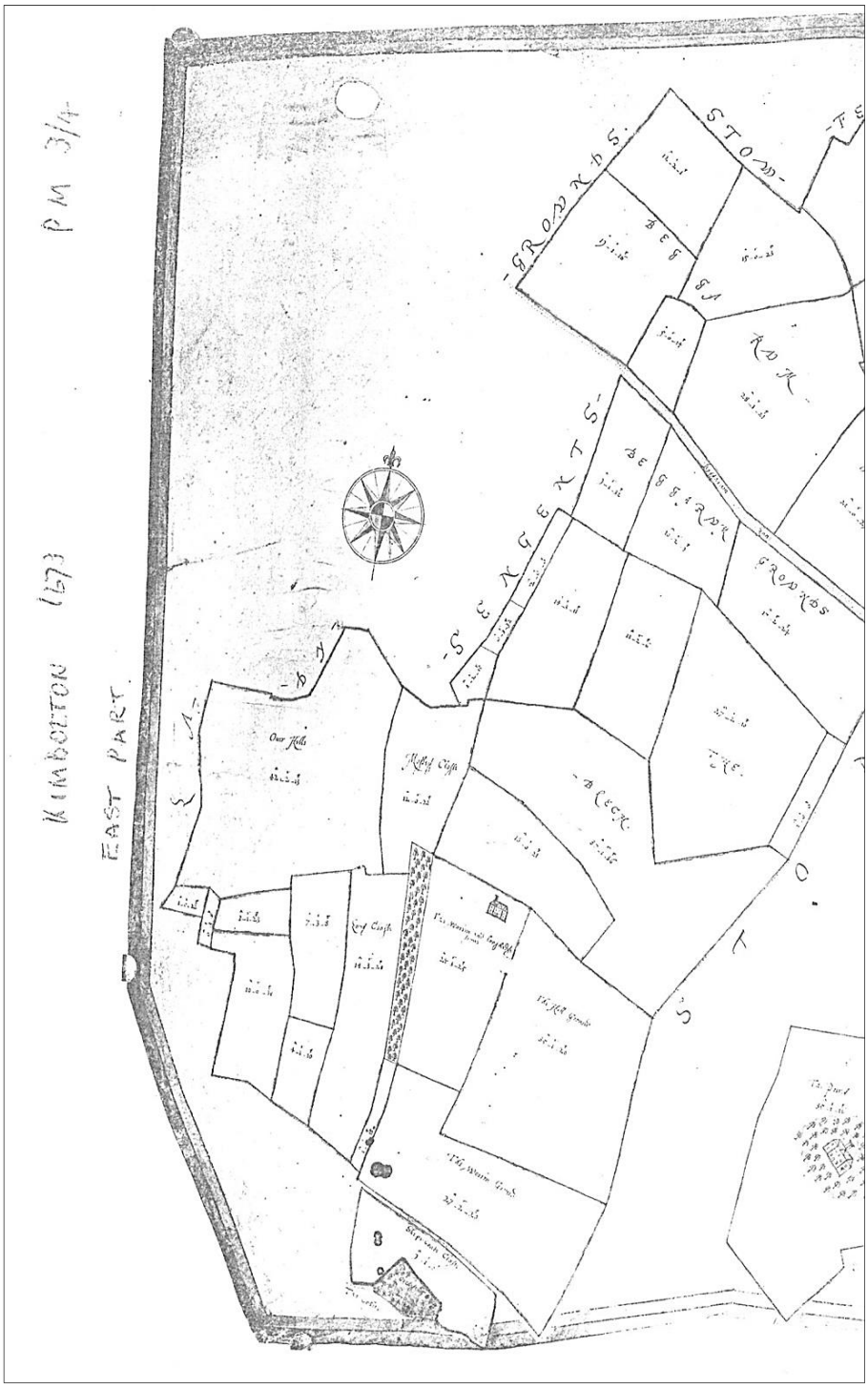


The Bleake Map of 1582 shows Warren Hill as 'Stonely pasture' and does not show a warren house.

The next clue came in the form of the 1673 estate map by Thomas Stirrup. Again using the long hedge for orientation, we find, in front of 'the castle' at the bottom edge, 'The Worrin [Warren] Ground', 'The Hill Ground' and 'The Worrin and longhedge groun[d]s [?].' The fields beyond these are collectively marked as 'The Brech', or breck, or heathland, a word typically associated with land used to hold rabbits. In the 'Worrin and longhedge' field a building is shown, albeit in rather stylised fashion, but exactly on the site of the Warren House. The fact that two of the field names include the word 'Worrin' and stand so close to the Breck also make it likely that the building at their heart had an associated and specialised use. It therefore seems reasonable to deduce that the Warren House, at least in its timber-framed cottage form, was built by 1673.

Building analysis and the subsequent detailed knowledge obtained during the restoration process also confirmed that the timber-framed structure first stood without the stone façade, since its outer faces were noticeably weathered, and that it probably stood for some time like this since the frame was re-configured at least twice. Analysis also suggested that the main, relatively low grade structure had been built in a single phase and specifically for this site (i.e. not reconstructed from elsewhere, nor incorporating a significant number of reused timbers).

Amongst the Manchester papers at the Huntingdonshire Archives, formerly Huntingdon Record Office, there is a badly water damaged, mostly illegible document, with nothing to tie it specifically to Kimbolton other than its inclusion in a bundle of others that do relate to the estate. It is dated January 26th 1637, placing it within the years that Sir Henry Montagu, from 1626 1st Duke of Manchester, was improving castle and estate. The document is inscribed on the reverse 'The generall [accou]nt for the heath' and is indeed a set of accounts. It begins 'Layed out about your Honour's improvements upon the heath' and then, as far as can be made out, it refers to surveying, and fencing with posts and rails on the heath, digging and tiling.[4]



The eastern part of the 1673 map by Thomas Stirrup shows a building, almost certainly the Warren House, in the 'Warrin and longhedge' field, with ' The Warrin ground' below in front of the castle and 'The Breck' behind.
(HA PM 3/4 - this. clearly, is a record office photocopy of an original in the possession of the family)

[4] Huntingdonshire Archives M/48a/3

The evidence is perhaps circumstantial, but also plausible, that the Warren House was built in 1637 as part of these 'improvements upon the heath.' These were years during which rabbit husbandry on estates was indeed undergoing revival and when warren houses, like other estate buildings, often doubled as features embellishing a landscape even if, as still here, they were relatively humble structures.

The next piece of evidence is a very detailed estate map of 1763 by Cosmo Wallace.[5] The Warren House is now shown accurately in its embellished form, complete with porch and extensions or outshots to the rear. It is now playing its part in a more aesthetically managed landscape, placed at the centre of an undulating line of estate railing that borders a 'Plantation of Forrest Trees' (still present today and known as Warren Spinney). There is also a poor photocopy in the Record Office of a very similar map dated 1764 that describes this spinney as 'A Plantation of Young Forest', suggesting that it was but newly planted.[6]

This in turn is consistent with an apparent willingness in 1758 by Robert, 3rd Duke of Manchester, to accept the advice of his friend, Joseph Spence, over improvements to his estate. Spence visited Kimbolton in 1758 and wrote a long letter detailing his ideas, which he signed 'Your Grace's most obedient & most devoted Humble Servant – Spanco' (from which it seems reasonable to infer that they were on informally friendly terms).

[5] HA SF 457
[6] The papers in the Manchester Collection are on loan to the public record offices and certain maps are deposited as copies only.

***A Plan of the House, Gardens and Park of Kimbolton Castle the seat of His Grace the Duke of Manchester*, 1763, detail (HA Map 457). Here the Warren House stands in a 'Plantation of Forrest Trees.' Note too the estate fencing relatively tight behind the Warren Spinney (suggesting therefore that the warren did not extend to the stream). The two small mounds shown to the west of the Warren House on either side of the spinney could be pillow mounds (artificially created mounds for the rabbits' burrows). Traces of double ditching also survive in the spinney, although more thorough investigation of the terrain is needed. The use of the plateau north and west of the Warren House as a WW2 airfield makes it unlikely that any other archaeological traces of the warren will survive. Sadly, the National Monument Record at Swindon holds no pre-WW2 aerial photos of the plateau – the 1950 OS map on p10 makes clear how extensive were the works associated with the airfield.**

Joseph Spence is an interesting figure in 18th-century literature and garden design. At various times, he was Professor of Poetry and Regius Professor of History at Oxford University. He was an appreciated companion for several aristocrats on their Grand Tours and a good friend of Alexander Pope and other writers, published various works of history and commentary of his own. Already a designer of gardens and landscapes for his friends, Spence's success in designing the garden for the house where he lived at Byfleet in Surrey led to other, higher profile commissions of which Kimbolton Castle was one. Today, Spence's lengthy notes about the site are at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale.[7] Spence's formal write up of his ideas to His Grace the Duke of Manchester (hitherto unpublished) provides a detailed eye witness description of the park and its wider setting. Rough notes and jottings also survive of planting lists, survey measurements and design sketches for the grounds at Kimbolton Castle, forming a valuable source for any garden historian of the castle. Spence also makes passing reference to earlier landscaping at the castle undertaken by 'Burnets' in 1745. Nothing more is known of this intervention.

Infuriatingly Spence does not mention the Warren House in his letter or notes, even though he describes the wider views around the castle. View No 1 'from the Colonade', looking east towards Stonely aspires to 'a very pleasing look up to the Priory' and the sketch accompanying this includes a funny little building that could just be the Warren House, appearing as it does in the correct relationship to another cottage that could be Priory Cottage (see illustration), another eyecatcher to the estate that must now also be introduced.

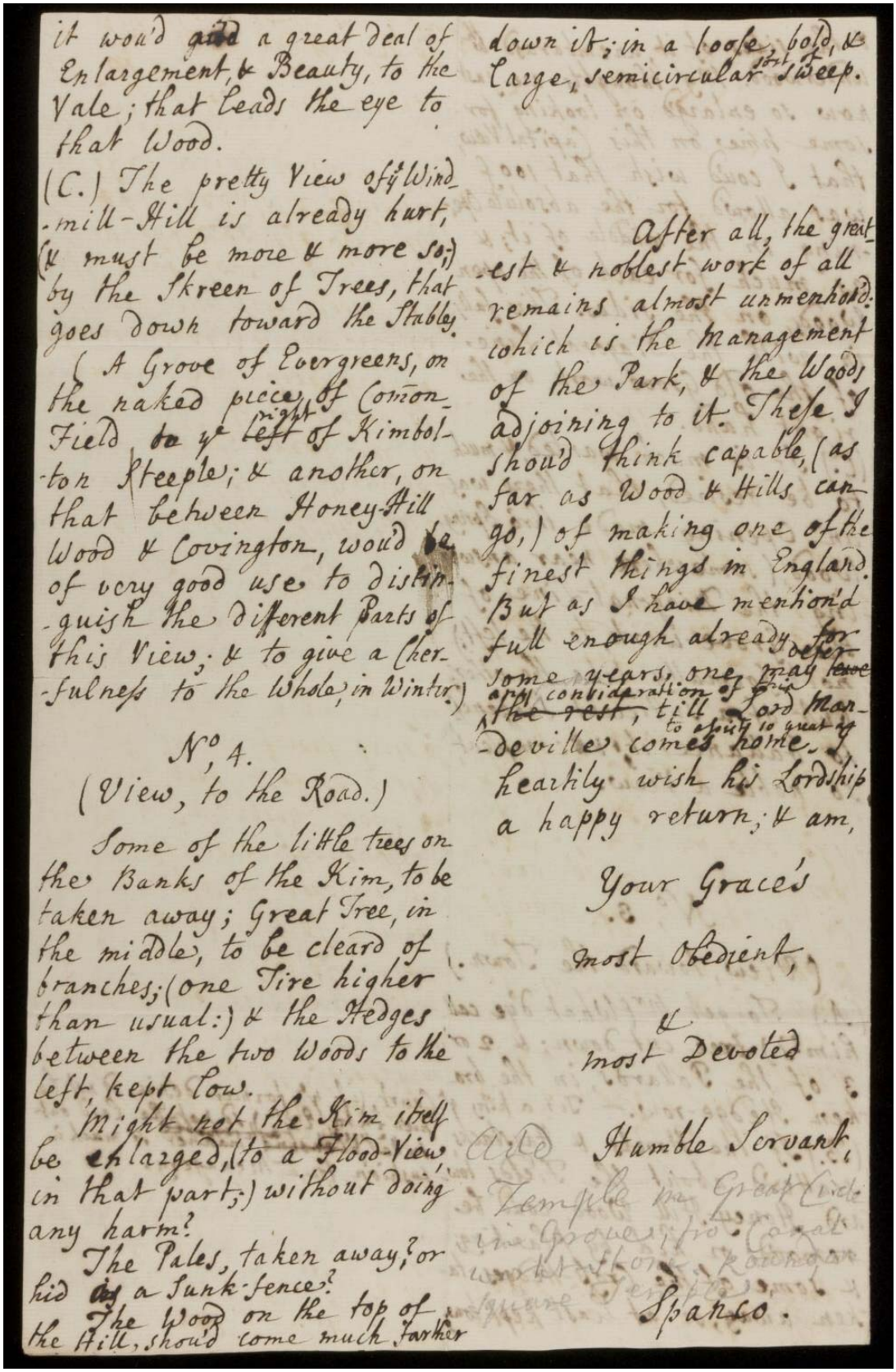
[7] Osborn Collection at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library in Yale: Joseph Spence Papers, OSB MSS 4, Box 6, folder 184, "Kimbolton Castle in Huntingdonshire: Duke of Manchester."

Priory Lodge, all that is left of Stonely Priory, lies along the escarpment from the Warren House. It too was probably built in the 17th century perhaps using material salvaged from t he former abbey. The Stonely lands remained in the ownership of the Wingfield family after Kimbolton Castle was acquired by Sir Henry Montagu in 1615. The two estates were reunited in 1655. The castellated brick parapet is clearly a later addition whose purpose is now obscure. A blocked first floor opening suggests that, like the Warren House, there may have been a viewing platform once.

Priory Lodge, all that is left of Stonely Priory, lies along the escarpment to the south east of the Warren House, within the formerly moated site of Stonely Priory, a religious foundation variously described as Augustinian or Cistercian founded in 1180 by William de Mandeville. It was never large and by the time of its dissolution in 1536, is described as 'ruynous and in decaye.' Local anecdote has it that the cottage incorporates an original wall of the priory, though it seems more likely that it merely incorporates salvaged material. The former priory estate was bought in 1552 by Thomas Maria Wingfield, whose son Edward Maria Wingfield (1550-1631) founded Jamestown, Virginia and became the first President of Virginia.

Priory Cottage is also thought to date from the early 17th century and, like the Warren House, is tall for its footprint, well-built of coursed rubble stone with dressed stone quoins and a steep tiled roof. The western elevation has been embellished with a castellated parapet in finely jointed brick. The *Options for a Lodge or Folly* includes a castellated parapet as one of its alternatives. The cottage has a central blocked rectangular opening at first floor level, that implies an access onto a porch roof or viewing point, much like the Venetian-type window at the Warren House (there is a utilitarian modern porch in place today). This elevation faces west towards Kimbolton Castle and village. Modern barns and scrubby hedges block the view today but it could well have been visible from the castle and is just visible from the Warren House. Larger warrens often had two or even more lodges set apart from each other to command as wide a view as possible under surveillance. It seems possible, even likely, that the history and purpose of the two lodges are linked, whether in a seventeenth-century construction date as part of a revival in interest in warren farming, or as part of the same eighteenth-century landscape development

The Stonely Priory estate remained in the ownership of a branch of the Wingfield family after the castle was conveyed by the last Wingfield to Sir Henry Montagu 1st Earl in 1617. The Stonely estate was bought by Edward, 2nd Earl of



it would add a great deal of Enlargement & Beauty, to the Vale; that leads the eye to that Wood.

(C.) The pretty View of ye Wind-mill-Hill is already hurt, (& must be more & more so;) by the Skreen of Trees, that goes down toward the Stables.

(A Grove of Evergreens, on the naked piece of Comon-Field to ye right of Kimbol-ton Steeple; & another, on that between Honey-Hill Wood & Covington, would be of very good use to distin-guish the different Parts of this View; & to give a Cher-fulness to the Whole, in Winter.)

N°. 4.

(View, to the Road.)

Some of the little trees on the Banks of the Kim, to be taken away; Great Tree, in the middle, to be cleard of branches; (one Tire higher than usual:) & the Hedges between the two Woods to the left, kept low.

Might not the Kim itself be enlarged, (to a Flood-View, in that part;) without doing any harm?

The Pales, taken away? or hid by a Sunk-fence?

The Wood on the top of the Hill, should come much farther down it; in a loose, bold, & large, semicircular Sweep.

