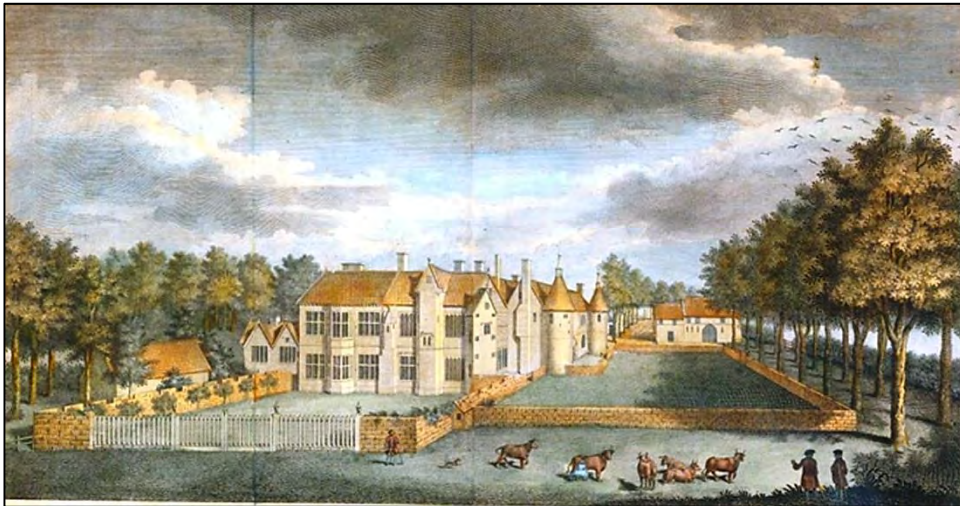


The Landmark Trust

WOLVETON GATEHOUSE History Album



Researched and written by Julia Abel Smith, 1998

Updated in 2016

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BASIC DETAILS

Dated: 1534

Owner: Captain Thimbleby

First letting arranged by the Landmark Trust: 1994

Listed: Grade I

Nosce Te Ipsum

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Wolveton Gatehouse

Summary

Although now only a fragment of what was once a much larger house, Wolveton remains one of Dorset's finest manors. It was inherited in 1480 by John Trenchard at the death of his maternal grandfather, John Mohun, who had married the Wolveton heiress, Joanna Jourdain. Soon afterwards he began to build a new house. His son, Sir Thomas, continued the work, building a courtyard house which was later extended by Sir George Trenchard. The Gatehouse was completed by Sir Thomas in 1534.

Sir Thomas Trenchard inherited Wolveton at his father's death in 1495 when he was a boy of sixteen. There had almost certainly been a fortified house belonging to the Jourdains on the site and indeed the Gatehouse towers appear to be earlier. The shields on its west elevation bear the letters 'T' and 'E', which probably refer to Thomas and his third wife, Edith Hyndford or Hymerford. Sir Thomas Trenchard died in 1550 aged 71 and was succeeded in 1557 by his great grandson, George, who was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. Along with a magnificent stone staircase, he built a grand south range with fine windows and plasterwork ceilings. His third son, George, married Lady Penelope D'Arcy, the subject of one of Thomas Hardy's 'Group of Noble Dames'.

In the 18th century, the Trenchards lived mainly at their other house, Lytchett Matravers, and Wolveton began to be overlooked. Its magnificent collection of armorial stained glass was removed to Lytchett, most of it being broken on the way. Many of the rooms were subdivided and let as lodgings. In a secret transaction, William Trenchard sold Wolveton in 1807, to his cousin and solicitor, Robert Henning. Most of Sir Thomas's house was soon demolished, leaving Sir George's wing and the Gatehouse.

Wolveton was bought in 1862 by Mr Weston who, whilst saving the house from ruin, made some rather heavy-handed additions. In 1874 he sold it to Mr Bankes, a younger son of the Kingston Lacy family. Mrs Bankes died at Wolveton in 1947 and it was taken over by her granddaughter, the Countess Zamoyska, who divided up the house. When it became too unmanageable, the Thimblebys stepped in. They have restored Wolveton and its Gatehouse to their former appearance, and since 1994 the Landmark Trust has arranged the letting of the Gatehouse for holidays on their behalf.

Captain Thimbleby lived in the Gatehouse in the 1960s whilst on leave from serving in the army overseas. After being invalided out of the army, he returned to Wolveton and decided to move into the main part of the house, after the flats there had become vacant. The Gatehouse had been subdivided; both the sitting room and double bedroom. Breeze block partitions were dismantled and the splendid fireplace in the sitting room, which had been removed in 1945, was replaced. Ceilings and doors were restored to their original heights.

After a fire in the guardroom, later wall coverings were removed revealing the original fireplace and much original plaster and stonework. The shutters have been made from elms on the estate which fell down in the great gale of 1987. The Captain has provided most of the furniture and pictures in the Gatehouse, which are truly in the spirit of the Landmark Trust.

The room currently used as a Chapel is near the site of the ancient one. In the 18th century this had fallen down and present chapel was then in use as a schoolroom and chapel. Later in the mid 1800's it became a bakery; the flour being brought through an opening high up in the wall, down a chute, into the adjacent tower room. Fragments of the bread oven remain at the back of the Chapel fireplace, made of Broadmayne bricks. The Thimblebys have created a private chapel here once again.

The Gatehouse is happily in use for guests as it was intended, the Chapel is in use also. The Stables again house the family hunters and the House itself been returned to a single home once more. Whilst Dorchester is doing its best to encroach, in this small sanctuary there are badgers, foxes and roe deer. After many years other most welcome species have returned to Wolveton: trout, salmon, water rats, kingfishers and swans.

Introduction

Dorset families did well under the Tudors and many passed on their good fortune on to us in the houses they built. The Trenchards of Wolveton in the water-meadows west of Dorchester, put up one of the finest. Although now only a surviving portion of what was once a much larger house, Wolveton remains one of Dorset's spectacular manors. Most of the original house was demolished in the 1820s, but the lavish Elizabethan wing erected by Sir George Trenchard remains, an exceptional example of the delicate decoration of the Tudor Renaissance: an Elizabethan display of fine widow glass and moulded oak and plaster.

Wolveton was inherited in 1480 by John Trenchard at the death of his maternal grandfather, John Mohun, who had married the Wolveton heiress, Joanna Jourdain. Trenchard began working on the property, and his son, Sir Thomas, continued the work, building a courtyard house, which was later extended by his successor Sir George Trenchard. The Gatehouse at Wolveton, which is now let by the Landmark Trust, was completed by Sir Thomas in the reign of Henry VIII in 1534.

Sir Thomas Trenchard inherited Wolveton at his father's death in 1495 when he was a boy of sixteen. There had almost certainly been a fortified house belonging to the Jourdains on the site already and the Gatehouse towers appear to have been constructed earlier. The shields on the Gatehouse's west elevation bear the letters 'T' and 'E', which probably refer to Thomas and his third wife, Edith Hyndford or Hymerford.

Sir Thomas Trenchard died in 1550, aged 71, and was succeeded in 1557 by his great grandson, George, who was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. Along with a magnificent stone staircase, Sir George built a grand south range with fine windows and plasterwork ceilings. George's third son, also named George, married Lady Penelope D'Arcy, the subject of one of Thomas Hardy's 1891 collection of short stories *Group of Noble Dames*.