After all, the great-est & noblest work of all remains almost unmention'd: which is the management of the Park, & the Woods adjoining to it. These I should think capable, (as far as Wood & Hills can go,) of making one of the finest things in England. But as I have mention'd full enough already, for some years, one may leave off consideration of the rest, till Lord Man-deville comes home to enjoy it: to which I heartily wish his Lordship a happy return; & am,

Your Grace's

most Obedient,

& most Devoted

Humble Servant,

Spanco.

Extract from Joseph Spence's letter to t he Duke of Manchester in 1758 describing View No 4 'to the Road' and signed 'Spanco'. (Osbourne Collection, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library)

Manchester, in 1655, so that the cottage or lodge was available for inclusion by Spence in his planning of the landscape around Kimbolton Castle.

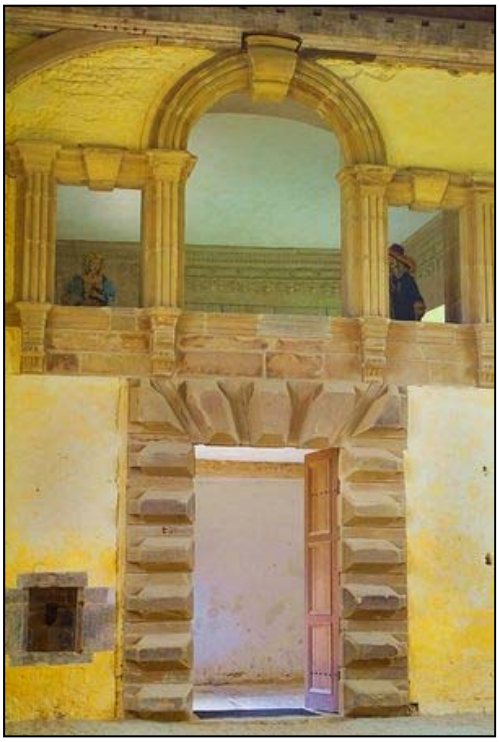
After discussing View Nos. 2 and 3 ('from State Apartments' towards the south, and 'toward the Town' to the west, Spence comes to View No. 4, north 'to the Road', and the one that probably included the Warren House in full gaze. He writes:

> *'Some of the little trees on the banks of the [River] Kim, to be taken away; Great Tree, in the middle, to be clear'd of branches; (one Tire [tier] higher than usual:) & the Hedges between the two Woods to the left, to be kept low.*
> *'Might not the Kim itself be enlarged (to a Flood-View in that part) without doing any harm?*
> *'The Pales [palings), taken away, or hid as a Sunk-fence.*
> *'The Wood on the top of the Hill, shou'd come much farther down it, in a loose, bold & large, semicircular sort of sweep.'*

From the references to the road and the Kym, Spence is surely looking up the hill, for the Warren House must be in 'the Wood on the top of the Hill.' So it is puzzling that he does not mention it directly. Perhaps at this stage it was not visible from the castle but enclosed within the wood and Spence, gazing out comfortably from inside the castle, was unaware of it. Perhaps, if still unembellished with the stone façade, the little structure was considered insufficiently picturesque to mention.

We do not know for sure how many of Spence's suggestions were acted upon by the 3rd Duke of Manchester, or indeed by Robert, 4th Duke, who inherited the estate in 1762. However, Cosmo Wallace's map of 1763 depicts a now carefully landscaped park, with the now fully developed Warren House at its heart. The 'Plantation of Young Forest' marked on the1764 version of the map could well be an execution of Spence's instruction for a 'loose, bold & large, semicircular sort of sweep.' That the Warren House lies at its centre suggests that the spotlight did indeed turn on the building, and brings us to the question of when and by whom the stone façade with its brick porch was added.

The Warren House façade before restoration. Does it incorporate material salvaged from one of the remodellings of Kimbolton Castle?



The openings the Warren House have stylistic similarities with those of the viewing gallery at the Riding School, Bolsover Castle, built in 1637.

Other changes were also afoot at the castle in the 1760s. The medieval castle in which Katherine of Aragon died in 1536 had already undergone several transformations, first by Sir Henry Montagu, 1st Earl of Manchester, around 1620; next the so-called Great Rebuilding was undertaken by the 4th Earl, first with Sir Henry Bell of King's Lynn (probably) in the 1690s and later with architects Sir John Vanbrugh and Nicholas Hawksmoor from 1707. A near contemporary letter suggests that it was architect Thomas Archer who then added the grand east portico in 1717. Around 1764, Robert Adam designed the magnificent gatehouse that still provides such a thrilling endstop to Kimbolton High Street. Adam also provided other designs to the 4th Duke for ancillary buildings, not all of which were executed. In 1775, Adam provided designs for a saloon at the castle. (The history and development of the castle is described in more detail in a subsequent chapter).

In theory, the addition of the Warren House façade could relate to any of these interventions before 1763, when it appears on the Cosmo Wallace estate map. Sadly, high hopes of finding a clear attribution for its provenance have not been fulfilled by the documentary sources. There are now two possible explanations for the provenance and date of erection of the façade, one based on physical evidence, the second on documentary. The first is the more convincing.

Under this **first** hypothesis, the façade was added in the late 17th or early 18th century, reusing material salvaged, or spare, from the Montagus' reworking of Kimbolton Castle and its surrounds in the 1620s and 1630s ('your Honour's improvements upon the heath). This is stylistically plausible: as architectural historian Nicholas Cooper has commented, the facade has 'that tantalising, slightly uncertain yet delicate classicism of some of the best building of c. 1630-40 (cf. the 17th-century wing at Scotney).'[8] A perhaps more far-fetched reference might be the openings of the viewing gallery at the Riding School at Bolsover, a building which also dates from the 1630s. The openings have a similar form to the Warren House windows, an arched window flanked by square openings.

[8] *Pers. Comm.*

Kimbolton Castle, south elevation of the inner courtyard refaced by Henry Bell, 1690s. The high level windows are now the only fabric of the works to the Castle in the 1620s and 30s left visible by Bell's and later alterations.
Photograph, Alison Ainsworth, 2013

Left: Kimbolton Castle, early 17th-century window, top storey of south elevation of the inner courtyard (2013).
Right: The Warren House, first-floor east window before restoration (2007).

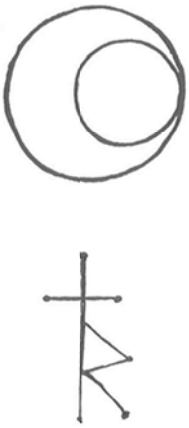
The size of the two-light windows and their ovolo mouldings appear similar, strongly suggesting that the stone elements of the Warren House date from the 1620s works to the Castle, and were salvaged and added to the Warren House

From their size and shape, the bricks at The Warren House also look earlier than 18th-century, as does the use of English bond – but dating brickwork from size and bond alone is not always reliable.

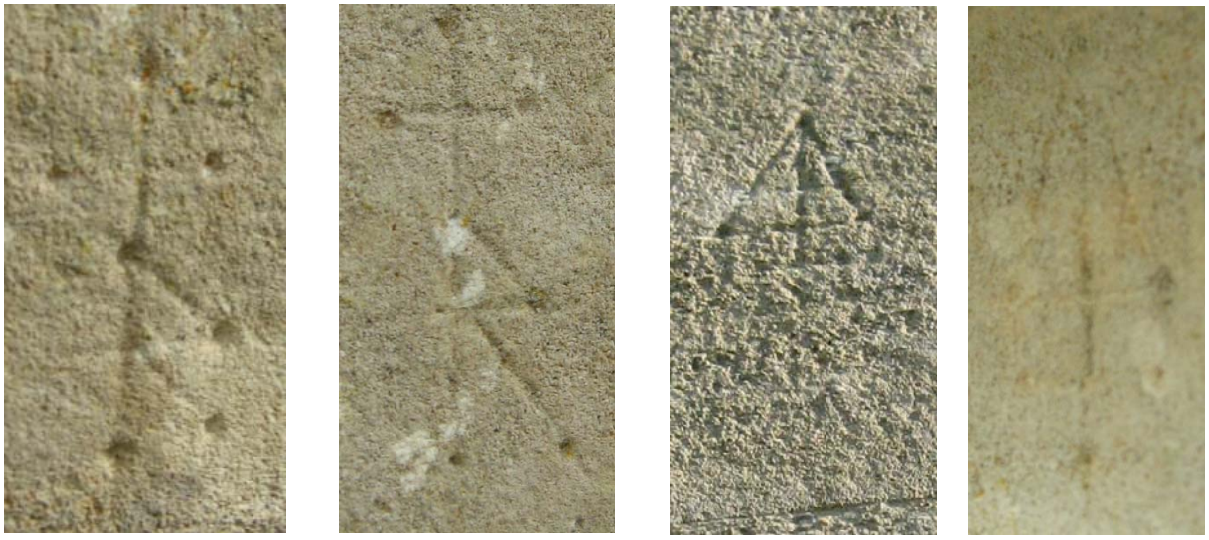
During restoration process, its architect, Oliver Caroe, argued against the façade having been added very soon after the cottage's construction, because he felt that the timber frame had stood first for a considerable period of time without it. He agreed, however, that it was probable that the stone features were reused from elsewhere, not least on the grounds that they fit the timber frame behind so poorly, the internal stone mullions actually being hacked back to make them fit. On this basis too, early 17th-century material could have been recycled from, and added at the time of, one of the later re-workings of the castle's fabric.

Very little early 17th-century fabric remains visible at Kimbolton Castle since most of it was swept away or concealed by the 4th Earl's later building campaigns. A range of three high level stone windows does survive, as a kind of parapet backdrop to the south elevation of Henry Bell's 1690s elegant refacing of the medieval great hall and inner courtyard with fine brickwork and stone dressings. The ovolo moulded mullions on these windows look remarkably similar to those at the Warren House, suggesting that the latter may well date from Montagu's works on the castle in the 1620s, and were probably salvaged and re-used in the 1690s or early 18th century.

There is further physical evidence to support the hypothesis of an early 17th-century date for the façade. Scattered across the stone blocks are tiny but distinctive arrows and marks, visible only under close scrutiny and in raking light. These are masons' marks, incised by masons who were probably pieceworkers to identify their work (scholarly opinion differs on whether such marks may be traced to specific individuals, rather than group work). Such marks are so commonly found on the outer faces of well-dressed masonry in polite late 16th- and early 17th- century buildings that it seems they were tolerated and possibly even encouraged by the building patrons. Apethorpe Hall, a great house some twenty north of Kimbolton, was briefly owned in the 2000s by English Heritage,



The Warren House, first floor, detail of the left-hand spandrel of the round-headed window. These distinctive geometric markings, matched asymmetrically in the opposing spandrel, appear to represent the laying out of an illusionistic oculus similar to those surviving on the east gateway at Kirby Hall. Below it is an unusually large version of mason's mark below, 5t6, which has also been found at Apethorpe Hall.



Examples of masons' marks found on the stonework of the facade at the Warren House. The two left hand examples were codified by the English Heritage team who worked at Apethorpe Hall as 5t6. This mark has been found on the 1622-4 range at Apethorpe, on the east gateway at Kirby Hall and on a fireplace dated 1605 at Deene Park.

whose team carried out a minute scrutiny of its fabric.

In 1622-4, two ranges at Apethrope were constructed for Sir Francis Fane, in pale oolitic Lincolnshire limestone, and English Heritage carried out a detailed record of the masons' marks found there.[9] Stone analysis showed this limestone came from a quarry at Kings Cliffe, owned by Fane and worked by the family of one of the few surveyors and architects of the period, John Thorpe.

At least two of the Warren House masons' marks (codified as '5t6' and '5ht1') appear on these 1620s ranges at Apethorpe, built in the same years that Sir Henry Montagu was refashioning Kimbolton Castle. The quarry at Kings Cliffe was owned in the late 16th century by the Mildmay family, who also had connections with Kimbolton Castle in the 1580s, when Sir Walter Mildmay took joint custody of the Kimbolton estate during the debt-ridden years of Mildmay's nephew, Thomas Wingfield.

The mark 5t6 has also been found at Kirby Hall and Deene Park, two more late 16th- and early 17th-century great houses in Northamptonshire. Kirby is especially consistent with the 1622-4 ranges at Apethorpe, while at Deene Park, the mark is found on a fireplace dated 1605. Such matching chronology and shared marks raises the strong possibility that the stone used in the façade at the Warren House came from the Kings Cliffe quarry and was cut by the Thorpe workforce.

The east gateway at Kirby Hall (the great house now partly roofless and in the care of English Heritage) also provides the most plausible explanation for the curious, larger markings in either spandrel of the arched window on the Warren House, carefully and symmetrically placed and about 300mm high. Each is a circle, containing another circle that is displaced to the right – like a pair of cartoon eyes looking to the right. Below each is a cross, rising from a triangle – an unusually large example of mason's mark 5ht1. The east gateway at Kirby Hall

[9] J. Alexander & K. Morrison, Apethorpe Hall and the Workshop of Thomas Thorpe, Mason of Kingscliffe: A Study in Masons' Marks', *Architectural History*, 50 (2007), 59-94.

Kirby Hall, east gateway. Note the small oculi in the spandrels of the archway, deeply and asymmetrically carved to heighten the perspectival impression.

Kirby Hall, east gateway, detail. The markings in the spandrels of the first-floor window at the Warren House may well be the setting out marks for just such a feature. Photographs: Jenny Alexander

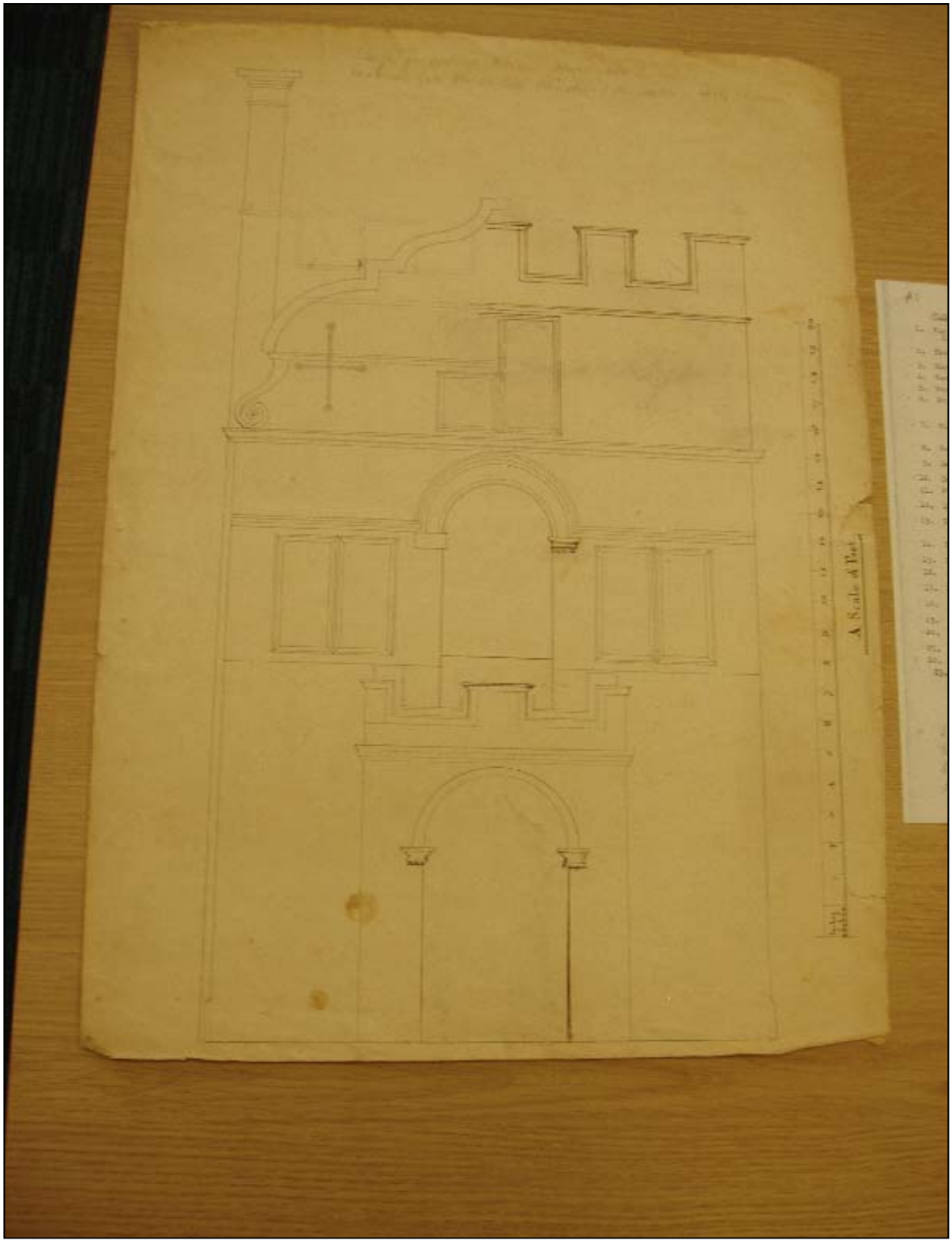
has similar features but in more finished form, as decorative oculi in the spandrels of both the archway and two flanking hollow niches. In these, the inner of the two circles has been deeply carved as a hemisphere and the outer circle indented, creating an interesting depth of decoration.