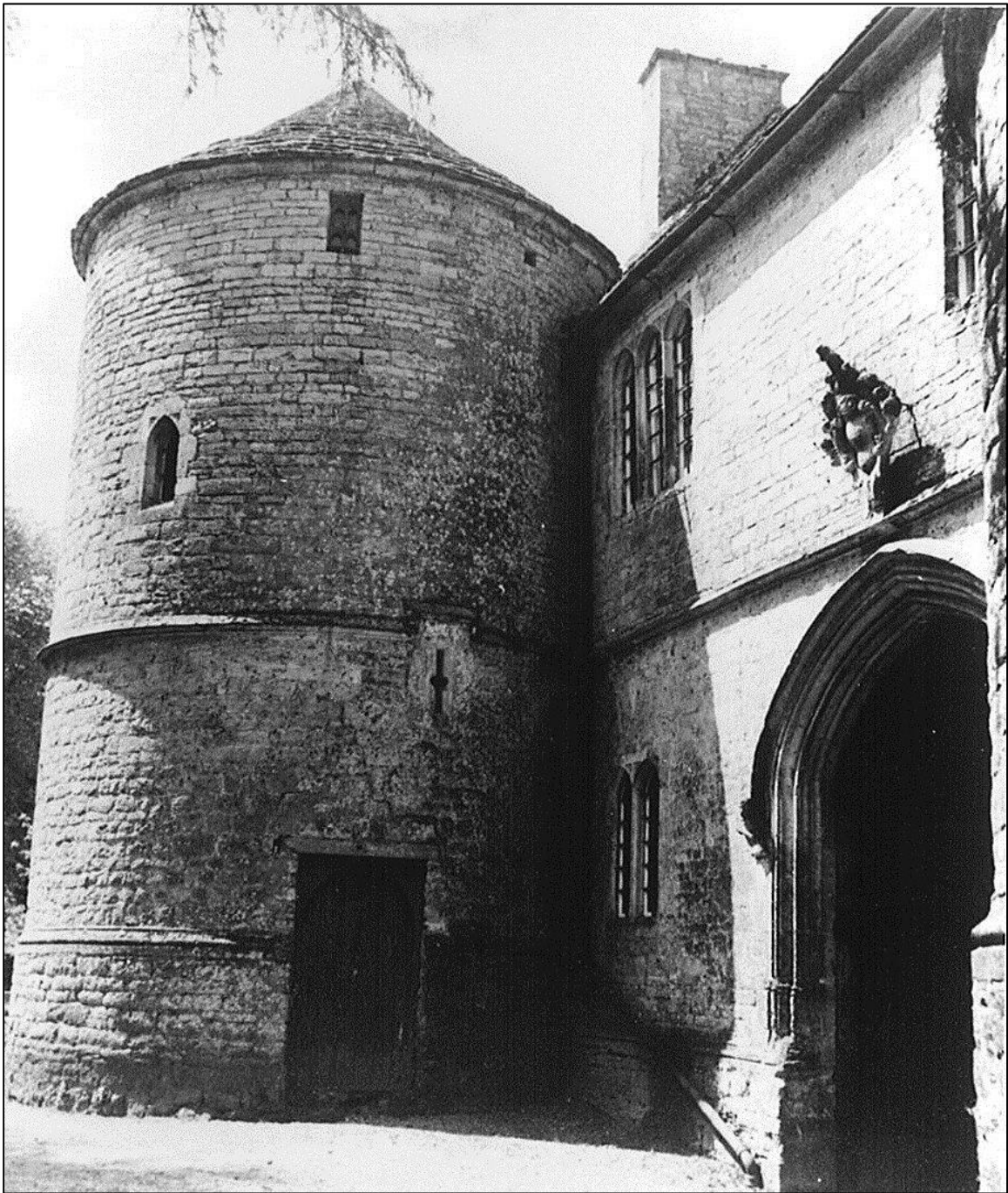
The south front (RCHME)



The east front of the Gatehouse (RCHME)

In the 18th century, the Trenchards lived mainly at their other house, Lytchett Matravers, and Wolveton began to be neglected. Its magnificent collection of armorial stained glass was removed to Lytchett, most of it being broken on the way. Many of the rooms were subdivided and let as lodgings. In 1807, in a secret transaction, the current owner, William Trenchard sold Wolveton to his cousin and solicitor, Robert Henning. Most of Sir Thomas's house was soon demolished, leaving Sir George's wing and the Gatehouse standing.

Wolveton was bought in 1862 by Mr Weston, who, whilst saving the house from ruin, made some rather heavy-handed additions. In 1874 he sold it to Mr Bankes, a younger son of the Kingston Lacy family. Mrs Bankes died at Wolveton in 1947 and it was taken over by her granddaughter, the Countess Zamoyska, who went on to divide up the house. When the property became too unmanageable for the Countess, the Thimblebys stepped in. They have restored Wolveton and its Gatehouse to their former appearance, and since 1994 the Landmark Trust has arranged the letting of the Gatehouse for holidays on their behalf.



The entrance gate looking south west (RCHME)

A building description of the Gatehouse

Wolveton's architectural history is fraught with contradiction. The main sources of information are John Hutchins's *History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset*, the first edition of which was published in 1774 after forty years' research; Arthur Oswald's *Country Houses of Dorset*, first published in 1935 and his two articles on Wolveton, published in *Country Life* in 1953; the lengthy *Survey* written by the Royal Commission's Inspector in 1948 and published in edited form in 1952; and finally, the *Buildings of England* volume on Dorset by John Newman and Nikolaus Pevsner, which appeared in 1972. The drawings by John Buckler, draughtsman and architect, and his son, John Chessell Buckler, made on 2nd April 1828 – now in the British Museum – are invaluable in terms of research. However, the contra-indications are numerous, a situation compounded by the fact that from 1495 until 1702, with the exception of Sir George, every single owner of Wolveton was called Thomas Trenchard.

The Exterior

The main front of the Gatehouse faces East and it once formed the eastern range of Sir Thomas Trenchard's courtyard house. The chapel (since demolished) was the north range, the entrance wing (also demolished) the west range, with the south wing of the house (before partial demolition) joining the north-west corner of the Gatehouse, completing the square. The Gatehouse is built of coursed limestone rubble with some of the stones in the towers cut on the circular. The roofs are covered with stone slates.

One of the conundrums concerning the history of the Gatehouse is whether the towers are older than the rest of the building. This is surely that case, and there was almost certainly a house on this site before the Trenchards entered the scene in 1480. The name Wolveton means 'Wulf's settlement' and denotes a Saxon origin. The third edition of Hutchins published between 1861 and 1874 suggests that in building Wolveton, Sir Thomas Trenchard 'appears to have incorporated

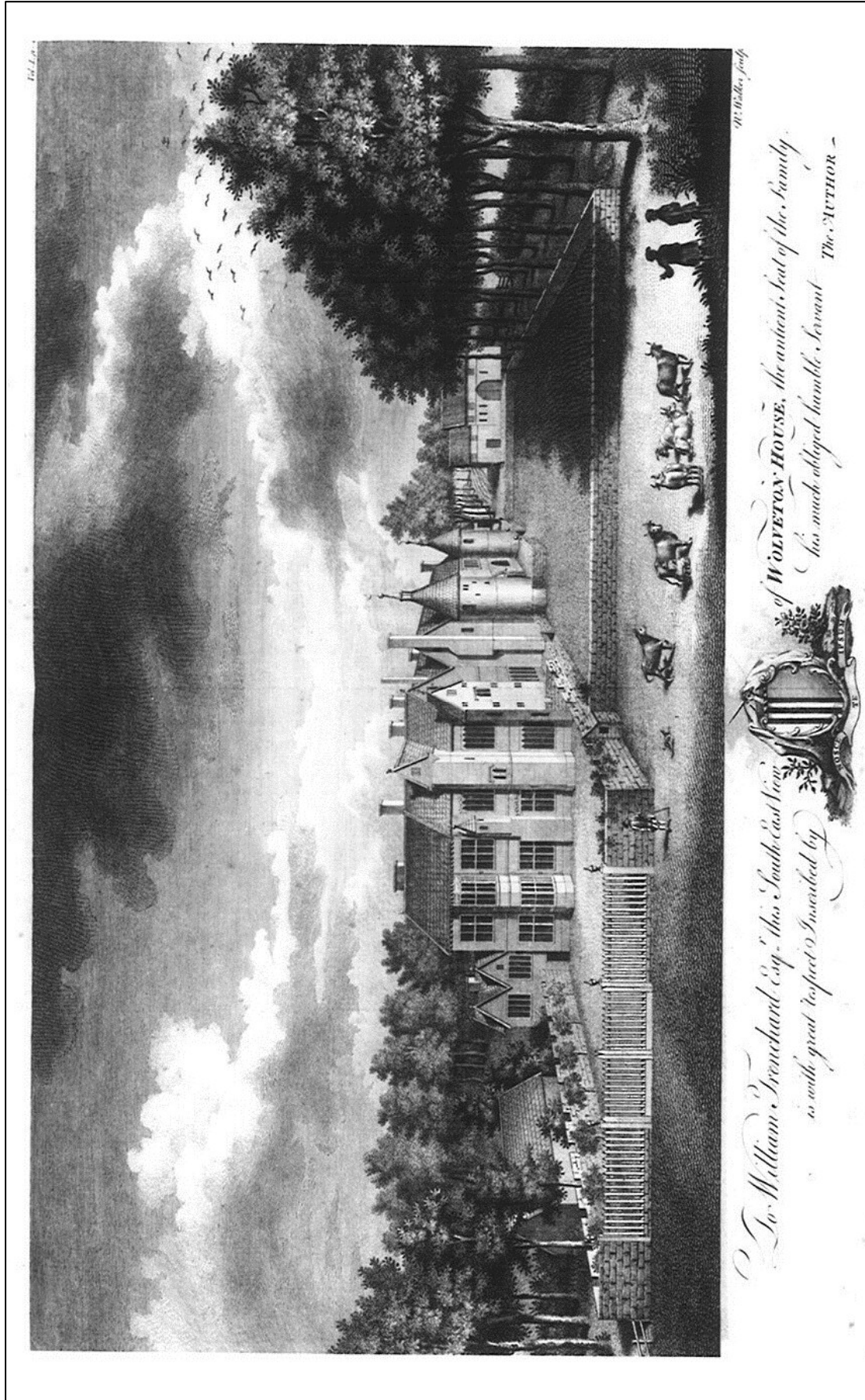


Layer Marney gatehouse - built c1520 (*Country Life*)

some portion of an older edifice.' Indeed in following the common late medieval plan of a gatehouse and courtyard with a great hall placed in the range on the far side, Sir Thomas may have been reusing the plans of an earlier house for his grand new one.

Further evidence which suggests an earlier construction date for the Gatehouse is the fact that the plinth – while continuous to the towers – does not run round the whole building. This can be seen particularly well on the northern facade. The plinth on the north tower is about six inches higher and simpler than its Tudor counterpart. Similarly, on the eastern facade, it does not run across the whole front. The moulded stringcourse on the north and south fronts does not align with those on the north and south towers, but it has been forced to meet on the main east front. The arrow loops guarding the main entrance, far from being Victorian reproductions, appear in all the early 19th-century drawings of the Gatehouse and would have been an antiquated feature for the 1530s. They seem to date from a time when defence was not of paramount importance yet it was still a consideration, for the early drawings of the house do not show a single window on the ground floor of the towers. It is possible that the original Gatehouse could have been similar to the 14th-century one at Nottingham Castle, with its twin round towers.

The towers, which give the Wolveton Gatehouse something of a French appearance, are a different size to each other. The south one is larger, which is surely an anomaly Sir Thomas would not have countenanced, if he had been beginning from scratch. Indeed, round towers were no longer being built in gatehouses in the early 1500s, a point made clearer when the towers at Wolveton are compared with those at the gatehouses at Layer Marney (c.1520), Coughton Court (c.1518) and Leez Priory (c.1536). A possible consideration may be because Sir Thomas was only the second member of his paternal family to live at Wolveton, and by retaining the towers, he was perhaps making a consciously historic gesture towards the longevity of his line. The most likely explanation

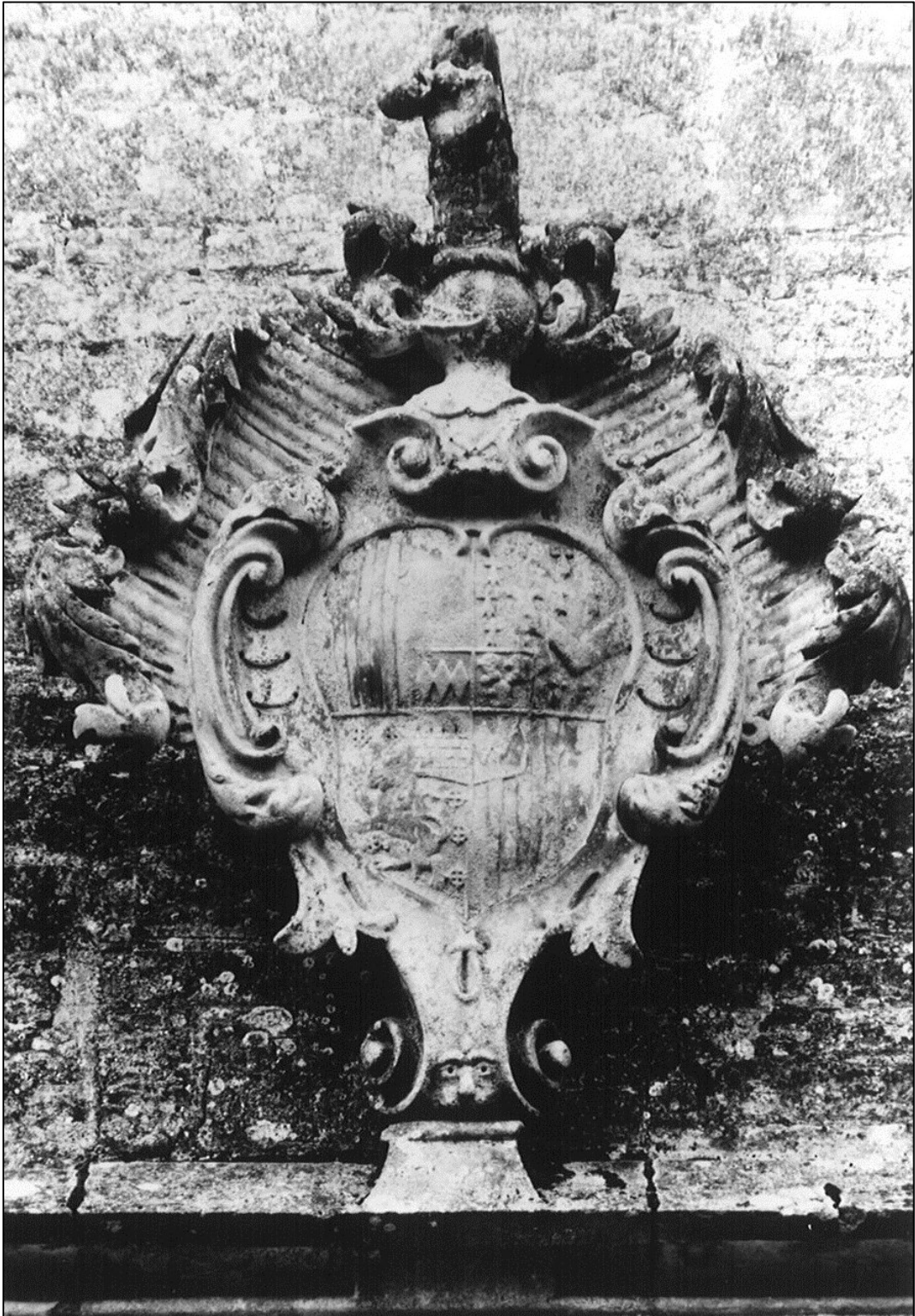


W Walker's engraving of Wolverton House showing the gatehouse towers with picturesque lantern tops (*Country Life*)

however, is that after a building programme lasting over thirty years, it would have been the quickest and most economical solution to retain the massive, constructed towers.

It appears that Sir Thomas demolished whatever there was behind the possibly 14th-century towers, and built his own rectangular gatehouse in its place. The ground floor room on the south side of the driveway, with its fireplace, was for the guardsmen. Sir Thomas's guests were accommodated in the commodious rooms on the first floor, with their own garderobes in the turret rooms, whilst their servants slept in the attics. Within the conical tower roofs are two, now untenanted, dovecots. The south tower held 250 boxes and the north, 150. The louvres, which gave the pigeons access to the south tower, can still be seen high on its north side. Pigeons were an important source of food in the medieval times, especially when there was a siege. In the Walker engraving of Wolveton, published in Hutchins in 1774, the towers are also shown surmounted by picturesque lantern tops.

The carved detail to the windows and archways at the Gatehouse is particularly fine. The 16th-century windows have arched lights with foliage in the spandrels and unusual tiny pedestals. The arch stops or labels on the eastern facade are full of character, and depict on the north side a satyr holding a stave, whilst its partner to the south, shows a wodewouse, or wild man of the woods, covered in hair and also carrying a stave. Above the arch is a beautifully carved cartouche with crest, helm, wreath, and mantling surrounding the coat of arms. The first and fourth quarters represent Trenchard, the second, Mohun, and the third, Jourdain, with an inescutcheon (a small shield often used to bear the arms of an heraldic heiress – a daughter of a family of no sons) in the middle. This must have been moved from another part of the house, probably after 1862 in the time of Mr Weston, as it does not appear in its present position in drawings made earlier in the 19th century.