The date of the Kirby gateways is uncertain, but one suggestion, that they date from the early 17th century, is based on the presence of 'a very distinctive mark' – 5t6, the other mark shared by Apethorpe Hall, Kirby Hall, and now the Warren House.

It is hard to resist the suggestion that the Warren House spandrel markings were the setting out marks for intended decorative features like the occuli on the Kirby gateways, left 'signed' but unfinished by mason 5ht1, working alongside a familiar colleague, 5t6. No such masons' marks have yet been discovered at Kimbolton Castle, although such things are hard to make out without full scaffolding and the kind of scrutiny received by Apethorpe from the English Heritage team.

We now hope to find funding to carry out stone analysis on 1620s fabric of Kimbolton Castle and the Warren Hous façade, to place the provenance of this elevation beyond reasonable doubt, as well as to further knowledge about the castle.[10]

[10] See also Caroline Stanford, 'The Warren House, Kimbolton, Cambridgeshire: A Rare & Interesting Survival', *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, Vol. 58 (2013).



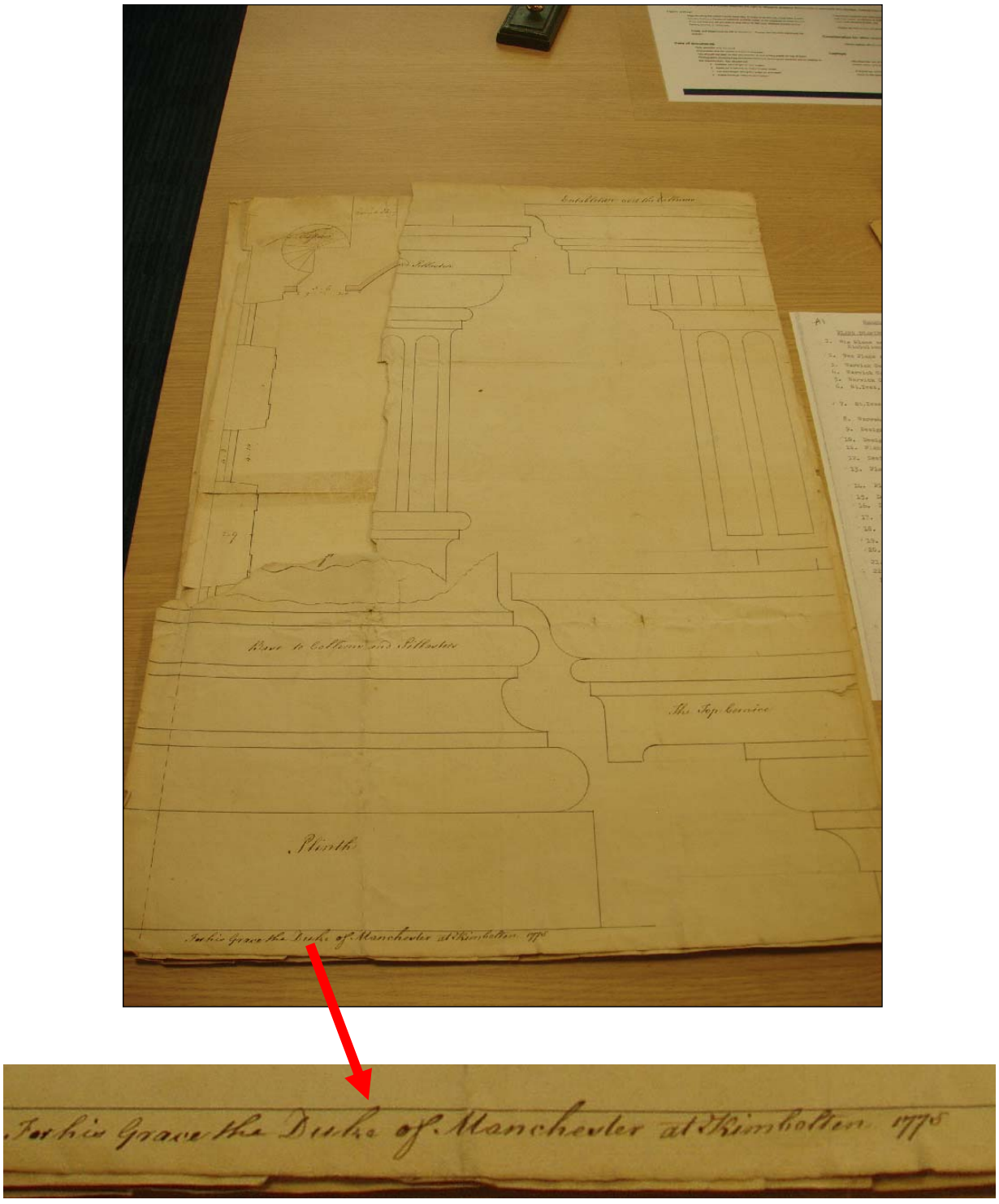
***Options for a Lodge or Folly*, which provides a possible connection for the Warren House with the office of Robert Adam. Note A4 sheet to right, for scale.**
(HA M1A/3/8)

The **second hypothesis,** that prevailed until Landmark's restoration of the Warren House, is that the **façade was added in the 18th century** during the second stage of the 4th Earl's works to the castle. The grounds for this are a drawing in the Manchester papers at the Huntingdonshire Archives.[11] It shows the front, display elevation of a small building, with two alternative treatments for the parapet. It has a chimney to the left, a porch with an arched doorway and an arched window at first floor level flanked by two pairs of rectangular windows. In short, up to parapet height it looks remarkably like the Warren House. A later note has been added in pencil, thought to be the hand of Inskipp Ladds, local historian and compiler of the Victoria County History for Huntingdonshire in the 1930s. This note reads: 'Design for the Warren House constructed of materials from the earlier structure of the Castle. Early 18th century.' The early 18th century is certainly possible as a date for the addition of the façade, but Inskipp Ladds offered no further substantiation for this date and nor has any substantiation emerged during Landmark's research.

Beth Davis, in an article in Kimbolton Local History Journal Volume 9, dated the drawing to the mid 17th century on stylistic grounds, and as also referring to mid 17th-century landscaping of the grounds as part of Sir Henry Montagu's extensive works to the castle 1617-20.

In fact, a mid 1770s date for the drawing, which we may call *Options for a Lodge or Folly,* can be plausibly suggested. After the 4th Duke inherited in 176 , and no doubt keen to leave his own mark on the estate, he commissioned designs from Robert Adam. Within the Manchester Collection, M1A/3/8, the *Options for a Lodge or Folly* is found in a folder of mixed sets of drawings dating from the early 1760s to the late 1770s, most of which relate to Robert Adam's involvement with the castle. M1A/3/6, for example, is *Elevation of a Gateway & co for his Grace the Duke of Manchester at Kimbolton Castle Huntingdonshire* signed and dated Robert Adam 1764.

[11] HA M1A/3/8



One of the dated drawings from the office of Robert Adam, on exactly the same paper as *Options for a Lodge or Folly*. It is dated 1775, when a reworking of the Warren House parapet was perhaps being considered. (Manchester papers, HA)

Adam's design for the entrance gateway and lodges was indeed built, even if his other designs for the 4th Duke with for various estate buildings, including a menagerie and other ancillary buildings, were not.

Options for a Lodge or Folly is quite a large drawing (the sheet measures 54 x 38 cm). The sheet size, and paper colour and texture are exactly the same as two other sheets in the folder (although these sheets are not the same paper same as the 1764 signed Adam drawings). These two other drawings are M1A/3/18 (a large scale detail of pillars etc annotated 'For his Grace the Duke of Manchester at Kimbolton 1775' and with an address on reverse) and MA1/3 /17 (a plan for a saloon with curved end walls, nd).

The ink and penmanship are comparable across these three drawings, although as the script on the *Options for a Lodge or Folly* is not joined, it is not possible to identify whether this is by the same hand. Indeed, the *Options* is quite a crude drawing – perhaps an exercise set for an apprentice architect, let loose on building possibilities remote from the main castle. As the options shown for the parapet do not include the actual triangular pediment as built, it is indeed possible that the drawing is a proposal for a *replacement* of the actual (and salvaged?) parapet, perhaps grown inadequate to a mid-18th-century sensibility.

Of course, the circumstance of these drawings all being grouped in the same folder within the catalogue may be sheer coincidence, but circumstantial evidence at least points towards *Options for a Lodge or Folly* **being from the office of Robert Adam, in or around 1775.**

However, we know that the Warren House already has its porch by 1763 from the map evidence, and must therefore also have had its façade by the same date. Was *Options for a Lodge or Folly* rather a repairs or replacement proposal for an existing parapet wall at the Warren House (or indeed at Priory Cottage, which did acquire a castellated parapet), to make it more fashionably Gothick? Either way, there is a strong possibility that the drawing was associated with Robert Adam's

office – an exciting thought, even if it does not in fact help with a definitive date for the actual addition of the Warren House façade.

Whenever the façade was added, it might have been expected that the lodge took on a more polite function thereafter, perhaps as a folly or destination for picnics from the castle. It does, certainly, align precisely (if perhaps coincidentally) with the room in the castle traditionally known as the Duchess's bedroom. However, somewhat to our surprise, we found no evidence, either physical or documentary, that the building behind the façade ever had more polite use – no sign of ornamental plasterwork, or decorative features. Whatever its public face, it seems that the Warren House continued to function behind as an estate worker's dwelling, and a relatively humble one at that.

George, 4th Duke, died in 1788 and was succeeded by William, 5th Duke of Manchester, who was only 17 at the time. In 1793, William married Susan, a daughter of the Duke of Gordon, with whom he had eight children. However, the marriage became increasingly troubled, and they had separated by 1808 when William became Governor of Jamaica, a post he filled until 1827. (In 1812, his Duchess caused a definitive break by eloping with one of her footmen, 'her conduct becoming notoriously bad' according to a contemporary.) With its Duke absent for almost two decades, the estate at Kimbolton was inevitably neglected.

On the Duke's return in 1827, he set about reviving his estate and as part of this he recruited a gamekeeper, one Nathaniel Dale. In 1871, Dale published, privately, his memoirs, *The Eventful Life of Nathaniel Dale.* These provide an eyewitness account of life below stairs in the castle and on the warren during the mid-19th century. Dale tells us that on the Duke's return, '*he found many things contrary to his liking. Some of the land had been let from the home farm; the herd of deer, very small in number as well as in size, through being bred in and in, and not having a change of blood, so the Duke told me, in the memory of man. Game there was but little; but the place was smothered with rabbits, the woods*

eaten up and partly destroyed by them.' Dale lived at a house at Park Farm south of the castle rather than in the Warren House, but his account of rabbiting with his sidekick Marshall from the nearby village of Staughton is worth quoting in full:

> *After the Duke had told me what he should like to do with the farm, he said, "There are two things I should like you to do as soon as you can, viz: to kill all the outlying deer, as they do a great deal of mischief; and to set to work and kill down the rabbits, for the place is swarming with them." Other things we took as they came. He told me there was an old pensioner living at Staughton, a very quiet man, who would come with his dogs and go rabbiting with me any time I wanted. In a short time I sent for the man whose name was Marshall. The first day we killed four or five dozen, and the next morning I sent them down to the castle, and told the woodmen to hang them up in the larder, and if they saw the Duke, and he enquired for me, to tell him I should be down in about ten minutes. When I got down, there the men stood with the rabbits on their poles against the castle. I asked them why they stood there. They said the Duke forbid having them in the castle and wished to see me, I was to wait until he came up; and in about ten minutes the Duke came, with the Duke of Gordon on his left arm; and when within about twenty yards he called me to him and said "Where did you kill all those rabbits?" I said, "At the Warren Spinney, Your Grace." He said, "You have had a good day. How many?" I said "About four dozen, your Grace." He said, "What are you going to do with them?" I said, "I told the men to bring them here and hang them up in the larder, as I understand that is the custom of the place." He said, "I will do away with that custom." I said, "Your Grace wishes to have them killed, and if you will say what I am to do with them, your orders will be complied with."*
>
> *He then caught hold of me by the arm, and led me further from the men, and said, "I will tell you what to do with them: take and sell them, and put the money in your pocket, and take care of it; some day you will find it useful." I thanked His Grace, and he turned to the Duke of Gordon, saying, "Do you think Dale will like that?" The Duke of Gordon smiles, and said,"I do not think he will object to it." The Duke of Manchester then said, "Do it quietly; let no one know they are your perquisites; if the farmers get to know they will be jealous, and you will soon have a row. Neither tell the steward, as he would shoot and eat rabbits all the year round; and never bring any to the castle as I would as leave eat a rat."*
>
> *He turned to the Duke of Gordon and said, "You will go into the kitchen one day and see that old woman (meaning the housekeeper) smothered up in rabbits' fur for she is always after the skins." They were at that time worth nine shillings per dozen. He then said to me, "My servants are all on board wages, and I don't wish you to work for them. You will require some nets: get what you want, and I will pay for them, and all other expenses." I said, "if your Grace allows me the rabbits, I can pay the expenses." "But if*

A Hertfordshire warrener, photographed around 1900.

I like to do it, you will not object?", he asked. "Well, no, my Lord," I replied. He then told me that as he had no dogs or ferrits, I had better get old Marshall of Staughton, as he was an old pensioner, and very quiet. After some talk about other matters, he said, "Now go and send the men back to your house with the rabbits, and we will soon be up with you" I did so.

The duke had now set me a job to kill and sell from fifteen to twenty dozen rabbits a week, without people knowing. The way I did was this: I took my nets in the night, run them by the side of the wood, and then old Marshall run the rabbits in with his dogs. By moving our nets, and so having various pitches during the night, we frequently caught several dozen. I sold them to old Marshall, and he took them away on a small hand-truck, selling them to a man called Conry of Eaton, who brought them back to Kimbolton and sold them as Sandy rabbits, Sandy lying some miles off.

This went on for seven years. The steward often asked me what I did with the rabbits, but of course I always gave him an evasive answer. However, after seven years had rolled by, our dodge was discovered. One night we had been out killing and as Marshall was going home, with two sacks full, he was overtaken by Neville Day, Esq., the lawyer, of St Neots, who had been dining with the steward, and was returning home. He asked him what he had got in his sacks, when Marshall replied, "Dogs' meat, sir." The lawyer said, "That's a lie; I will see;" and springing from his horse, opened the bags, and found they were rabbits. "Where have you brought them from?" he asked. "If you want to know more, you must ask Mr Dale, as I am employed by him." He bought a couple and took them home. The next morning he wrote to the steward and the clergyman, to tell them what he had discovered after leaving them the previous night. As soon as the Rev. J.H.T. had received the note, which was brought by the lawyer's groom, he went direct to the Duke, and told him the whole affair. After the Duke had listened to his story, he said, "Thank you, sir, for your information; but you are seven years behind-hand; I give Dale credit for keeping the Kimbolton people in the dark for seven years." The parson then left with his head down, as it was not the first time he had talked to the Duke about me; but the Duke being a just and good man, always told me about the affair.

On the following Sunday the steward sent for me. I went, and he told me all about it. He said he had dined with the Duke the night before, and wished me to know who it was who had informed the Duke. I thanked him, and told him I had just left the Duke, and he had not said anything to me, and finding that I had some dark looks from some of my old friends, and as some had even said I had been a rogue, I should go back and ask the Duke whether he wished for a change or not.

> *As I entered the butler's pantry, the butler and gardener were talking it over. The gardener said he was sure I should lose my situation; to which the butler added: "Yes; and serve him right, a d----d rogue." On asking the butler as to where the Duke was, he told me I should find him in his room. The gardener was anxious to know what was the matter, but I told him that was my business, and went to the Duke. I told him what the steward had told me about the clergyman. "Ah," he said, "the fellow came to me the other day with a cockney boo story, fit to burst. I thanked him and said he was seven years behind; and I gave you credit for what you had done according to my orders." I then asked him if he wished any change. He said, "No; and if anyone says anything to you about it, tell them to mind their own business, and not to interfere with you; the parson as well; and tell them I told you to say so. Go on as you have been doing; I am quite satisfied.*

Rabbits were not the only pests to be kept down. Dale must also have been a good shot: he recounts that one year he killed thirteen dozen wood pigeons with his son, and that culling seventy to eighty rooks a year was typical (*'at the time we had a good rookery, and the Duke liked to see a few about the farm…')* The Duke also allowed Dale to give tradespeople half a day's shooting a year '*which they enjoyed very much, whether he was at the castle or not.'* Poaching seems to have been relatively rare, although Dale was also called in to deal with that too, on one occasion hearing shots in Honey Hill Wood at 3am, which he traced back to some gypsies' tents.