The coat of arms over the gatehouse archway (RCHME)

On the west side of the Gatehouse, the carvings on the arch are equally fine and possibly represent a final heraldic flourish on the part of Sir Thomas. There are shield-bearing putti to the top of the arch and at the labels; and two shields just above the stringcourse. The putti belong to the Renaissance being inspired by a North Italian engraving. Two of the shields, one now sadly obscured by the Victorian wall, bear the letters 'TE' interlinked by lacing. Assuming the Gatehouse was completed in 1534, as is indicated by the plaque on its north side, the letter 'E' would in all likelihood refer to Edith Hymerford, the third wife of Thomas Trenchard, rather than his first, Elizabeth Strangeways, as sometimes indicated in a number of sources.

Thomas inherited Wolveton from his father in 1495 aged sixteen so that by 1534 he would have been aged 55. First, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Strangeways, but she seems to have died young. Anna de La Lynde, according to *Burke's Landed Gentry*, was the mother of his children. Having done her duty by providing an heir, Thomas, a second son, Richard, and 'younger issue', she too died. His third wife was Edith Hymerford or Hyndeford and her arms, featuring a chevron with three birds – webbed shovelers – appeared in stained glass in the south window of Sir Thomas's great hall and in the north window of his long parlour above. Perhaps Hutchins was referring to Edith Hymerford when he wrote in 1774, at a time when the carving could be more easily distinguished than it is now.

The label on the west (arch of the Gatehouse) terminates with figures holding shields, on which are two Ts combined and TE united by a tasselled cord like a garb (corn sheaf) of the Peverels with the sickle (sickle bill or shoveler duck?) of the Hungerfords.

After the completion of his home in 1534, it appears Sir Thomas may have turned his attention to building the tower of the parish church at Charminster where his mark, the curious double 'T', also appears.

Mr Oswald wrote in his articles for *Country Life* and in his book on Dorset manors that the 1534 plaque on the Gatehouse had originally come from part of the



Mrs Cunningham's drawing of the demolished north side (RCHME)

south wing of the main house which was demolished in the 1820s. This idea has likewise appeared in later accounts, however, it does not seem to be the case, as there seems to have been two plaques with different dates. In the first edition of Hutchins, written in 1774, it very clearly states that there was a plaque bearing the date of 1528:

South of the south round tower (of the Gatehouse) is a building called the store room on which is: HOC OPUS CONSTRUCTUM FUIT An' D'ni MCCCCXXVIII

However, the Gatehouse plaque has different wording and a different date, suggesting completion in 1534:

HOC OPUS FINITU (M) EST ANNO dIII (domini?) Md XXX IIII

It would have been entirely reasonable for Sir Thomas to have worked on the main house first and got round to the Gatehouse last, especially if there was a gatehouse, albeit old fashioned, already there. Early drawings in the main house support the idea of two different plaques. Mrs Francis Cunningham's undated drawing (opposite) shows Wolveton from the north, with a gap where the chapel had been. The entrance wing is depicted and the drawing clearly shows a plaque in place on the north side of the gatehouse. But the chapel and entrance wing were demolished before the east part of the south wing from where the plaque is supposed to have come.

Furthermore Mrs Gurney's drawing of 1811, overleaf, shows the house from the south west with the store room and oratory above, with what could be a plaque on the first floor, although it is difficult to make out beneath the paper crease in the drawing. When John Buckler came to draw the house in 1828 he must have seen the plaque of 1534 on the Gatehouse as his drawing is entitled *A.D. 1534 South East view of the Gatehouse at Wolveton, Dorsetshire, formerly the seat of the Trenchards*. By this time, the eastern part of the south wing with the 1528 plaque had completely gone and at a time when everyone's energies were devoted to demolition at Wolveton, it would have been most unlikely for them to have spent time and money resetting a date plaque high up on the Gatehouse



A drawing of Wolfeton House made by Mrs Rachel Gurney in 1811 (*Country Life*)

A DORSET MANOR HOUSE

SIR,—Having read with great interest the article on Wolfeton House, Dorset, in your issues of August 6 and 13, I am enclosing a photograph of an old pencil sketch of the east side of the house. It is inscribed "Wolfeton. Mr. Trenchard, R. G., Aug. 1811 near Dorchester." The initials are those of Mrs. Rachel Gurney, of Earlham, Norfolk, who is said to have made the drawing under the guidance of John

Crome. The sketch was found among the papers of Michael Beverley, of Norfolk, whose daughter had married a great-grandson of one Elizabeth Trenchard. Possibly the drawing may interest your readers, since it shows portions of the house that were pulled down not long afterwards.—ROLAND TRENCHARD, *Small Dole, Sussex*.

[Mr. Arthur Oswald, who contributed the recent account of Wolfeton published in these pages, writes: This attractive drawing is interesting in showing what the east end of the south range, which linked up with the gatehouse looked like before it was curtailed in 1822. The large four-light window lighted the east end of the hall. If we can trust Mrs. Gurney's perspective, a short gabled wing projected from the south-east corner, set askew. This feature appeared in the rather crude engraving of 1774 included in the first edition of Hutchins's *History of Dorset*, but the angle evidently defeated the draughtsman, who made it appear unconvincingly flat. Probably this was the building referred to in an 18th-century description as the store room "south of the southern round tower," on which was the Latin inscription with the date of the building (1534) now set high up in the north wall of the gatehouse.—ED.]

From *Country Life*, December 17th, 1953



**The Gatehouse staircase made up of oak blocks taken
in 1950 (RCHME)**

The Interior

The original entrance to ground-floor guard room on the south side of the Gatehouse was through the door leading from the staircase lobby. The door from the driveway straight into this guard room is a later addition.

The spiral staircase is quite remarkable to contemplate: the first six steps are made of stone, but the newel post and additional steps are then carved of single oak blocks, rather than the each step being fixed into the central newel. The steps are also hewn on the underside to give extra headroom.

On the first floor were two suites for guests with a main room for living and sleeping in, and a turret room, which housed the garderobe. In the north room, now our sitting room, the fireplace is exceptional. The delicately carved Ionic capitals and boldly carved gadrooning with acanthus leaves at the corners are accomplished with great virtuosity. It is tempting to equate this piece with the doorcase at the top of the stone stairs in the main house, carried out for Sir George Trenchard at the turn of the 17th century, as part of his grand building programme.