Dale also recounts that the fishpond behind and north east of the Warren House was created by the 5th Duke:

> *'soon after* [the pond] *was finished, and full of water, I was near losing my life. It was one very hot summer's day, when Gordon, who was the gardener, proposed that I, Jacklin the keeper, the groom, the footman and himself should go and have a bathe in the new fish- pond. I being no swimmer, it was arranged that the groom and footman, who were good swimmers, should teach me. Unknown to me and the groom, Gordon proposed to the footman, that when we got about halfway across, where it would be about nine feet of water, he should give me a good ducking; which he did at the place named….*

The fishponds, which still give Fishpond Spinney its name, were used for years by locals for fishing and swimming (there were even had diving boards), and for

skating in winter. Eventually the retaining wall and banks collapsed. Though restored in recent years, the ponds are now private property, so that it is no longer the destination for a stroll from the village that it was once.

William, 5th Duke, died in 1843 and was succeeded by his son George. Dale served a further seven years on the estate, although it seems from the estate account books that survive from this period that his rabbit perks may not have continued under the 6th Duke. The following annual entries, recorded by Peter Purves the estate steward, are representative:

April 6 1844 The Keepers Account. Received from Campbell Poulterer Huntingdon for 39 dozen rabbits sent him during the season £19 12s

The Keepers Account
4 April 1846 Received of Nathaniel Dale the Keeper for 331 rabbits sold to Mr Brazier of Bedford £10 19 9d

The Deer Park
5 March 1946 Received of J. Poulton Venison Dealer 62 Jermyn Street London for 26 stall fed Bucks sold him in spring 1845 £7 each - £182

A more detailed snapshot of Dale's activities also appears in the 1846 accounts:

Under keeper nine weeks 4 19 0
Keep of Lady Olivia Montagu's pet dogs 1 4 5
Oatmeal for dogs
27 6 0 half year's wages for Nathaniel Dale
Occasional watchers (incl at night) and beaters
Saddlers account for repairing the keeper's saddle.
To John Giddings the Grocer Kimbolton for powder and shot, Mrs Bass the basket maker, Turner the Druggists bill for medecines
'Annual allowance in lieu of rabbits £5'
For killing vermin during the year 7 16 6
For killing 331 rabbits 6 3 5

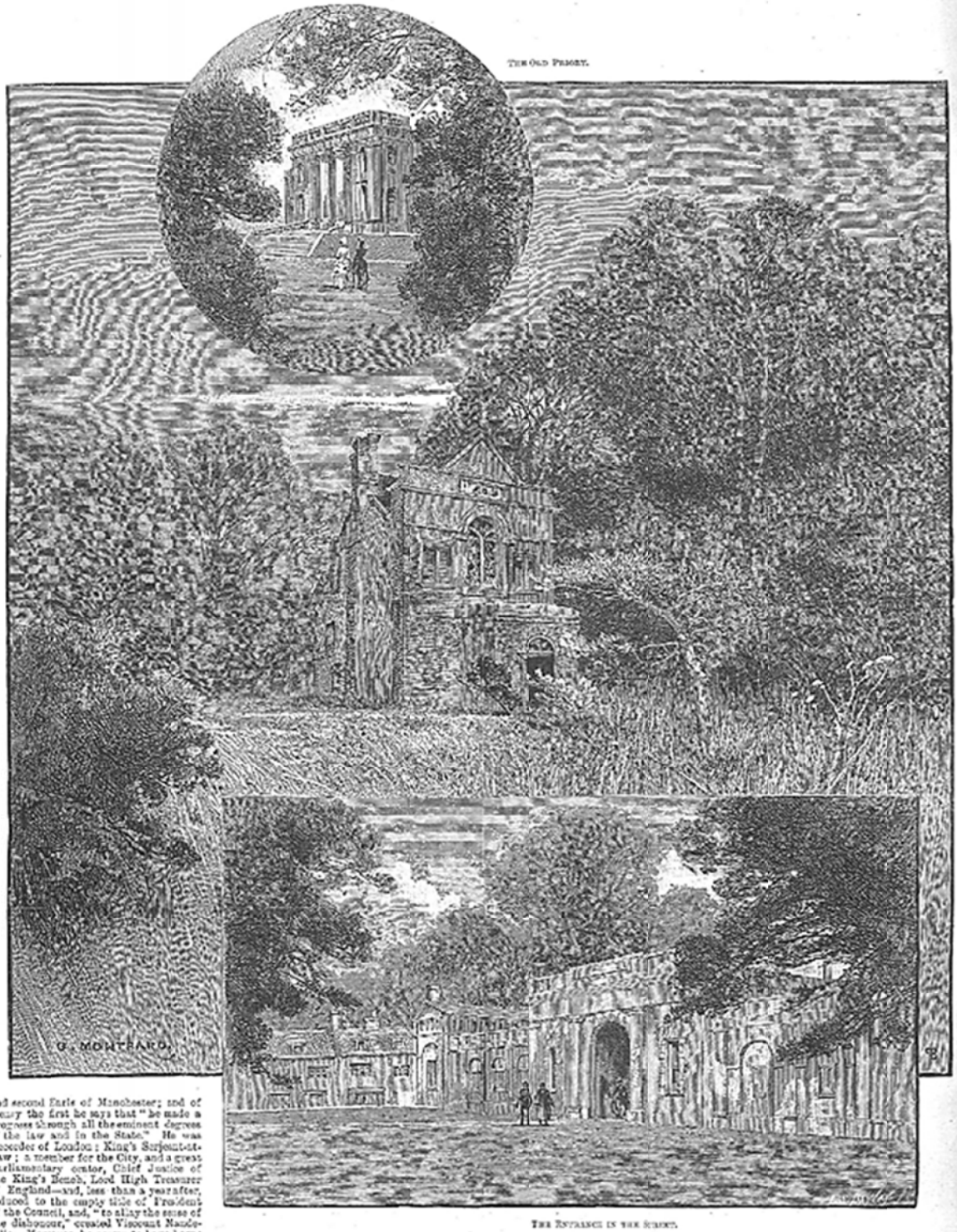
On 4th April 1848 Purves recorded 'No sales have been made of any game this year' so perhaps the rabbits were more under control by then.

826 THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS JUNE 29, 1889

ENGLISH HOMES.—No. XIX. KIMBOLTON CASTLE.

GRAND ENTRANCE IN PRIVATE GARDENS.

THE OLD PRIORY.



G. MONTBARD.

THE ENTRANCE IN THE SCHOOL.

and second Earls of Manchester; and of Henry the first he says that "he made a progress through all the eminent degrees of the law and in the State." He was Recorder of London; King's Serjeant-at-Law; a member for the City, and a great Parliamentary orator, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, Lord High Treasurer of England—and, less than a year after, reduced to the empty title of President of the Council, and, "to allay the sense of the dishonour," created Viscount Mandeville. Moreover, he seems to have borne his deprivation so well that he was made, in requital, Lord Privy Seal and Earl of Manchester.

"He was," says Clarendon, summing up, "a man of great industry and ingenity in business, which he delighted in exceedingly; and preserved so great a vigour of mind even to his death, when he was very near eighty years of age, that some who had known him in his younger years did believe him to have much quicker parts in his age than before."

He was the most literary of the Montagus, though he is known only by one book; but of that at least fifteen editions were published within sixty years—one of which had the singular honour of being the first work published after the Great Fire of London.

It was a book on death, and was long a favourite present to attendants at funerals; it was called "Manchester Al Mondo: Contemplatio Mortis et Immortalitatis." In style it is plainly founded on St. Augustine. Its matter is a long series of reflections on death, its advantages, and the need of making ready for it, in a stately English, intermixed with scraps of Latin, somewhat as "Sartor Resartus" is vexed with German. For instance:—"Procrastination is the great enemy to preparation. This *Dum vivimus* that always cries *Cras! cras!* deceives many a man, making him *perdere hodiernum*, trusting upon to-morrow."

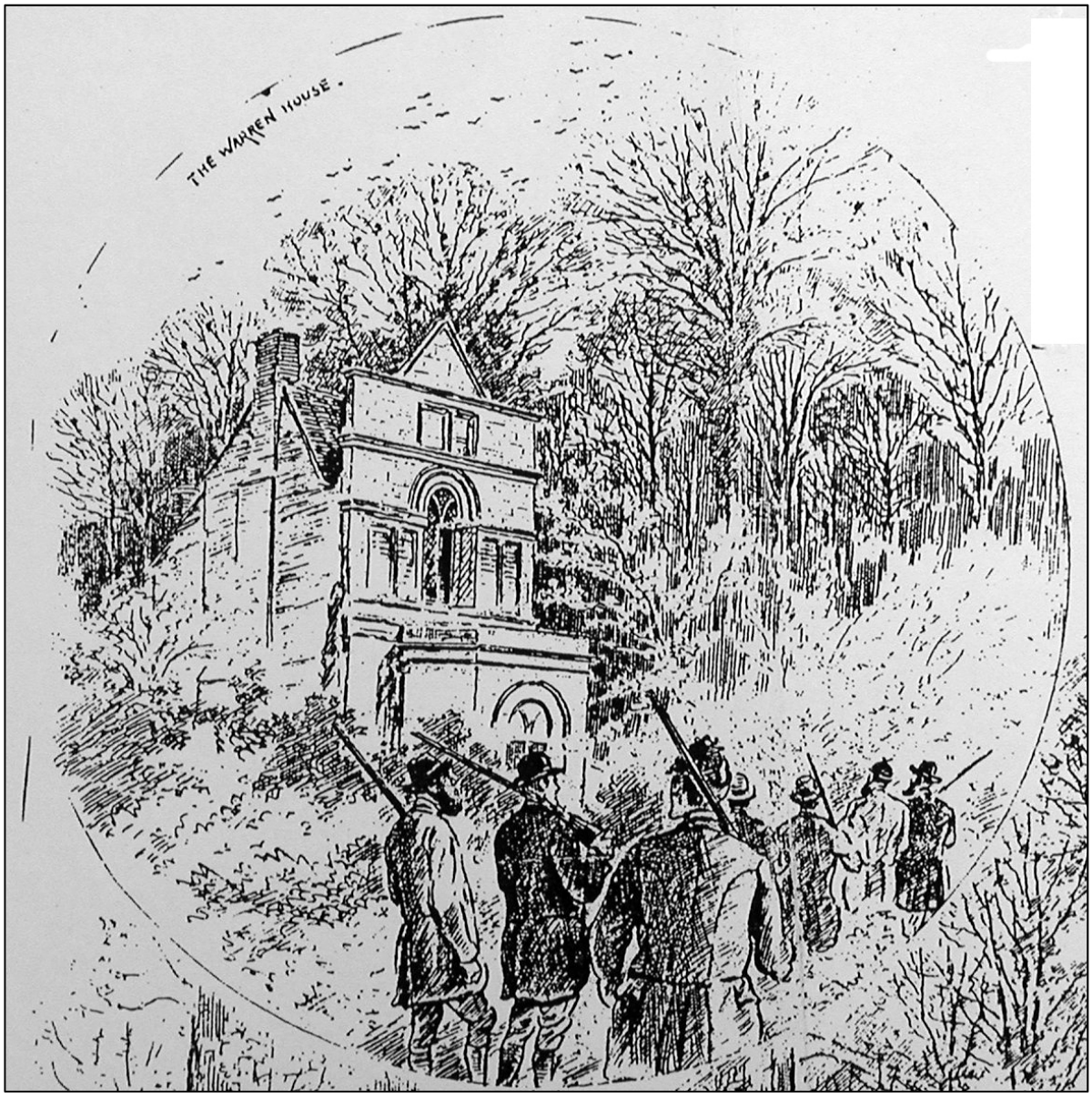
"Death is the known'st and unknown'st thing in the world," he says; and tells a pretty story to illustrate this. "It was a sweet speech, and might well have become an older body, which a young innocent child of my own used in extremity of sickness, 'Mother, what shall I do? I shall die before I know what Death is. I beseech you, tell me what is Death, and how I should die!'"

The most famous Earl of Manchester was, of course, the second, the distinguished Parliamentary General: "a person

During the 1840s, the accounts also reveal that one Joseph Scruby, butcher, was leasing 'Bank Close back of Warren Spring' and 'The Warren Close', a total of more than 15 acres. Perhaps he was using their wildlife to stock his shop counter. Scruby is present in Kimbolton in both the 1851 and 1861 censuses, although census returns for each decade between 1831 and 1891 record a gamekeeper living in 'Warren Spinney,' confirming the use of the Warren House as a simple estate dwelling.

Under George, 6th Duke, the shooting on the estate was developed in line with the fashionable enthusiasms of the country house set. There were several visits by Edward, Prince of Wales and his wife Princess Alexandra in the time of the 7th Duke. In February 1868, they stayed at Kimbolton for a week's hunting and a ball; in March 1870 for another week's hunting; and in January 1877 for more hunting and festivities. Edward also visited as King in 1906. It was perhaps the publicity of such visits that led to articles about the castle and its setting in the *London Illustrated News,* one in 29th March 1889 (which includes a fine illustration of the Warren House by G. Montbard but mistakenly captions it Priory Cottage). Another late 19th-century magazine illustration exists of the Warren House, which we received as a photocopy from Huntingdonshire District Council: the photocopy is annotated '1884' but it has so far not been possible to trace which publication it came from. It combines a view of the Warren House with views of two groups of men shooting rooks (the 1885 OS map places 'The Rookery' just north of the Kym, by the sharp bend in the road). This suggests that the Warren House perhaps served as a rendezvous or destination for the shooters during these years.

In both these illustrations, the attic and flanking first floor windows are all shown blocked, and there is a single storey lean-to to the rear. The 1885 OS map shows an addition extension to the northeast corner of the lodge, as well as a detached outbuilding to the west, which is still marked on the 1959 OS map but has disappeared today.



The Warren House as part of a fashionable shoot in the 1880s. The photocopy we received of this drawing was annotated '1884' but we have so far been unable to trace the original.

The *Victoria County History* for Bedfordshire, published in 1908, records that '*The shooting of Kimbolton Castle is periodically let and the bag depends largely on the number of pheasants reared. Nothing very great is done with partridges, the land being for the most part heavy, but a good rabbit shoot is usually obtained in the extensive woods surrounding the park.'* [12]

In February 1926, a Mr Phillips handwrote a detailed description of the Warren House as a Record Card for Secular Monuments, the early stirrings of today's much more formalised listing and control of historic buildings and compiled as research for the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments of England's Inventory for Huntingdonshire, published the same year. The clear photo attached to the Record Card shows a neat and self-respecting little dwelling with a brick path leading to the porch. Its condition is described as 'good' and the plan shows the outshot and an attached store. Mr Phillips considered it '*probably built late 17thC largely from early 17th and small amount of late 15th or early 16thC material possibly taken from the old castle.*' From such rough site notes emerges received wisdom, as 'possibly' becomes 'probably' in the printed version.

In the 1900s, the first of several sources of oral history of the Warren House was born. Ernest Fletcher, whose father was a gamekeeper on the estate, was born in the Warren House, the doctor arriving on horseback. In a parish magazine from 1986, Ernest, then in his eighties remembered the long walk from the warren to the village school and back, made four times a day since packed lunches would only be taken in very inclement weather such as heavy snow or flooding. He remembered the trek to the outside loo on dark winter nights. Water came from a nearby spring (the well?) but when this dried up in hot summers, he was despatched with a large stone jar in a wooden trailer with pram wheels down the hill to the nearest pump in the village. Even as a sturdy lad, he remembered what a struggle it was to haul it to the top of the hill again.

[12] VCH Beds ii (1908), p. 197.

A photograph by historian Inskipp Ladds, probably taken in the 1920s, shows trees around the lodge and an outbuilding. There is a hedge with a gate enclosing the plot.

Kenneth Paine as a young boy lived at the Warren House before the war, here with his sister Sheila, mother and an uncle.

As we move further into the 20th century, we enter living memory and are lucky to have the recollections of other villagers and former residents of the Warren House. In the 1920s, Dawn Gooderham's parents, Mr & Mrs Waite, spent their honeymoon at the Warren House and lived there for several years afterwards as Mr Waite was employed as a gardener on the estate.

Kenneth Paine moved to the Warren House from London as a young boy at the beginning of World War II, his father having grown up in Kimbolton on war work with the De Havilland Engine Co. The rent was 2/- a week to the Manchester estate. Relatives helped the Paines move in, with a horse and cart to get the furniture up the hill. The pump did not work properly, so the Paines had to rely on rainwater from a butt outside the back door, while drinking water was brought in 2 gallon buckets from the foot of the hill by a Mr Hackett. Mr Paine was only home at weekends,

> *'and when he was here he would, with my help, prime the pump with some water from the water butt and as he poured the water down through the top of the pump I would pump the handle up and down and eventually we could draw water from the well. This was when we could fill the large copper boiler in the end stable block with that water, heat it up and all take it in turns to have a bath in the long galvanised bath which was one of the items we had to buy on moving in to The Warren. We had a smaller galvanised bath that was for us children to use, usually in front of the kitchen range.'*[13]

Kenneth Paine also remembers very clearly how the rooms were laid out, and also that the kitchen and pantry (north facing as was ideal) were in the outshot to the rear, with a child's bedroom tucked in the half storey under the eaves above it. There was a woodstore joined to the north east corner of the building.

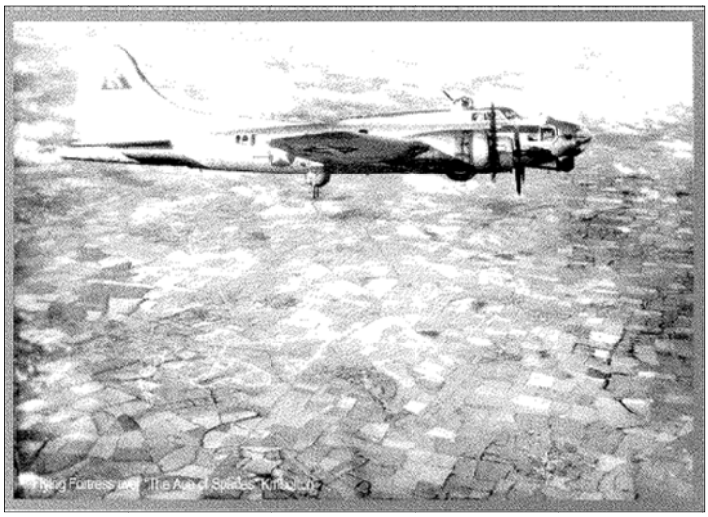
In these years, before 1939, there were seven gamekeepers on the estate and there were many shooting expeditions in autumn and winter, with a constant staccato gunfire in the woods.

[13] Kenneth Paine pers. comm..

During World War II a big change came to the warren: the arrival of the US Air Force. The military airfield on the plateau behind the Warren House opened in 1941. It was first planned as an RAF base but in 1942 was modified and enlarged for use by the larger USAAF B17 Flying Fortress aircraft, and became known to the Americans as Station 117. Runways and hard standing were added, with accommodation barracks and administration and technical support blocks built on the southern edge close to the Warren House. It seems too that some of the airmen lived in the Warren House during the war.

There were two Type T2 aircraft hangars, one to the south and one to the west of the airfield, with two control towers. The Kimbolton Airfield was mostly used by the 379th 8th Air Force Bomber Group, a unit that flew the highest number of missions and dropped the highest bomb tonnage of all British-based USAAF bomber groups. In July 1944, the teenage Princess Elizabeth visited the bomber command with her parents.

For villagers, rabbits provided an important supplement to their diets and days and nights were taken up with netting and killing them, reportedly as many as 1,000 at a time.



The plateau behind the Warren House became a USAAF base during the Second World War.

Web source: http://www.pdegraaf.com/articles/b17%20bomber%20story.html

THE MIRACLE B-17 BOMBER STORY FROM WWII

Look carefully at the B-17 and note how shot up it is - one engine dead, tail, horizontal stabilizer and nose shot up. It was ready to fall out of the sky.

Then realize that there is a German ME-109 fighter flying next to it.

Now read the story below….

Charlie Brown was a B-17 Flying Fortress pilot with the 379th Bomber Group at Kimbolton, England. His B-17 was called 'Ye Old Pub' and was in a terrible state, having been hit by flak and fighters. The compass was damaged and they were flying deeper over enemy territory instead of heading home to Kimbolton.

After flying over an enemy airfield, a German pilot named Franz Steigler was ordered to take off and shoot down the B-17. When he got near the B-17, he could not believe his eyes. In his words, he 'had never seen a plane in such a bad state'. The tail and rear section was severely damaged, and the tail gunner wounded. The top gunner was all over the top of the fuselage! The nose was smashed and there were holes everywhere.

Despite having ammunition, Franz flew to the side of the B-17 and looked at Charlie Brown, the pilot. Brown was scared and struggling to control his damaged and blood-stained plane.

Aware that they had no idea where they were going, Franz waved at Charlie to turn 180 degrees. Franz escorted and guided the stricken plane to, and slightly over, the North Sea towards England . He then saluted Charlie Brown and turned away, back to Europe .

When Franz landed he told the CO that the plane had been shot down over the sea, and never told the truth to anybody. Charlie Brown and the remains of his crew told all at their briefing, but were ordered never to talk about it.

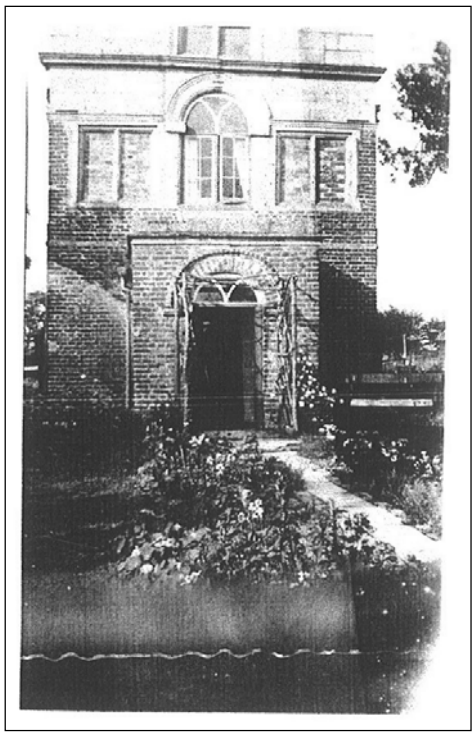
More than 40 years later, Charlie Brown wanted to find the Luftwaffe pilot who saved the crew. After years of research, Franz was found. He had never talked about the incident, not even at post-war reunions.

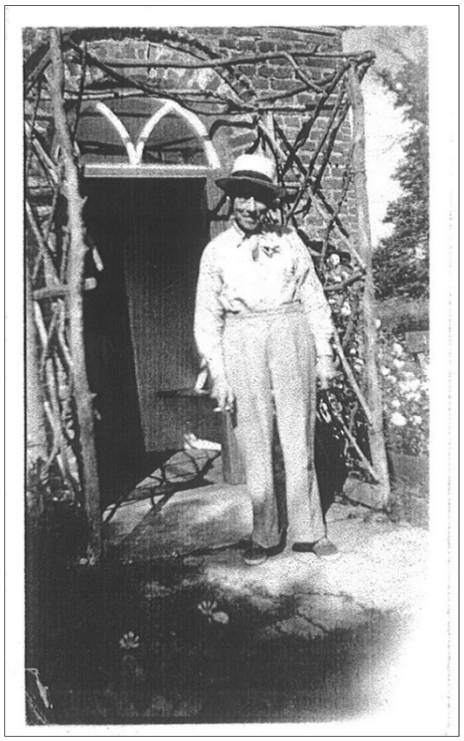
They met in the USA at a 379th Bomber Group reunion, together with 25 people who are alive now - all because Franz never fired his guns that day.

Research shows that Charlie Brown lived in Seattle and Franz Steigler had moved to Vancouver, BC after the war. When they finally met, they discovered they had lived less than 200 miles apart for the past 50 years!

After the War

From 1949-52, the Warren House was let to Mr & Mrs Holloway, whose daughter Joy was a young girl at the time. Mr Holloway had retired from working on the estate but still helped out with beating and feeding the pheasants in cold weather. Joy's photos show the cottage now has roses leading to the front door and a trellis around the porch, and a childhood of dolls' picnics and fancy dress on the Warren Hill. In 1952 Mr Holloway died and so they moved back down into the village.





The RAF continued using the airfield until 1964, when it was closed. Much of the airfield was destroyed and has now returned to agriculture, although part of it was used for the Bicton and Harvard Industrial Estates.

The Warren House was left empty after the Holloways left. Without mains water or electricity, it stood stranded and unappealing as a dwelling, as so often happens to such isolated buildings. Dilapidation took its toll, the roof and rear extension partially collapsed, and vandals moved in.

In the early 1970s, the 10th Duke made the estate over to his son, the Hon. Sidney Drogo Montagu, Viscount Mandeville (the courtesy title for the heir to the Manchester dukedom). In December 1974, Viscount Mandeville sold the Warren House as part of the Duchy of Manchester Estates to Boots Pension Fund. Four years later, in 1979, the Fund proposed demolishing the decaying Warren House. Prompt action by Kimbolton Parish Council, under chairman John Stratford, and Kimbolton Local History Society led by Beth Davis, led to a spot listing of Grade II* because of the lodge's relationship with the castle.

This brought a temporary reprieve, but in 1983 the Fund again applied for permission to demolish. On 11th July, Huntingdonshire District Council resolved to grant permission for 'the demolition of the building at the rear of the façade, subject to the retention and restoration of the façade, together with the protection of its stability.' At this stage the triangular pediment was still standing; little did they realise that it was not the showy façade but the little timber framed warrener's cottage to the rear that was the rarest element of the building. This time, the listed status brought the proposed demolition to the attention of the national amenity societies. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was contacted, and John Stratford organised a petition from the village in favour of saving the whole building. As a Grade II* structure, the application for the demolition was forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Environment for ratification – which was declined.

Photographs of the Warren House in the 1980s, from the files of Huntingdon District Council.

ST NEOTS Weekly News **EXTRA** SERVING TOWN AND REGION

Warren House, an 18th-century folly at Kimbolton, is threatened with demolition. SARAH HEREN talked to those fighting to save it—and some who would prefer to see it bulldozed.

Is it foolish to rescue this folly?

THE Warren House folly sits by itself high on a hill overlooking Kimbolton may be knocked down. Some villagers shrug, others are doing all they can to save it.

Like many buildings in Kimbolton, Warren House has been listed, thereby protecting it to a certain extent from demolition. For the second time in four years, its owner, the Boots Pension Fund, is trying to pull it down.

Some people think it is an old wreck of a house but to others it is a unique building and an important historical monument. To a handful of older people, Warren House is a part of their lives and they have fond memories of the days when it was lived in.

Warren House does look as though it could fall down in the not-too-distant future. It has gaping holes in the back wall and its timber is coming to pieces.

One man who has lived in the village all his life stated firmly that it was not worth preserving and should have been knocked down years ago.

It came close to being bulldozed when the pension fund first bought the house in 1975. It was then that parish councillors quickly called in the Department of the Environment. The department gave it a grade two starred listing.

The pension fund maintains that the building is dangerous, especially as it is a tempting place for children to play. The fund has since erected a fence around it.

But because of pressing Dutch elm disease the fund did go ahead and cut down the spinney surrounding Warren House.

So what's so special about Warren House? It is a one-up, one-down brick and stone building dating from about 1770. It was used as a gamekeeper's cottage in the days when the Duke of Manchester owned Kimbolton Castle and huge estates from Kimbolton to St Ives.

Its front is a folly, creating the impression of a miniature mansion on the skyline.

"It was built as part of the park landscaping to go with the castle," explained Mrs Beth Davis, a member of Kimbolton Historical Society. "The nice thing about it is the top half is in brick and the bottom half is in brick. Stone was a high class building material. The back is in timber, which is even lower class. They put all their money into what could be seen."

Even when seen from nearby, Warren House is very deceptive. It may only have two rooms, but they are very large with high ceilings, and its false frontage with its disguised features still makes it look larger than it actually is.

The story of Warren House begins in 1707 when the 4th Duke of Manchester invited Vanburgh to redesign Kimbolton Castle. The Duke was obviously under the influence of local fashion," says Mrs Davis. He was a member of the Kitkat Club — a very superior club for the nobility — which is where he met Vanburgh."

The castle had then been in the family for over a century. (It was only 30 years ago that Viscount Mandeville, now the 11th Duke of Manchester, decided to sell it after the estate was made over to him by his father. It now houses Kimbolton School.)

It seems that while the castle was being redesigned, odds and ends of cornices and parapets were taken away to help make up this very stately little folly. Even with its false bricked-in windows it cuts a good impression from a distance.

Behind it, safely disguised so as not to create a blot on the landscape, sits the gamekeeper's cottage. There are no stone pineapples or any of the fancy details that some follies can boast and to some people it could be very disappointing, especially now it is in such a decayed state.

Still, some conservationists like Beth Davis and a number of parish councillors went to see its former dignity restored.

Warren House may be neglected but it is not unloved. Parish councillors have now written to Boots Pension Fund and Huntingdon District Council in another attempt to save it from being pulled down.

Mr John Stratford, chairman of the parish council, says that if anyone wants to see Warren House restored, it is some of the older villagers who are already disappointed that the spinney has disappeared.

But he and other councillors realise that villagers' feelings about the future of Warren House are mixed. They have therefore have suggested to the fund that it sells the cottage to someone willing to do it up and then living in it. This way, no parish rates would be spent on its restoration and hard feelings among indifferent villagers would be avoided.

As one local man said: "Put it this way, I wouldn't notice it if it went."

But there is always the other side to the question. "It's part of our local history. Most people only care about their own everyday lives," says Mrs Davis.

● *Today, Warren House is neglected and in a dangerous condition; but the "false frontage" is of considerable architectural interes The sketch shows what it would look like if restored.*

Peaceful pre-war days

It is only 30 years since Warren House was last inhabited — although, looking at its present sorry state, that may be difficult to believe.

Mrs Dawn Goodenham runs the ironmongers shop at 41 Kimbolton High Street. Her parents spent their honeymoon in Warren House in the early 1920's, and they lived there for a number of years.

Her father, Mr Charles Wallis worked for Kimbolton School as a gardener, her mother Alice worked as a maid at the castle for the uncle of the Duke of Manchester, Lord Charles Montagu.

Looking at Warren House and its barren hill now, her recollection is of as former days, when it stood among trees, may come as a surprise.

"All they had was a well and all hemps and it was very peaceful and idyllic. There is a well there and a fish pond behind it. It's dried up now but it could be lovely. There used to be diving boards. It was a marvellous place, everyone fished and swam there.

"Then the airfield (American, during World War II) was built and all the stuff off the runways went into the fish pond and killed all the fish.

"There have been several families living there since the war. They have all gone now, I suppose the last one to live there was 20 years ago."

Asked how she felt about it being knocked down, Mr Goodenham said: "I think it would be wrong. I suppose I'm sentimental but I'd like to see it saved — it could be a super place if it were done up. It's no one's fault. It just ran down and ran down. It was a chapter of events — things do alter and it just got left.

"Some people don't even know it exists," she concluded sadly, "but we remember it."

An article from 1983.

The Warren House at in 1985, at its lowest ebb, before the repairs carried out by the Boots Pension Fund.
(*Ancient Monument Society's Transactions*, 1985 Vol 29)

The decay continued. By 1985, when the Ancient Monuments Society also highlighted the building's plight, the pediment had collapsed.

'The vandals have virtually destroyed the projecting round-headed entrance porch and half the parapet and the surmounting stone gable have collapsed', stated the report from the Ancient Monuments Society. 'Nevertheless, reconstruction is still possible.'

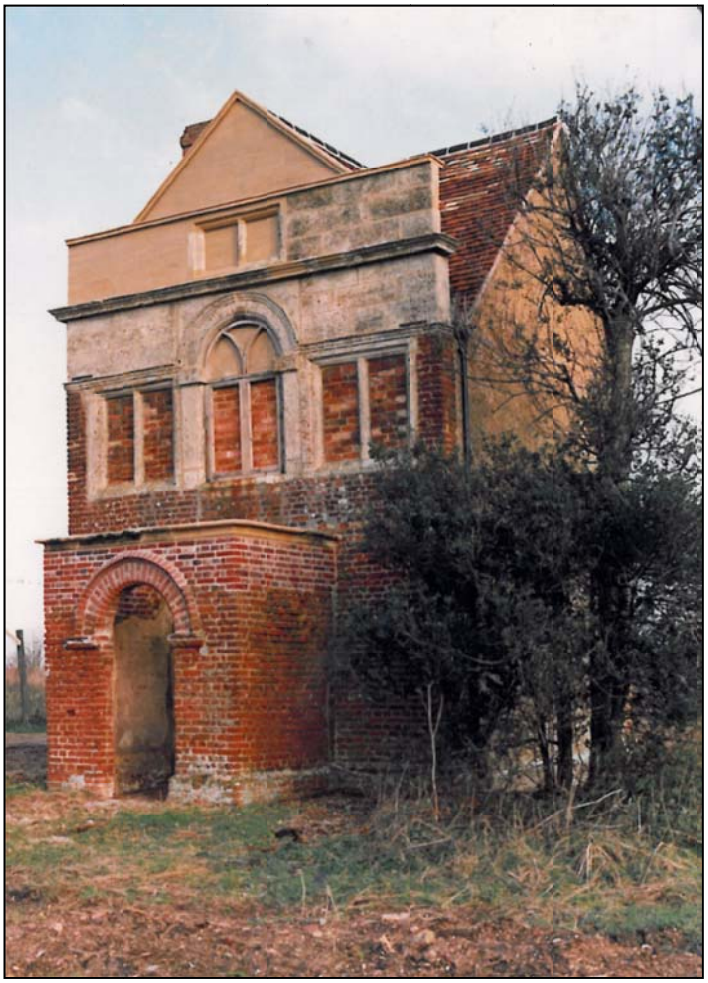
To their credit, the Boots Pension Fund did instigate repairs at this point. They re-roofed the building, and rebuilt the parapet and its gable. The remnants of the rear extension were removed and the timber frame was enclosed in (an unsuitably cementitious) pebbledash render. This at least stabilised the building, even though inside it was a floorless, stripped out shell, and was left unused, an inevitable temptation once again to vandals despite the forbidding metal fence erected around it.