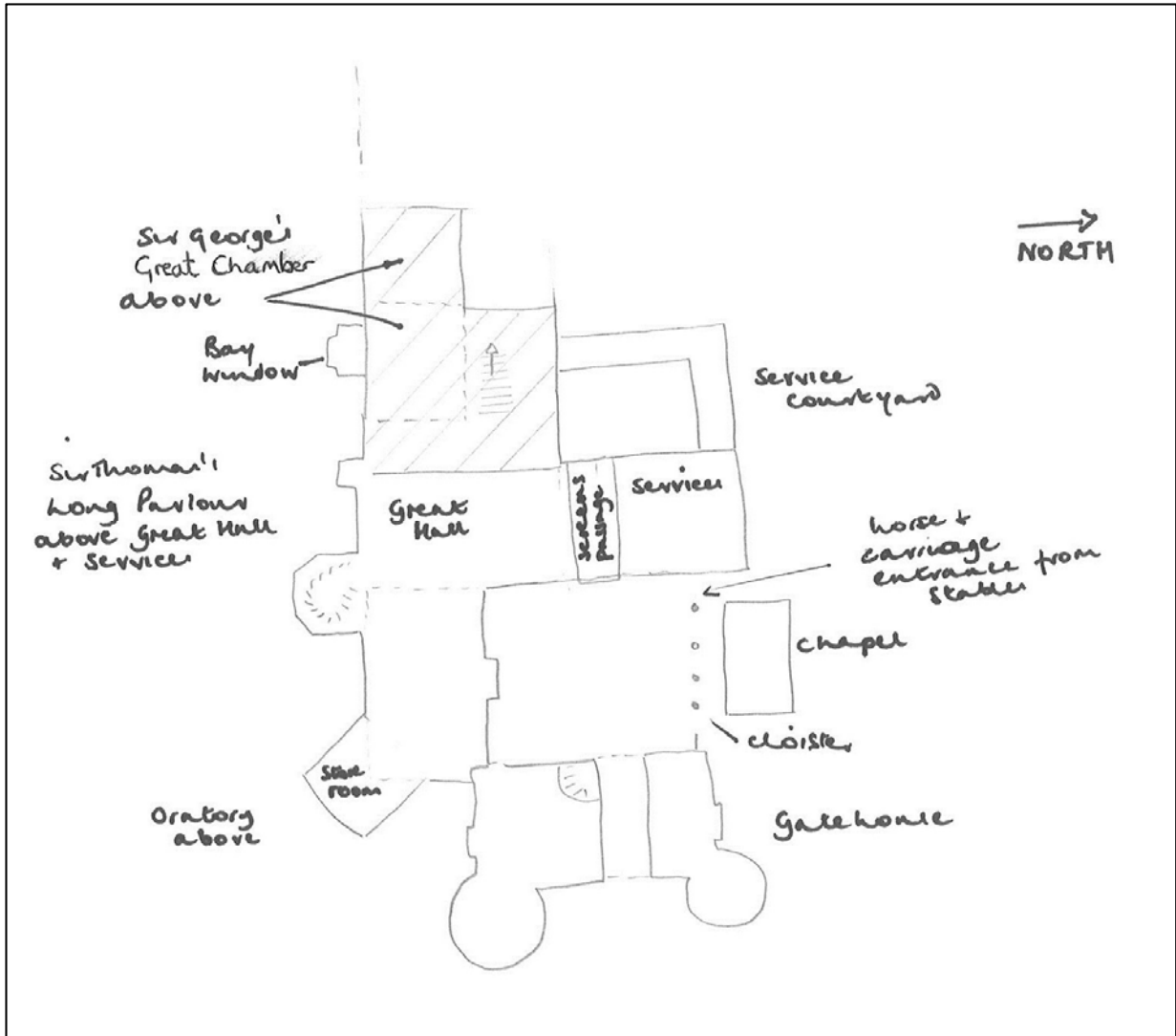
The fireplace in the double bedroom, also of the early 17th century, is not as fine, but nevertheless is executed in a striking rusticated design. The door into the bathroom is original, of double plank oak with wrought iron studs, hinges, latch and plate.



The fireplace in the gatehouse sitting room (RCHME)



The fireplace in the first floor bedroom (RCHME)



Conjectural plan of Wolveton House as it may have looked soon after the death of Sir George in 1630

Captain Thimbleby's restoration at Wolveton

Captain Thimbleby lived in the Gatehouse in the 1960s whilst on leave from serving in the army overseas. After being invalided out of the army, he returned to Wolveton and decided to move into the main part of the house, after the flats there had become vacant. The Gatehouse by this time had been subdivided, including both the current sitting room and double bedroom. Breeze-block partitions were dismantled and the splendid fireplace in the sitting room, which had been removed in 1945, was replaced. Ceilings and doors were restored to their original heights. After a fire in the guardroom, later wall coverings were removed revealing the original fireplace and much original plaster and stonework.

The shutters have been made from elms on the estate which fell down in the great gale of 1987. The Captain has provided most of the furniture and pictures in the Gatehouse, which are truly in the spirit of the Landmark Trust.

The room currently used as a chapel is near the site of the original ancient one. In the 18th century this had fallen down and present chapel was then in use as a schoolroom and chapel. Later in the mid-1800s it became a bakery; the flour being brought through an opening high up in the wall, down a chute, into the adjacent tower room. Fragments of the bread oven remain at the back of the chapel fireplace, made of Broadmayne bricks.

The Thimblebys have created a private chapel on this site once again, and the Gatehouse, through the Landmark Trust, is happily fulfilling its initial function as a guesthouse, as it was originally intended to do so. The stables are also now functioning again, housing the family hunters, while the house itself has been returned to a single family home once more. Whilst the city of Dorchester is doing its best to encroach, in this small sanctuary there are now badgers, foxes, and roe deer again. After many years, other most welcome species have returned to Wolveton, including trout, salmon, water rats, kingfishers and swans.

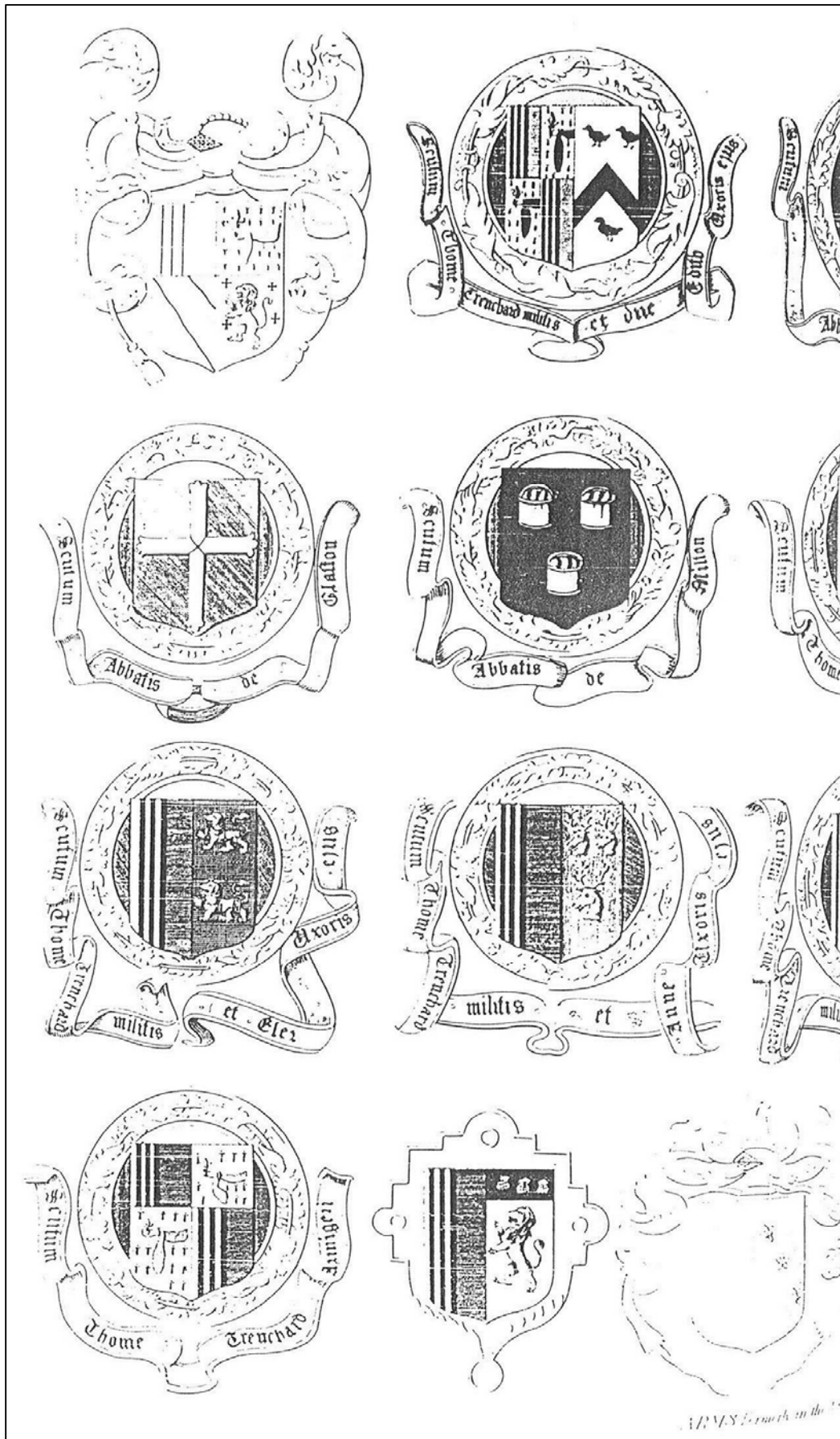
Wolveton before the demolitions

The purpose of this album is to concentrate on the Gatehouse, but as the Gatehouse forms the entrance to one of the finest manor houses in Dorset, much of which has now been demolished, a brief account of the house itself is provided. The key to our understanding of what the house looked like before its diminution is provided by the Walker engraving published in the first edition of Hutchins in 1774. It is seen from the south east and therefore clarifies the relationship of the Gatehouse with the main south wing of the house.

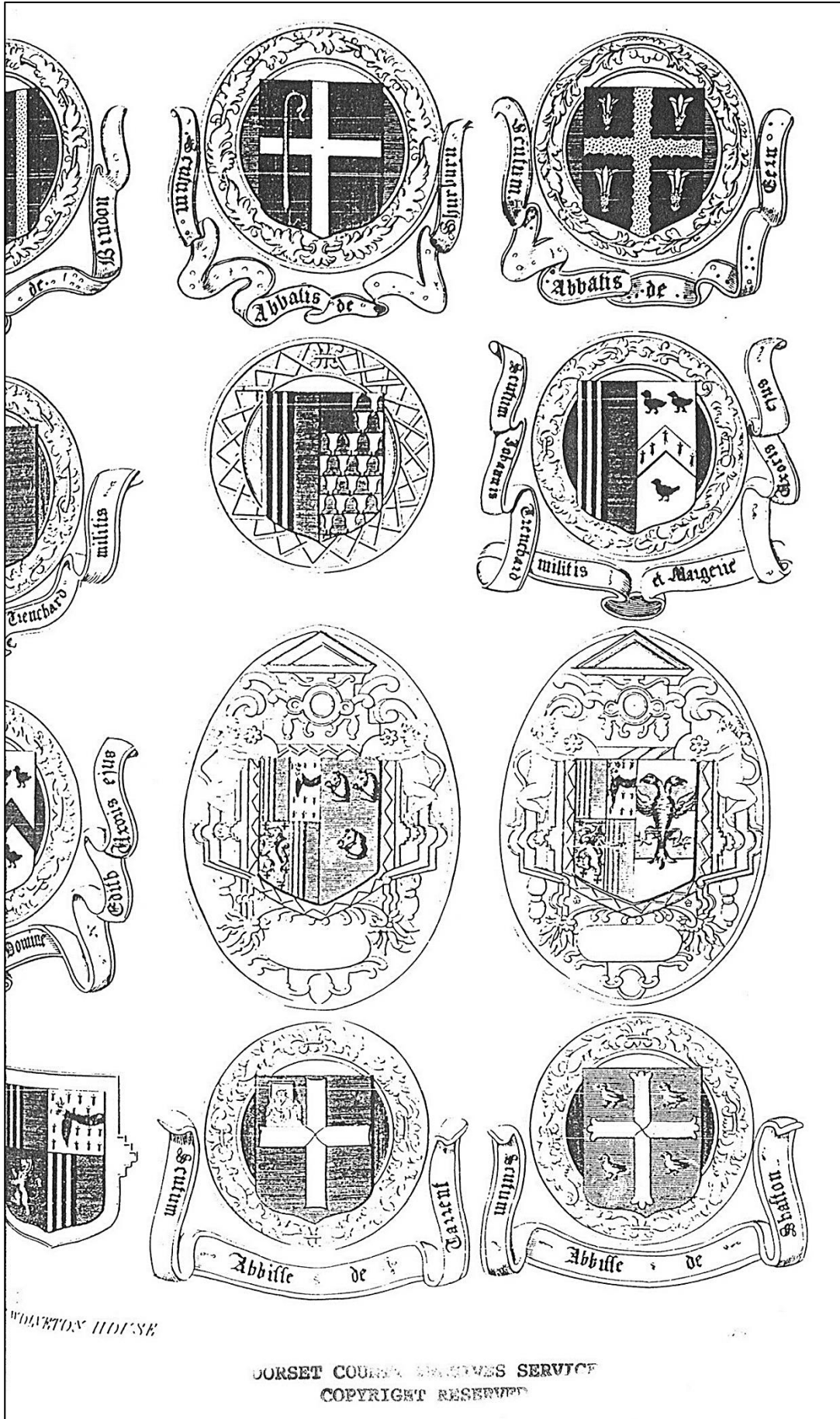
Galloping through the archways of the Gatehouse at the end of his journey, a Tudor messenger to the Trenchards would have entered a small courtyard with the entrance wing straight ahead and the chapel to his right. Interestingly for us, Hutchins compares somewhat disparagingly the entrance wing at Wolveton, with the house that once stood behind another Landmark gatehouse, that at Tixall. In the entrance front at Wolveton

are many windows; almost all of them different from each other as if the architect had studied irregularity. This seems to have been the humour of the age; for, Dugdale remarks that at Tixall, Co. Stafford ... a fine piece of masonry, built in the reign of Henry VIII, though the windows are numerous, scarce two of them are alike, ... so the beauty of the structure of that age did not, as in the present, consist of uniformity but the greatest variety the artist could give.

Mrs Cunningham's drawing confirms Hutchins's remarks but there is a liveliness in the fenestration, giving it a picturesque look, which can now only be seen in the remnant of Sir Thomas's house in the south face of his Great Hall.



Heraldic glass once at Wolveton - from Hutchins History of Dorset



This is the room that the messenger would have entered, once through the massive front door. Hutchins found it

large, and, as all the principal rooms, is adorned with wainscot and fret-work. On the wainscot are carved over the chimney 14 Kings of England, which are said to resemble their figures in the first edition of Rastell's History of England, ending with Charles the First. Mr. Aubrey, in his Miscellanies, says, that, on November 3, 1640, the day the Long Parliament began to sit, the sceptre fell from the figure of Charles I. while the family and a large company were at dinner in the parlour. Opposite to these are figures of an abbot, soldier, and one or two squires with a horseman. On the screen are the arms and quarterings of Trenchard.

In the east window of the Great Hall were stained glass heraldic shields belonging to the Abbeys of Bindon, Sherborne, Cerne, Glastonbury, and Milton. These were collected by Sir Thomas after the dissolution of the monasteries. Beyond the great hall to the East was a room described by Hutchins:

Behind the hall chimney is a smaller room, called the late Mr. Trenchard's smoking-parlour; the cornice of the wainscot charged with signs of the zodiac and works of each month, and grotesque heads in pairs, as in the borders of illuminated calendars and missals, manuscript and printed. In the windows of this room are Trenchard, impaling Filiol; and Trenchard, impaling Hymerford. Just without the west or outer door of this room is a pentagon stone building, covering the cellar stairs; a window in it has been stopped up.