In 1997, the Warren House and land around it were purchased by the trustees of the J. M. No. 2 Papworth Trust, one of whom was Rosemary Convine. The building was absorbed into the surrounding farmland, farmed by Mrs Convine's husband.

In 2003, Katie MacAndrew, Conservation Officer for Huntingdon DC, again became concerned about the plight of the Warren House, and at her suggestion, Mr Convine contacted the Landmark Trust. We immediately recognised the potential of the Warren House for Landmark use, being exactly the sort of overlooked and stranded historic building we had been founded to save. The Convines very generously offered to make a gift of its freehold, with access across the fields, and in 2005, this transfer was completed.

As always, Landmark had a full project load in hand and the Warren House had to await its turn in the programme, albeit kept weathertight. We were grateful for

the patience of the village and its thriving Local History Society. It was not until November 2010 that we were able to launch an appeal for its restoration, thinking initially that this was 'just' an 18th-century folly, lined up with the Duchess's bedroom in the castle below. As research proceeded, it became clear that its greatest significance lay rather in the façade's facilitation of the survival of an extremely rare timber-framed warren lodge. It took just over a year to raise the funds necessary for its restoration, and work began on site in June 2011. The Warren House opened its doors to its first Landmarkers in July 2012.



The Warren House in the late 1980s, after the repairs carried out by the Boots Pension Fund. The parapet and gable have been reconstructed, the roof replaced, the rear extension removed and the exterior rendered with cementitious pebbledash. The building was weathertight, but it had no services and so no purpose.

The Warren House in 2003, when it first came to Landmark's attention.

Inside the Warren House before restoration.

Notes on the repair of the Warren House

When we began to consider how to convert the Warren House to a Landmark, our first thought (partly to contain costs on what we quite quickly realised was going to be quite a difficult fund-raising challenge) was to keep the new accommodation to the existing footprint, without the rear extension. This would have meant dividing the ground floor to form a kitchen and bathroom.

However, it seemed a real shame to subdivide the ground floor, when it never had been before, and so we decided to reinstate a rear extension. There was never any doubt that the accommodation should provide bedroom and bathroom on the ground floor and sitting/dining room and kitchen on the first floor, to allow Landmarkers to gain maximum benefit of the views of castle and village below.

We were warned by Chris Convine, the farmer who gave us the Warren House, that the very clayey soil was unlikely to be conducive to soakaways for a septic tank – and he was right. We found the old well in the south west corner of the site which we thought might do but found it mostly *holds* water rather than draining it, and were concerned not to risk contaminating deep level aquifers. So a sewage treatment plant has been installed instead. Getting water and electricity to this isolated site also took a great deal of protracted negotiation and planning, not least because (quite rightly) all cables had to be brought underground and the ownership of the land around changed during the course of the project.

From building analysis conducted at the outset by Colin Briden[14], we knew we had a timber-framed cottage onto which the brick & stone façade and brick porch had been planted, along with the current chimney stack (which probably replaced an earlier one). The timber-frame was in poor condition, and needed a number of simple and low-key repairs to tie it together and strengthen it.

[14] A copy of Colin Briden's building analysis report may be found in the leaflet box.

September 2011: scaffolding erected and a project team site meeting

The façade was found to be separating from the rest of the building (the south elevation of the timber frame had been mostly removed, presumably when the façade was added), and was also dropping at either end. This was clearly a long-standing problem, since an east-west tie beam had been added across the façade, set back behind the facing brick.

Two vertical beams were needed on either side of the doorway onto the porch. Our architect Oliver Caroe initially had ideas to make these an architectural 'feature' with mouldings and banded decoration etc, since in the early days of discussion of the scheme, there remained the possibility that the building had a 'polite' function once it became an eyecatcher – we had, after all, taken the building on under the impression that its primary role had been as an 18th-century folly.

However, as building analysis and documentary research progressed, we became more and more convinced that the dwelling itself had never been more than a simple warrener's cottage, and that the scheme should therefore reflect this fact and resist any temptation to speculative incorporation of more polite detail such as new mouldings or plaster cornices. Oliver therefore submitted with cheerful grace to 'keeping it simple' as a simple rabbit warrener's cottage.

The brick paviours in the porch are the originals found under later layers of debris. There was evidence of two built-in benches to each side wall of the porch. The porch appears to have always been rather poorly bonded in its brickwork back to the main façade. As a result, it was tilting forward. These cracks have been neatly tile stitched. The upper courses of the porch brickwork were a later rebuild (part of the 1980s repairs by the Boots Pension Fund) and the bricks not a very good match with the rest. We have rebuilt these upper courses in new bricks from Bulmer Brick & Tile.

Top: the façade was stabilised and tied in using a tile-stitching technique. Below: repairs to the timber framing

Top: the façade was stabilised and tied in using a tile-stitching technique. Below: repairs to the timber framing

The lower level of the stone coping on the porch survived and most of the stones have been salvaged and retained, with a few replacements made to match. The upper layer of stones was only known from a sketch in the SPAB's archive and have been replaced. Building regulations required the addition of an iron handrail, to allow the prospect below to be enjoyed from the roof. It stops short of returning into the front elevation so as not to 'snag' the window detailing.

The plinth of the rear extension is built of new brick, with a hempcrete wall on top. Hempcrete is one of the new generation of green building materials, a mixture of hemp shivs (the coarsest fibres left as residue from hemp) and hydraulic lime. It has excellent insulation properties as well as providing the breathability required for healthy old buildings. The hempcrete was mixed on site and placed within shuttering, raised up by stages as the wall set. The external surface is lime plastered and the inside is magnesium silicate board with a lime plaster skim.

On the timber frame of the original house, we kept panels of original daub wherever they survived well enough to do so. Missing or too decayed panels were replaced in modern wattle & daub. Modern brick infill was removed, but older brick panels were allowed to stay. The external faces of all the timber-framed areas have been lime plastered and finished with an ochre-tinted limewash.

The east elevation leans quite considerably at the top, but this has been stabilised and left out of plumb. The plaster line also varies in that in some places it sits behind the brick façade edge but in other areas it projects beyond it, our plasterers having been instructed to bend the plaster in for a 'softer' approach.

The roof required quite a number of replacement timbers although most of the original structure remains in situ. We decided to replace the 1980s roof

Left: The façade had severe cracking, which required tile-stitching inside and out. Right: The unusually stout surviving laths used to reinforce security of the ground floor. When such panels failed, they had been replaced in the past with brick.

Repairs to the roof structure. The clasped purlin (left) is suggestive of an early (17th-century) construction date. Unfortunately, the timbers were not suitable for tree ring dating.

Excavations for the footings of the rear extension; bales of hemp shives; hempcrete mixed, and the kit for doing the mixing.

The hempcrete walls of the rear extension rise between plastic 'shutters', used to form the structure as the mixture of lime and hemp hardens. This new generation of sustainable building material offers excellent insulation, as well as breathability.

completely (it was already in poor condition) with a mix of three different colours of new pegged clay tiles, all made by Aldershaw Tiles.

The top section of the chimneystack had been rebuilt in unsympathetic modern flettons, so we have rebuilt the top in a better matching brick and added a pot for each flue.

Curiously, old photos show the 'fanlight' above the front door as being fixed – ie as part of the frame not the door, which must have made it an incredibly low door height. By incorporating the fan light as part of the door, we gained valuable borrowed light into the bedroom which otherwise only has a small window in the east wall. Even this small window is a new introduction, since, as explained above, the ground floor of warren houses was traditionally built for security, and indeed we found particularly stout split oak laths had been used. The staircase also acts, as originally, as a light well into the ground floor.

Inside, the modern ground floor was dug out and a new one laid in insulating limecrete. This in turn has underfloor heating laid in a screed, finished off with brick-sized pamments from the Norfolk Pamment Company. The brick hearth to the fireplace is original (taken up and relaid). We opened up this ground floor fireplace back to its original size, strengthening the brick arch and brickwork above in the process.

The timber fire surround is a simple addition. We never finally resolved the purpose of the hook found hanging down the flue, since it was not a pot hook. Landmarkers will no doubt form their own theories. We installed a Charnwood Island stove in it because we were concerned that such an exposed building with so many outside walls might struggle in cold weather to stay comfortably warm.

The new vertical post added to the inner face of the east wall is to help support this end of the main beam, and also in part dictates the position of the bed.

Top: The rear extension in place and the whole scaffolded (Dec 2011)

L to R: Clayboard floor above new oak ground floor joists; second coat plaster on the first floor; heaters prevented frost damage as the internal plaster dried during the winter. Below L to R: top flight of stairs going in; jamb to door onto porch; plastering the bedroom.

There was much debate about where the staircase should go. Its original position was indeed where it now stands, but it was initially felt that it would be better moved into the rear extension. However, other warren houses and documentary research showed that there was a certain plan typology associated with warren houses, and that their staircases were very often in the southwest corner, presumably because the stair windows, overlooking the southerly slopes preferred by rabbits, afforded additional opportunity for surveying the landscape.

It required some ingenuity to get a new stair that would also be pleasant to use , all made of oak, into such a tight space. Metal stays were also needed to stabilise the tall newel post. Bob Oakes of Cold Hanworth Forge has made the metal handrail, and the finial is also his design.

There was clear evidence that the first floor ceiling had been lowered at some later stage, possibly in the 18th century – nail holes for laths on the underside of the rafters and collars, and plaster on the chimneybreast extending up beyond the later ceiling level, showing where the original level had been. However, we took the decision that the ceiling should go back at its higher, original level (the main beam that survived from the later, lower level that survived running east-west would have been very low, and was made worse by a sag in the middle of its span, and hardly any of the actual lath & plaster ceiling remained). The roof void is insulated with sheep's wool. The current fanlight is a re-making of the one that survived, glazed with modern but distorted kiln glass. It sits above the slope of the rafters, and so could never be looked through (further evidence that the façade was a reuse of existing fabric from somewhere else).

The floor finish on the first floor is of new oak boards – mostly selected to run the full width of the room. The little fireplace, which was missing its cast iron grate, was really too small to have been of much use. So here we have installed another new stove (a Charnwood Cove) sitting in front of the chimneybreast, on a new stone hearth with a simple stone surround.

A nice pair of salvaged doors were supplied by Landmark's furnishings manager to recreate the cupboard to the right of the hearth, as the original joinery was nearly all lost. Downstairs, the equivalent cupboard, with its upper and lower sections, is all as found.

All the new windows are made of bronze. The ones on the front elevation are traditional in form, although still designed to take sealed double-glazed units. The glass is modern but 'kiln distorted' to replicate what might have been there in past years. All other windows are more modern, double-glazed units, with a different profile to the ones at the front, which we felt was the right decision for what were new windows, and all except one in a new-built extension.

The curtains are the revitalisation of a traditional Landmark screen print design overseen by Lady Smith, and the Warren House has been simply furnished in evocation of its original purpose as a warrener or gamekeeper's cottage. Whatever its brave face to the castle world in the valley below, this cosy little dwelling has always been just that, rather than a fancy folly for excursions by the grand.

Architect Oliver Caroe (right) and Landmark's project manager Alastair Dick-Cleland discuss repairs to the porch, and the scaffolding down at last, in March 2011.

Rabbits, warrens and warren lodges

A Brief History of Rabbits

Strange though it may seem to us today, rabbits are not a native species to these islands. Rabbits originated in Spain, but soon spread throughout France. At first, they were known as coneys, from the Latin *cuniculus*, which in turn gave *conicularum* as their breeding ground, which became in vernacular English a coneygarth or coneygree. It was initially the young animal, and meat, that was known as a rabbit, or rabbet. However, 16th-century slang, adopted 'coney' to mean the unwitting victim of a pickpocket (as a similarly sitting target to rabbits in a warren – hence too 'conman') as well as for a cruder four-letter word, and rabbit became the accepted name.

Coneys were introduced to Britain in the late twelfth century, perhaps by someone like Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester, used to eating rabbit in his native Poitou. Rabbits were a prized delicacy which required careful nurturing and protection from the wetter English climate. They were initially established on islands and around the coast. Lundy held one of the earliest rabbit colonies - between 1183 and 1219 the tenant of Lundy was entitled to 50 rabbits from certain 'choves' (- coves?) on the island.

The earliest rabbit bones found as evidence of foodstuff occur in the late11th/early12th century midden at Rayleigh Castle, Essex. The earliest reference to rights of warren *in warennis et cunigariis* dates from 1204. Evidence of a coneygarth on the mainland is first confirmed in 1241 when Henry III ordered hay to be carted from his *cunigera* at Guildford. Rabbits were first ordered for one of his feasts in Christmas 1240 (along with venison, boar, fish, swans, peacocks, hens, hares...). Rabbits spread rapidly on the mainland in the next decades.

Hunting rabbits, from left, *The Book of Hunting* (1390) and St Mary's Psalter (1310).

The medieval mind delighted in imagining a topsy turvy world. Here, rabbits hunt down a dog, bring him to trial and hang him. Worse still, in autumn (the leaves have turned orange) another dog desecrates his grave.

Rabbit meat soon became a fashionable delicacy, their furs valuable adornment. The right to set up a warren was claimed as a manorial privilege and the lord of the manor employed a warrener, an estate official of some status, to manage rabbit husbandry. Rabbits were carefully guarded in their warrens from predators both human and animal – the meat was four to five times more expensive than chicken. There is reference to 13th-century tithes being paid in rabbits, and county sheriffs and tenants were often required to supply a certain number to their lord.

Rabbit husbandry became more widespread after the Black Death in the mid-14th century, the high mortality rates bringing scarcity of labour. Where landowners found themselves with idle grazing or arable land, rabbit warrens were often the ideal solution especially in open heathland. In the Suffolk breckland, warrens were first set up on heathland and then on arable across ever greater acreages, the dry climate and sandy soils providing ideal conditions for rabbit breeding.

Rabbits no longer needed such careful nurturing as the species hardened and multiplied. On the demesne at Brandon in Suffolk, rabbit sales as a percentage of manorial income rose from a negligible sum between1300-49; to 21% of income1350-99, to a massive 40% between 1386-7. Another renowned warren was at Methwold, especially famous for its prized black pelts and supplying 9,450 rabbits to London in 1390. Lundy too is still known for its black rabbits.

A significant export trade also sprang up: the earliest known reference is the export of 200 skins in 1305 from Hull. By 1431, a London cheesemonger was exporting a massive 40,000 skins to Flanders. In 1555, Swiss naturalist Conrad Gesner commented that 'There are few countries wherein coneys do not breed, but the most plenty of all is in England.' Every part of the rabbit was used. From the 14th century, sumptuary laws attempted both to regulate both extravagant living and to maintain due social distinction. The then not-so-humble coney was included in such provisions, a statute of 1337 reserving the right to wear rabbit fur to those of gentle birth.

An inventory taken of the contents of a late 16th-century warrener's cottage. Thanks to Michael Leach of the Essex Society for Archaeology & History for providing this transcript.

Inventory in Essex Record Office D/DP E2/14

(*endorsed on verso*)

xiii September 1589
An Inventory of the
warrens lodge on
John Tylers goinge home

(*recto*)

The warrens lodge xiii die Sept 1589

A playne bedsted the bottome boarded standinge in the lofte
An olde matt
A thyn featherbed, a little bolster
A veary olde pillow peced w^th^ manye pece
A rogite woollen blanket, checkered at the one end
An olde rogite rug, full of holes, newed at both the ende with blew, red & yellow
A verie olde single cowlet of darnip
An olde yellow tester & head on the bed, the valance of buckram fringed with red & yellow crewel
A playne presse for apparaill
ffower sliding wyndowes about y^e^ chamber
A stock lock & a key to the door

The yard roome beneth

A bynne for fewwelle with one door
One trough to store them in
Two planke & a dore of iii boarde lying on head by the stayers
A plane planked to sett ii hoases(?) upon
A dore boarded w^th^owt lock or key
A little hanging wyndow

The firste roome below

A short playne table of ii boarde, standing upon iiii feete
An olde light turned chayre
A larger stoole w^th^ iiii feete
A bynne for fewwelle, with a little troughe to store them in
An olde Bill
A yewgh bowe with one band, somewhat above the hande place
Ffive watching arrows & one bolte
A spade
Three haye nette, one of them (illeg word) to Richard Sandburne barbo^r^ of London (illeg abbreviations)
A leather bottle for beere and a pottle
A sliding window } *on verso*
A stocke & a key to the doer }
A dozen of purse nette }

In 1363, a further statute permitted the majority to wear lamb, coney, cat (marten, polecat) or fox, as rabbits became more widely cultivated.

The Tudor gallant however would never have contemplated wearing grey rabbit skins, which in 1532 these were considered suitable for serving men and yeomen taking wages. Those of gentler birth sought out instead the skins of rarer rabbits. Henry VII's nightgown was deliciously lined with black rabbit fur: a black rabbit skin cost 10d in the mid 16th century, which was twelve times as expensive as the grey ones. Rarest of all, 'black sprinkled with white hairs' (silver grey to a naturalist) cost about 6s a skin.

However, the characteristically medieval custom of demonstrating wealth and prestige through the wearing of furs declined through the 16th century, as fashionable padding and stiffening made its use less practicable, and fur declined into a fashion for old men. By 1600 only a handful of the Skinners Livery Company were skinners by trade, the majority no more than casually interested in the export of rabbit skins. Sought chiefly now for their meat, rabbits became a less valuable commodity. While many warrens are known to have flourished through the 16th century, it seems few new ones were created in these years, when grain cultivation flourished. Poor grain harvests in the 1590s may have been responsible for a revival of interest, a phenomenon that may have been responsible for the construction of the Kimbolton warren house.

By the mid-17th century, new ideas for rabbit-keeping began to surface in letters and published literature. In 1659 Adolphus Speed published a pamphlet *In and Out of Eden,* which proposed keeping rabbits on an intensive system, not necessarily in large warrens but at twenty to the acre, fed partly by hand in hutches and given shelter by growing French furze (also used for flash firing ovens and superior to English furze because more prolific). Rabbits kept like this would be twice the weight of those in warrens. Poulterers would give 8d a rabbit till Michaelmas and 1s – 1s 8d thereafter. Skins would sell for 3s 4d: caps of

rabbit fur ('light demi-casters') were in fashion, and the bare pelts were shredded for fertiliser. Experiments with spinning rabbit wool began and in the late-17th and early-18th centuries there is again evidence of profitable warrens and the creation of new ones, like the one at Goldalming in 1671-3 on former sheep pasture of 260 acres, or another at Cranwell, Lincs, on heathland. In Ashdown Forest in Sussex, by 1700 warrens were a favoured use for enclosed land, apparent in the names which appear on the enclosure maps.

Important organisational changes were also taking place. Originally, warrens had been gentleman's enterprises, and even in the 16th century warreners were still manorial servants. Through the 17th and 18th centuries, deer parks, warrens and dovecotes ceased to be exclusively gentlemanly ventures and spread their benefits to other classes, recovering their popularity in long period of low grain prices. In 1710, 'distressed warreners' petitioned Parliament, lamenting their losses from thieves, as humbler men now leased warrens from gentlemen and so shouldered the financial risk themselves.

On great estates, the second half of the 18th century saw a decline in managed warrens, many dismantled to make way for the now more profitable production of grain as better understanding of soil fertilisation brought poorer soils into cultivation, or for woad, better suited to barren areas. Rabbit farming shifted instead to the open heathlands, where these escaped enclosure. The sanctions against poaching, incredibly harsh by today's standards, reveal how valuable a commodity rabbits remained. At Bury St Edmunds Quarter Sessions in January 1805 a G. Cross was convicted of stealing a trap and two rabbits from Wangford Warren. He was sentenced to six months solitary confinement, hard labour and a public whipping. In 1813, 22 year old Robert Plum and 18 year old Rush Lingwood were indicted at the Norfolk Assizes at Thetford for entering the warren of Thomas Robertson of Hockwold, farmer and warrener, and taking a coney from a trap. Plum was transported for 7 years, Lingwood imprisoned for two.

The Victorian fashion for shooting parties may have meant that rabbits returned to a respected place on some estates, but by the late-19th century warrens had disappeared entirely in many parts of the country.

Elsewhere, however, and most notably in the Brecklands of East Anglia, warrens continued on a huge scale, underpinning thriving local economies into the early 20th century. By 1900 at Elveden in the Norfolk breckland half the land was warrens, employing 30 warreners. Even the arable land was given over to buckwheat and kidney vetch to feed the rabbits. The livestock also underpinned significant local industries, like the hatmakers of Bedford, who were supplied with rabbit wool for felt, quite apart from the meat and skins sent wholesale to markets. Even the bones were boiled for glue. An excellent recent report on warrens of the Brecklands, including detailed volunteer surveys of former warrens and their features, may be found in the leaflet box in the Warren House.

Writing in 1925 within living memory of such large scale activity, W G Clarke reminisced about the industry:

> *'Each morning during the season the result of the night's work* [on Thetford Warren] *was taken to the Warren Lodge, where they were skinned, the skins being sold for 18s 6d per dozen, while the carcasses were disposed of, and totalled about 20,000 a year*...
>
> *The Warren Lodge is a curious building, almost on the highest part of the warren and of great antiquity. The older portion is square, of two stories, with a thatched roof. The walls are of local flints, over three feet thick, and strongly bound together by cement-like mortar. The only entrance is by a narrow doorway, the angles of which are quioned with freestone, blocks of which are also built into the walls – one in the upper storey has a trefoil opening – with a number of Roman tiles, including nineteen over the arch of the door. There is a solitary window on the ground floor, about a foot square, and protected by a number of iron bars which would render it impossible to effect an entrance. One of the rooms on the ground floor was devoted to the racks etc, used in drying rabbit-skins, while another contained the traps, nets, and big lanterns used by the warreners. In one corner of the bedroom is a stone cell with a niche, presumably for an image, and from this room a tube about six inches square gives communication with the porch and facilitated conversation at night. The spiral stone staircase is very narrow and so low that there is not enough*

> *room to stand upright. The ancient well in what was probably at one time the courtyard, is 103 ½ feet deep and is worked by a crank and a pulley, one bucket going down when the other comes up.'*[15]

Today, this widespread activity and its specialist buildings and landscaping have disappeared almost completely from our modern consciousness. Warren lodges, boundary ditches and pillow mounds were once so commonplace that everyone knew them for what they were, and no one thought it necessary to write it down for posterity. How strange it would seem to them that agricultural historians must so painstakingly recover the facts.

[15] W G Clarke, *In Breckland Wilds* (1925), pp. 143-4.

Thetford Warren Lodge, which once doubled as a hunting lodge for the Abbott of Thetford. It had a fine first floor hearth (left) and a spiral staircase in the south corner.

The warren lodge as building type

Very few warren houses survive even as ruins, but they were once familiar enough for Shakespeare to assume knowledge of them among his audience, describing a melancholy lover in *Much Ado About Nothing* as being 'as lonely as a lodge upon a warren.'

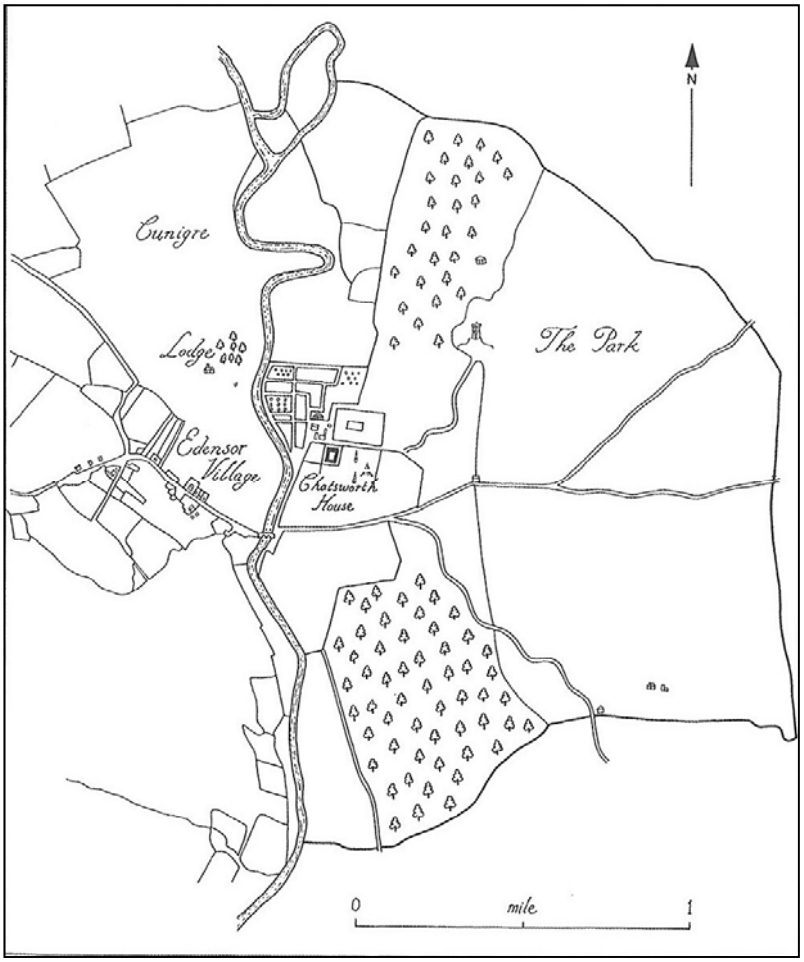
Very few medieval lodges survive today in recognisable condition. The best are in the East Anglian Breckland. Methwold, Lakenheath, Ersiwell, Santon, and Langford Warren in Ickford all had their lodges, but only fragments survive.

The 15th-century lodge at Thetford, today ruinous and cared for by English Heritage, is the best preserved medieval lodge in England. It is a massively built, keep-like structure in stone and flint, some 8 x 5 metres. Two single chambers are linked by a stone staircase in the SW corner. The principal room is on the first floor, with a fine hearth and garderobe. The high quality of this first floor fireplace suggest the building may have doubled as a hunting lodge for the Abbott of Thetford, on whose lands it stood and for whom it was an expression of power and status. It seems built for defence, a reminder both of the high value of the rabbit skins in the Middle Ages and also that armed intruders might be expected. An early photograph shows that it was once thatched and had (perhaps later) single storey outbuildings, but these were destroyed by fire in 1935.

Nearby Mildenhall Lodge is similar in shape and form, slightly smaller and slightly later, also built of flint with brick and stone. It is less overtly defensive in character, standing on high ground to survey the heath. It too is ruinous, although accessible to the public.

Only a handful of medieval warren lodges are known elsewhere in England, most of similar form. Norton Tower Rystone Yorks dates from the late 15th/early 16th century and was more obviously also a hunting lodge, being larger at 10m x15m, slighted in 1569, and is ruinous today.

Mildenhall Warren Lodge, also in Suffolk, stands on a rise. Its former windows surveyed the landscape to the south.



1617 map of Chatsworth, showing the 'Cunigre' and a warren lodge forming part of the vista from the great house.

Sir Thomas Tresham's triangular warren lodge built in 1593 near Rushton in Northants. His use of the number three throughout the building affirms his Catholic faith in the Holy Trinity.

Below: Landmark's East Banqueting House in Chipping Campden *c*1612, overlooks ground still known as the Coneygree. Could it too have doubled as a warren lodge?

However, documentary and cartographic evidence suggests that many other warren lodges existed formerly, as well-built tower houses. In the late 16th century, they were also brought into service as embellishments in the landscape. The famous Rushton triangular lodge is the most idiosyncratic, built by Sir Thomas Tresham in the 1590s. A play on the Holy Trinity in its tri-foldness and a statement of Tresham's Catholic faith, it was also a working base for the warrener. Despite its distinctive form and embellishment, it is referred to in estate accounts as the 'Warryners Lodge' and has the characteristic single chamber on each floor with a spiral staircase in one corner. Perhaps in part as a result of this eccentric building, a fashion emerged in the early 17th century for show warren lodges, still tall, keep-like structures.

Similarly, two maps by William Senior in 1617 of Chatsworth House and its park show how the warren (the Cunigre) formed the main element in the view from Chatsworth House. The house and gardens underwent extensive subsequent modifications, but the warren remained in this prominent position until the 1750s. At Sopwell House near St Albans in Hertfordshire in the mid-17th century the house looked out directly across the warren with formal gardens to one side (just as Chatsworth). At Balls Park, also in Hertfordshire, a substantial and innovative house in the Artisan Mannerist style was built by John Harrison just before the Civil War. The house had no formal park until the 1750s, but meanwhile in 1700 county historian Henry Chauncy described how Sir William Lytton built there 'a fair, stately fabric of brick in the middle of a warren…It stands towering upon a Hill, from whence is seen a most pleasant prospect.'[16]

[16] Chancey *The Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire*, 1700, pp.520-1.

The rabbit warren, with its banks, lodge and pillow mounds, could clearly be seen as a very appealing element in the grounds of the country house in the early modern period. In the Cotswolds warrens had existed close to major elite residences and in deer parks since the Middle Ages but the main period of expansion again seems to have been late 16th and early 17th centuries. It is even possible that the East Banqueting House of Old Campden House at Chipping Campden, another Landmark, fulfilled a dual purpose as warren lodge. This tall, three storey building is certainly topped by an elegant loggia as banqueting house, but the lower two storeys are more functional, and the building borders the open ground still known today as the Coneygree.

As the rapid expansion of population and the growth of towns during the 17th century increased the demand for the relatively cheap meat provided by rabbits, renewed interest in rabbit farming per se also generated new and humbler buildings. A set of accounts survive from Thomas Treswell, an important figure in the Jacobean surveying world, recording his expenditure in 1614 '*about the new buildinge of a house & the impaleinge of Certeyne groundes called Odfey Grainge within the county of Bedford near Royston for the Hare warren theire*.'[17] These are the sort of detailed accounts we may wish were still legible for 'your Honour's improvements on the heath' at Kimbolton in 1637, recording felling, carriage, quantities of bricks, palings, gates and hinges, tiles….

Early warren lodges had a fairly standardised and repetitive form: they were a stamp of authority on the landscape, providing wide views and many in commanding positions. Indeed, on maps of the largest warrens there might even be two or more lodges at a distance from each other. Tower-like or at least relatively tall, warren lodges continued to be constructed in some places well into the 17th century. A particularly late example is Warren Cottage in Hatfield Forest, built in the 1680s next to a group of 17 pillow mounds and surviving today although much altered. This cottage also originally had just two rooms, connected

[17] Bedford Record Office DDX 80/14. My thanks to Prof. Malcolm Airs for this reference.

by, for the date, a rather archaic external stair turret. It also has elaborate brick pattering and a massive external chimney stack. It is possible that its builder, Sir Edward Turnor, was attempting to revive his warren and at the same time trying to assert his traditional rights over local commoners.

However, Capability Brown and the naturalistic park landscaping of the 18th century spelled doom for many warrens, as at Chatsworth, where the clutter of mounds and lodge was swept away in 1758. We can perhaps feel grateful for the 5th Duke's neglect of Kimbolton in the early 19th century. Properly organised warrens had entirely disappeared from elite landscapes by the end of the 18thC, rabbits exploited instead on heathland by artisan warreners.

By the 18th & 19th centuries too, warren houses had lost their distinctive form and became little distinguishable in plan or materials from other simple dwellings. They proclaim their original purpose – if at all - only in name. Warrening appears to have declined in central parts of the country from the late 18th century, as large scale land improvement schemes and enclosure replaced areas of rough pasture with improved grass and arable land. Only in the Brecklands, the sandy heathland harder to convert to arable, did the rabbit continue to reign supreme. The speed with which the importance of warrens – together with the role of the distinctive features employed in rabbit farming – passed from the wider social memory is striking. Within centuries, even decades, the physical traces of a major agrarian industry had been rendered mysterious, and not only to most archaeologists, who have been fooled into thinking that the remains of artificial mounds associated with rabbit farming were features belonging to the Roman period or even earlier. It is strange to think that special measures – pillow mounds, banks, artificial burrows, winter fodder and even protection - were needed to sustain rabbits. Yet this collective amnesia was largely the simple consequence of the success of the rabbit itself, as it developed from a semi-domesticated, vulnerable and valuable creature to the rampant and ubiquitous nuisance it is today.