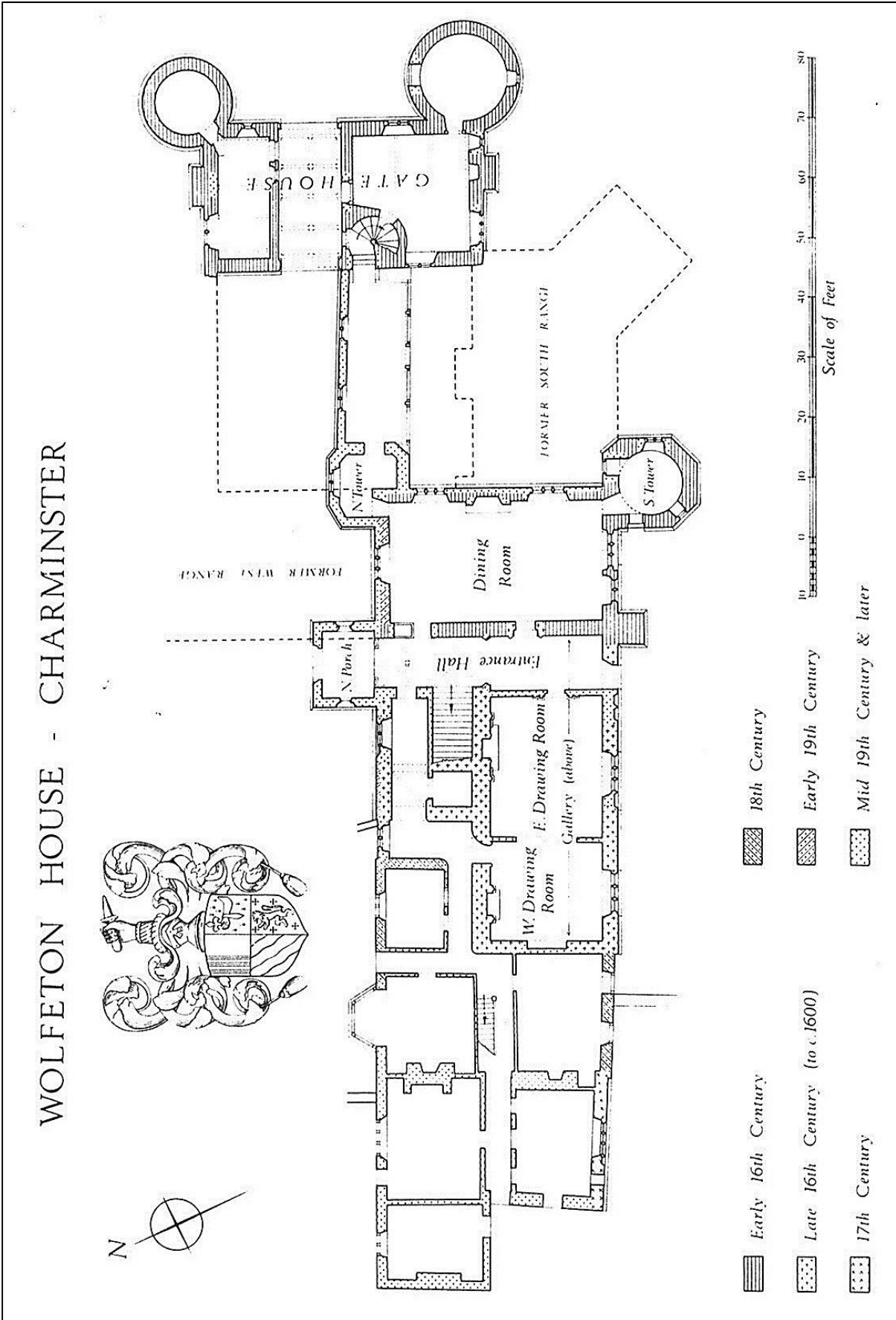
The carved panels of the signs of the zodiac of about 1510 are in the present Chapel on the ground floor of the north side of the Gatehouse. The pentagon building referred to, means the original staircase leading from the Great Hall to Sir Thomas's Long Parlour above, later made redundant by Sir George Trenchard's grand new staircase leading to his Great Chamber. Sir Thomas's first floor Long Parlour had windows facing North, East and South and these were adorned with the arms of the Trenchards and their wives. The old staircase would also have given access to the room above the later "smoking parlour". Beyond this was an oratory above the small room "now used as a repository for cheese" according to Hutchins, with the date plaque of 1528 on its outside wall.

When Sir George built his Great Chamber, with its stuccoed ceiling at right angles to Sir Thomas's Long Parlour, he provided new access to it in the form of a magnificent staircase of limestone, said to be very similar to one at Longleat built at the same time. Dr. Girouard has pointed out stylistic similarities between the work of Allen Maynard, a Frenchman working for Sir John Thynne at Longleat, and the finely carved door leading from the landing to the Great Chamber. The oriel window there, pulled down in 1798, housed "an octagon marble table on four wooden lions", given by a tenant, so the story goes, to King George III and Queen Charlotte, after a royal visit to Wolveton. It would be rewarding to know its relationship to those at Lacock made for Sir William Sharington. With Thynne, Sharington was a protégé of Protector Somerset whose Renaissance palace they had both found so influential. Dr. Richard Pococke, visiting Wolveton in the autumn of 1754, also found echoes of the earlier Somerset House there:

One part next to the garden is handsomly built, with large windows such as were in use in Queen Eliabeth's time and King James I., with fine entablatures and ornaments. They speak of it as Inigo Jones's design, but I rather take it to be the architect of Somerset House.

The ceiling of the Great Chamber, similar to the one at Herringston, featured horses and cranes but has long since disappeared although the chimney piece, which is supported by four fluted Corinthian pillars and over it a man asleep surrounded by four dancers, is still there. Sir George's new wing was replacing rooms of Sir Thomas's as is indicated by the eaves marks left on its east wall. Beneath the Great Chamber are two rooms which Hutchins called the parlour and drawing room. Sir George divided Sir Thomas's Long Parlour into a series of smaller rooms, two of which were called the Parlour and the Nursery.

In 1695 Thomas Trenchard, great-great grandson of Sir George, married his cousin Elizabeth Henning. He died in 1702 and she in 1725 and it is likely that at this point Wolveton ceased to be the family's permanent home. They left one daughter, Mary, who married her cousin, George, the son of Sir John Trenchard (see section on the Trenchard family). As a result of their dynastic union, Mary Trenchard would have owned Wolveton and the other family house at Lytchett



Matravers, whilst her husband owned Bloxworth House acquired by his father, Sir John. George and Mary Trenchard probably spent a little time at Wolveton each year, preferring the two smaller and more convenient houses: Bloxworth and Lytchett.

The couple had two daughters and Wolveton and Lytchett were therefore left to another George Trenchard, presumably a cousin, who died in 1763. In the days of the English Palladians and their successors in the latter part of the century, such as Robert Adam and James Wyatt, the architectural style of Wolveton which had made such a grand appearance in the 16th and 17th centuries, became deeply unfashionable. Lytchett was preferred and Wolveton suffered.

In the windows of all the main rooms at Wolveton were large amounts of armorial stained glass. Hutchins called it "the noblest ornament of this house" and it contained almost a complete pedigree of the Trenchard family. When Hutchins visited the house, the glass was in a bad way. Some of the stained glass was moved in 1758 and he notes despondently in 1774:

Some of these coats, (of arms in stained glass) especially above stairs, are broken; others repaired by the glazier agreeable to his own fancy; others covered with the plaster which stops up several of the windows; and others removed to Lichet Maltravers, where the family chiefly of late years has resided. This has occasioned Wolveton House to be much neglected, and of late much reduced. It is at present occupied as a farm-house by Mr. Fooks, who has long been a tenant of the Trenchard family.

In 1798, on what must have been the orders of William Trenchard, the heraldic glass was removed from the bay windows on the south facade along with most of the rest of the glass. In a later edition, Hutchins adds:

In Powel's Topographical Collections in Devon and Dorset, A.D. 1820, it is stated that "a great deal of the back part of the house has been pulled down, and the whole of the fine glass, with the exception of five or six shields, was taken down, amounting to 100lbs, to Mr. Trenchard's at Litchet, but it was so badly packed that, when the case was opened, almost the whole was pounded or broken to pieces, so that very little was preserved'.

That the glass was taken away from Wolveton is tragic but the carelessness with which it was transported in 1798, is unforgiveable. After the stained glass had gone from the bay windows, they were demolished, diminishing the sense of movement and interest on the south side of the house.

Arthur Oswald tells us that the chapel to the North of the courtyard was pulled down in the first half of the 18th century and it may well have gone soon after the death of Elizabeth Trenchard in 1725. The Walker engraving, published in 1774, shows a northern driveway. Just before the Gatehouse it hits a wall, making it likely that the entrance to the courtyard was then over the site of the demolished chapel, shown in Mrs Cunningham's drawing. In the engraving, the east front of the Gatehouse gives onto a neatly walled enclosure.

From Powel's *Topographical Collections*, we may gather that the entrance front was the next to go. Mrs Gurney's drawing of 1811 shows the smoking parlour, first floor oratory and store beneath, in place. Another drawing, at present in the house, dated 19th May, 1822 shows the oratory and store demolished, but not the rest of the wing, but by the time the Bucklers arrived in April, 1828 the whole of the eastern part of the south front had gone.

In 1807, William Trenchard, son of George Trenchard, sold Wolveton to his cousin and solicitor, Robert Henning, in a secret and not entirely scrupulous transaction. Henning died in 1828 and left it to his son James who died in 1865 and what was left of the house, but not the farm, was sold to Mr Weston, the owner of a number of quarries at Portland. With Mr Weston, Wolveton entered a new era as for the first time for over a century, its proprietor was both resident and rich.