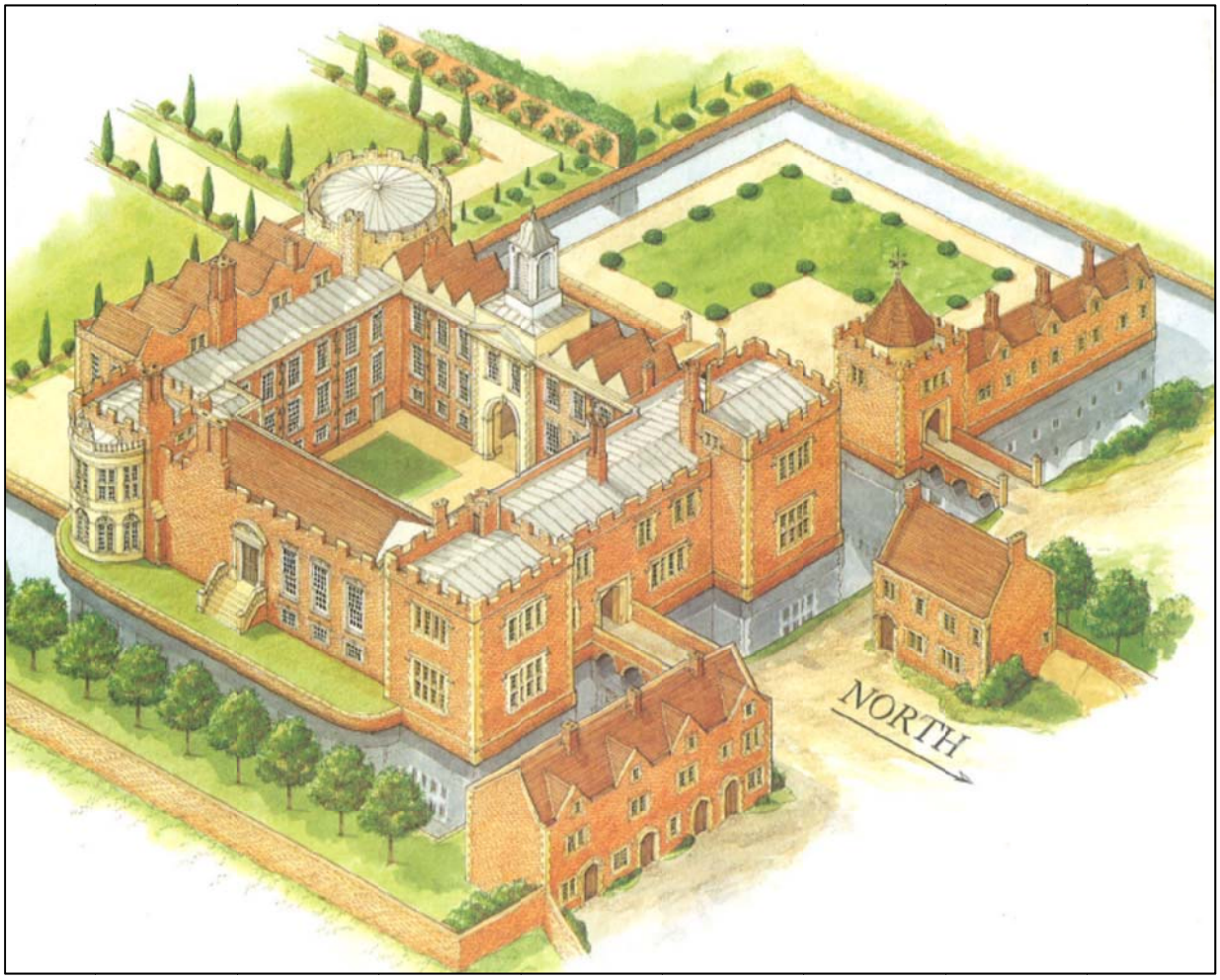
Outline History of Kimbolton Castle

(As it is a boarding school, Kimbolton Castle is not generally open to the public.)

Today, Kimbolton counts as a village but in the Middle Ages it was a prosperous market town, laid out on a regular plan after the granting of a market charter in 1200 to Geoffrey Fitz Piers, Earl of Essex. Fitz Piers is also the likely builder of the first castle, which was certainly built before 1201 when he received King John at Kimbolton. John so liked the place that in 1205 he relieved the potential burden of regular visits by granting lands in Brampton and Alconbury to be held for the service of providing fish, wine and hay once yearly for his visits to Kimbolton.

The earliest direct mention of a castle is in 1217; in 1221 it was attacked by the Earl of Albemarle who was ignominiously repulsed. In 1279, however, it is described as a 'fortalace' or forcelet, implying something less than a fully developed castle. Edwards I, II and III all visited the castle during the 14th century. (Note that the earliest castle at Kimbolton was not on the current site – in the 1540s, and after commenting on Wingfield's rebuilding on the present site, Leland reports *'There is a plotte now clene desolated, not a mile west of Kimbolton, called Castle Hill, where appear ditches, and tokens of old buildings.'*)

Most of the inner court of the current castle is thought to have been rebuilt by Anne, Duchess of Buckingham (d. 1480) whose husband Duke Humphrey died in battle at Northampton. Certainly expensive lead was brought from Derbyshire in 1463. However, the castle seems to have lacked basic maintenance. In 1485, the castle had been in the hands of Katharine, Duchess of Bedford, whose husband had been had been beheaded for treason for joining the Duke of Richmond's plot – a typically tangled tale of Tudor intrigue and entail, which perhaps explains the neglect of the castle's fabric.



A reconstruction of the hotch-potch of the moated house as it was in 1695, just before the 4th Earl began his remodelling, first with Henry Bell of King's Lynn and later with Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor. This house combines medieval fabric, early 16th-century additions by the Wingfields, and Sir Henry Montagu,1st Earl's, remodelling in the 1620s and 30s.
(*Country Life,* 30th March 2006)

Their son, Edward Duke of Buckingham unfortunately followed in his father's footsteps, being beheaded for high treason himself by Henry VIII in 1521, forfeiting all his honours to the Crown. In a survey carried out for Henry VIII in 1521, the castle was described as 'a right goodly lodging contained in little room, within a moat well and compendiously trussed together in due and convenient proportion, one thing with another … There are lodgings and offices for keeping a duke's house in stately manner' but 'by occasion of the old maintill wall, the hall there well builded is likely to perish; and through the said castle is and will be great decay, by occasion there is no reparations done.'

The following year, Henry granted the castle, manor, market and fair of Kimbolton 'in male tail' (or to pass through the male line) to Sir Richard Wingfield for a rent of £40. Wingfield was a man of considerable power at court at that time. He served as marshal of Calais in 1511 and became deputy of Calais in 1513, becoming ambassador to Flanders in 1514.

On 20th Nov 1522 the rent was released, the whole to be held as a knight's fee (in return for which Wingfield was expected – as he clearly was already doing - to give his king military and other service). At the same time, Henry gave Wingfield permission to take stone and lead from the ruined castle of Higham Ferrers to rebuild the castle. Wingfield largely rebuilt it as a Tudor manor house, so that it remained a castle only in name.

Sir Richard Wingfield died at Toledo in 1525, and so can have barely seen the improvements he made to the castle. He left a son, Charles, aged 12, who later married Jane, sister of Sir Francis Knollys. In May 1534, Katherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first queen but by now divorced in favour of Anne Boleyn, was brought to and confined within Kimbolton Castle. In declining health, Katherine spent her time mainly at prayer or working on needlework with her ladies, steadfastly protesting her devotion to Henry and resisting the title of Princess Dowager rather than Queen.

Katherine is traditionally thought to have lived in a tower in the south-west corner of the castle. Katherine died in the castle in January 1536 and was buried in Peterborough Cathedral.

Charles Wingfield died in 1540, leaving a one year old son, Thomas. Eventually, Thomas seems to have led a rather wild life, and in 1580 his uncle Sir Francis Knollys asked for letters from the Privy Council to repress his nephew's unruliness. The papers refer to Charles's 'simplicitie', and the custody of the lands and woods, despoiled by Thomas Wingfield and his own prodigal son Edward, was transferred jointly to Sir Francis and Sir Walter Mildmay.

When Thomas Wingfield died in 1592, Edward his son succeeded to the estate, by now sufficiently redeemed to be known as 'the great warriour.' Edward died in 1603, leaving as heir Sir James Wingfield who in 1606, with his mother and wife Elizabeth, conveyed the manor to Sir Charles Montagu and others, apparently as part of his settlement for marrying Elizabeth. By then the property was heavily encumbered with debt. In 1610, James I granted the manor back to Sir James Wingfield in male tail for assurance of the latter's title.

In 1615, Sir James conveyed the estate back to the king, who in turn granted it to Sir Henry Montagu. In 1620, Sir Henry was created Baron Montagu of Kimbolton and Viscount Mandeville, in a nod to the post-Conquest holders of lands in the area. Through the 1620s & 30s, Sir Henry Montagu carried out his own remodelling of the Tudor house and its grounds, although most of his intervention has been superseded or enclosed by the later, grander alterations. The 1637 'improvements on the heath', when the Warren House may well have been built, belong to his tenure of the castle.

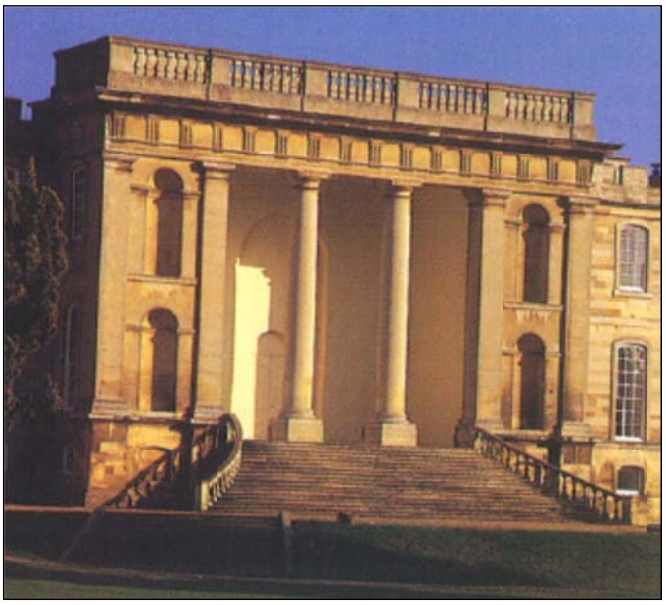
The staircase at Kimbolton Castle, inserted by Henry Bell in the 1680s to connect the principal rooms and bedrooms and later painted by Italian artist Pellegrini. The Pellegrini mural paintings on the staircase, in the chapel and in the boudoir are said to be the best examples in England of this talented Venetian decorator.

In 1626 Sir Henry was created 1st Earl of Manchester, (a sequence of apparent promotion was almost certainly purchased by Henry, to help the impoverished early Stuart monarchs, whose financial relationship with Parliament – and therefore access to taxes - was rapidly breaking down). The 1st Earl died in 1642. Edward, 2nd Earl of Manchester became a renowned Parliamentary general during the Civil War. (Oliver Cromwell was born in Huntingdon and so a local man himself). Edward, 2nd Earl survived to play an equally instrumental role in enabling the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II and died in 1671. From then, the castle and manor passed with the Earldom and Dukedom of Manchester until 1950 when the castle was sold and became today's school.

A furniture inventory taken after Henry, 1st Earl of Manchester's death in 1642 and another in 1687 describe a great hall with screens, a long gallery, chapel, dining room, drawing room, upper round chamber, lower round chamber, Queen's Chamber (likely to have been where Katherine of Aragon died) and many other rooms. Outside were a gatehouse, stables, 'the Castle Court,' the Dyall Court,' 'the Great Garden' and 'the Little Fountain Garden.' Parts of this 16th- and early 17th-century castle survive within the structure of the largely 18th-century building that remains today.

In 1683 this rather haphazard medieval castle as inherited by Charles, 4th Earl, who chose the winning side in the Glorious Revolution. Soldier, diplomat, member of the Privy Council as well as the Kit Kat Club, Charles was created 1st Duke of Manchester in 1719. It was Charles, 4th Earl, who in 1690-5 instructed the first stage of reworking, probably undertaken by gentleman architect Henry Bell of King's Lynn. This involved the Courtyard, the Great Hall and (partly) the Chapel and Main Staircase. The leadwork in the courtyard and on the South front is also of the highest quality ('among the finest in England,' wrote Pevsner).

Top: Henry Bell's elegant Baroque re-facing of the medieval Great Hall.
Centre: Vanbrugh's new west front, c1707. He was keen 'to give it something of the Castle air.'
Bottom: Thomas Archer's east portico, added around 1717.



The courtyard has beautiful, finely jointed, soft red brickwork reminiscent of that at Landmark's Queen Anne's Summerhouse some 20 miles south at Old Warden, erected a few years later. Bell added a further range of rooms with staircase and passages in the courtyard against the old south wing, and in 1694-5 rebuilt the inner wall of the north wing to match and the inner walls of the east and west ranges.

There was then a pause during which the 4th Earl went as ambassador to Venice. In 1707, the old south wing collapsed into the moat, except for Queen Katherine's chamber. Her husband abroad, Lady Manchester turned to Sir John Vanbrugh, a fellow member with the Earl of the Kit Kat club, for advice. Vanbrugh ended up rebuilding it, assisted by Nicholas Hawksmoor, from 1707-20. Vanbrugh was anxious to retain its 'Castle Air': 'I thought 'twas absolutely best,' he wrote to the 4th Earl of Manchester in July 1707, 'to give it Something of the Castle Air, tho' at the same time to make it regular… for to have built a Front with Pillasters, and what the Orders require cou'd never have been born with the Rest of the Castle: I'm sure this will make a very Noble and Masculine Shew.'

Vanbrugh rebuilt the south front, with a large saloon which projects in front of the main wall and has an outer door in the centre with flight of steps down to the garden. He then went on to reface the remaining fronts of the Castle in a similar style.

In about 1717, a large portico was added on the east elevation in front of the White Hall. This has been only recently attributed to Thomas Archer, according to a diary written by an anonymous traveller. He visited Kimbolton on 13 June 1727, and noted: 'The front has a Portico with Four Dorick Pillars, and four windows on each side of it, built by Archer about ten years ago.' This is interesting too for Landmark's portfolio: Archer completed the garden pavilion at Wrest Park in Bedfordshire some 30 miles south, the important early 18th-century

The view from the east portico of Kimbolton Castle, up Warren Hill to the escarpment. The Warren House is just visible on the skyline.

garden now open to the public and in English Heritage's care. Archer has also been mentioned in connection with Landmark's Queen Anne's Summerhouse, built around 1713 and just a few miles from Wrest Park. No proof of Archer's involvement here has yet emerged, but it is interesting to note this clutch of buildings erected in the same years and same area by him.

The castle moats have long been filled in and their position can no longer be identified. The grounds around the castle were laid out in terraces on at least three sides and on the south was a formal garden with a parterres flanked by double rows of lime trees and, beyond, an ornamental canal and shrubberies. All this was enclosed on two sides by brick walls ornamented with sixty-one stone flowerpots. From Vanbrugh's letters, it is likely the gardens were made around 1707 although little survived the mid-18th-century redevelopment of the landscape after Joseph Spence's input, and this in turn has been largely lost since.

Today, a good deal of the old Tudor and Jacobean manor house survives within the later additions, although the only place it is still visible is on the lower ground floor on the south side. The classical transformation of an old fortified manor house accounts for various anomalies in its form: the 18th-century portico, which was the grand entrance, faces away from the town and gatehouse; its main staircase, added in the late-17th century, is squeezed in at the back of the south range.

The stone gateway at south-east of the castle is by Robert Adam, as is the main gatehouse facing the town High Street, built around 1766 (although it is probably not on the site of the original gatehouse). Today the gateway still provides a fine endstop to the high street of the medieval planned town, the castle 'turning its back' on the town, in a rather French way.

Lords of the Manor of Kimbolton

Earl Harold (Domesday)
William de Warren (Domesday)
Geoffrey Fitz Peter, Earl of Essex d 1212
Geoffrey Fitz Peter, 2nd (?) Earl of Essex d 1219
William Fitz Peter (brother) d 1227
Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford (nephew) d 1274
Joan , his wife held in dower,
Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford & Essex (grandson) d 1297
Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford & Essex (son) d 1321
Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford (son) d 1335 no issue.
Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford (nephew) d 1361
Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford (nephew) d 1372, left two daughters,
Eleanor m to Thomas Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester and Mary, m to Henry IV
Anne, Countess of Stafford and daughter of Thomas and Eleanor held the castle and manor in 1423.
Anne as wife of Humphrey Duke of Buckingham (d 1459) held in 1460 and her son Humphrey, aged 4 in 1460.
Henry Stafford Duke of Buckingham beheaded 1483.
Attainder reversed 1484 and son Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham inherits.
Attainted and beheaded 1521.
Wingfields:
Richard Wingfield 1522-5.
Charles 1525-40
Thomas 1540 to at least 1573
Sir Edward d 1603
Sir James till sale in 1616 to
Sir Henry Montagu, from 1626 1st **Earl of Manchester** d 1642
Edward, 2nd Earl d 1671
Robert, 3rd Earl d 1682
Charles, 4th Earl & 1st **Duke of Manchester** from 1719, soldier and ambassador to Venice and France.
William, 2nd Duke d 1739
Robert, 3rd Duke d 1762
George, 4th Duke d 1788
William, 5th Duke d 1843
George, 6th Duke d 1855
William, 7th Duke d 1890
George, 8th Duke d 1892
William, 9th Duke d 1947
Alexander, 10th Duke (d 1977)

1950 Kimbolton Castle bought by Kimbolton School

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