Mr Weston had a huge job on his hands and he approached it with Victorian vigour. He built up Sir Thomas's staircase tower with its once elegant gable, at the corner of the Great Hall. He added a similar one in the corresponding position

in the courtyard, surmounting them both with a parapet. He built a mighty wall running from the courtyard tower to the Gatehouse, joining it so clumsily just by the Thomas Trenchard and Edith Hymerford love knot at the bottom of the arch. Behind this was a glazed passage leading from the house to the Gatehouse on the garden side. He erected a porch by the front door with a fine show of his arms above. It was probably Mr Weston, who placed the coat of arms (which must have come from a demolished part of the house) above the arch on the east side of the gatehouse. His activities inside the house were equally energetic. It is easy to be censorious, but without Mr Weston's intervention, Wolveton would probably not be standing now.



**The south east corner with Sir Thomas's staircase tower on the left
built up by Mr Weston (RCHME)**

In 1874 Mr Weston sold Wolveton and all its furniture to Albert Wynne Bankes, of the Kingston Lacy family. Until he died in 1913 Wolveton enjoyed an Edwardian summer. It was loved and embellished in the gentlest fashion and the gardens cared for and planted with bulbs, primroses and shrubs. Mr Bankes's death and the Great War, as with so many other country houses, were bitter blows to that way of life. The last inhabitant of the Bankes family, Mrs Bankes, died at Wolveton in 1947 in her 93rd year. The year after, the house was divided, not entirely sympathetically into five flats. The house, said Arthur Oswald, submitted itself, 'readily to an operation that was performed without difficulty or complications.'

The house was left to the Bankes's only child, Lady Stucley, who died in 1950. Her daughter, the Countess Zamoyska, then took it on but when the situation became unmanageable she considered selling Wolveton in separate lots. At this point early in the 1960s, the Thimblebys came to the rescue and saved the house from being sold. Captain Thimbleby lived in the Gatehouse to begin with, as the main house was still tenanted. Once it had been vacated, the Thimblebys faced the Herculean task of restoring Wolveton as a home. This they have now achieved but having no specific use for the rooms in the Gatehouse, Captain Thimbleby approached Martin Drury, then Chairman of the Landmark Trust, with the suggestion that we should let it for holidays on their behalf. We were delighted to become involved with such an important house and the Gatehouse was let to the first Landmark holiday-makers in 1994.

The Trenchards of WolvertonOwners of Wolverton in **bold type**

Name	Born	Succeeded	Died
John		1480	1495
Sir Thomas	c1479	1495	1550
Thomas			
Thomas		1550	1557
Sir George		1557	1630
Sir Thomas	1582	1630	1657
Thomas	1615	1657	1671
Thomas	c1639	1671	1694?
Thomas		1694?	1702
Mary m George Trenchard (2 daughters)			1702
George (cousin?)		by 1750	1763
William		1763	1829

The succession went from father to son except when Thomas succeeded his grandfather in 1550 and when Mary succeeded her father in 1702. She married her cousin, George, son of Sir John Trenchard, and they had two daughters so the succession went to George Trenchard, presumably another cousin. In 1807 William Trenchard sold Wolverton to Robert Henning and it was released to him in 1823. In 1828 it was left to his son, James Henning, who sold the house, but not the land, to Mr Weston in 1862. Mr Weston sold it to Mr Bankes in 1874 and it passed to his daughter Lady Stucley in 1948. When she died in 1950, her daughter, the Countess Zamoyska, took it on and it was later acquired by the Thimbleby family.

The Trenchard family

Motto: *Nosce Te Ipsum – Know thyself*

Although they first came to Dorset in 1480, the Trenchards had been a land-owning family in Hampshire and on the Isle of Wight since the time of Henry I. They had estates at Shalfleet and Quarr on the Island, but their main home was Hordle, on the edge of the New Forest near Lymington. This was granted to Paganus, or Payne, Trenchard by the Earl of Devon, in the first part of the twelfth century.

Wolveton came to the Trenchards through the female line. In about 1400, John Jourdain of Wolveton married the heiress Christian Chantemarle, who brought with her a number of manors. They had a daughter and heiress, Joanna, who married John Mohun of Hammoon (Ham Mohun), between Shaftesbury and Blandford Forum. Their daughter, Christian Mohun, married Henry Trenchard of Hordle, and at the death of John Mohun in 1480, Wolveton was inherited by his grandson, **John Trenchard** (d. 1495).

The general Act of Attainder of 1483 passed on the accession of Richard III, included John Trenchard, 'late of Charminster'. As a Lancastrian and enemy to the new King, his lands were confiscated under the terms of the Act. However, when Henry VII came to throne in 1485, Trenchard's lands, not only in Dorset and Hampshire, but also in Wiltshire and Devon, were restored to him. The will of John Trenchard (and of his son Thomas), shows how much of his wealth came from sheep-farming and he used part of it to begin work on his new house at Wolveton. According to Hutchins, he had timber from Frome Whifield 'toward building his house by the gift of Robert Coker, Esq.'

His first wife was Margarita, daughter of John Wyke of Bindon near Axminster in Devon. There is still an unusual medieval house there, although much altered, where a Roger Wyke obtained a licence for a chapel in 1425. Interestingly, much work was carried out there c.1500, at the same time that work was going on at Wolveton. John Trenchard's second wife and the mother of his children, was Eleanora, daughter of John Philiolle of Woodlands in Dorset. Here also, there is a Tudor house with unusually early brickwork for the county.

In 1495, John Trenchard was succeeded by his son, **Sir Thomas** (1479–1550). He first married Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Strangeways, but she died without issue and secondly he married, Anna de La Lynde, the mother of his children. Knighted by Henry VII, he was one of the foremost men in Dorset. According to Burke, Sir Thomas

with most other eminent gentlemen of the West brought timely aid to the succour of the city of Exeter then besieged by Perkin Warbeck and the Cornish Rebels,

thereby supporting the King against one of the pretenders to his throne.

Sir Thomas was a Commissioner of the Peace and High Sherriff of the County at least twice, once in 1509, the other perhaps in 1506 when he offered refuge to Archduke Philip of Austria, King of Castile, and his wife, Joanna of Aragon. This unexpected event which laid the foundations of the rise of the ducal family of Bedford, happened after a storm at sea blew the royal couple ashore at Portland. Legend has it that when the storm was at its height, Joanna dressed in her finest clothes, securing to herself a considerable amount of money, so that if she were drowned, she would be given an appropriate burial. When they were rescued, Sir Thomas was called to meet the storm-tossed party and he took them to his house where he waited for instructions from his King.

At Wolveton, all went well except for the fact that the chief protagonists could not converse easily with each other, sharing no common language. It was then that Sir Thomas had a stroke of brilliance; realising that his royal visitors could be with him for some days, he quickly remembered John Russell of Berwick, the family into which his brother had married. Russell, according to Hutchins, had, resided some years in Spain, (so) he was sent for by his relation, Sir Thomas Trenchard, to attend and entertain the Archduke of Austria, who recommended him to the favour of King Henry VII, who took him into favour and appointed him to one of the Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber; and afterwards recommended him to his son, Henry VIII.

The relief when Russell arrived at Wolveton must have been palpable. This episode appears in every account of the house for it caused a stir, not just of local, but national repercussions. (After their sojourn at Wolveton, the royal couple went to Windsor where no doubt Joanna met her sister, Catherine of Aragon, widow of Prince Arthur, but already betrothed to the young Henry, Prince of Wales.)

Sir Thomas Trenchard's last wife was Edith Hymerford and he died in 1550. In the second quarter of the 16th century, it is thought, he built the tower of Charminster parish church. It is embellished with his personal rebus of intertwined 'T's, also found on the west front of the Gatehouse. The Gatehouse was completed in 1534 and it probably marked the end of Sir Thomas's ambitious building project at Wolveton. That year he was 56, an old man for the time. It seems entirely natural that having completed his own house, he might turn to the parish church and the life hereafter. The early 1530s were a tempestuous time for the Church in England with the King's wish to break with Rome, divorce Queen Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn. Indeed the year after Sir Thomas had completed his Gatehouse, Thomas More was beheaded at the Tower of London, which paved the way for Thomas Cromwell and the dissolution of the monasteries. Perhaps it was a comfort to the ageing Sir Thomas to build such a

permanent symbol as the Charminster church tower, in such times of religious uncertainty. Sir Thomas died in 1550, at the fine age of 71.

His son predeceased him and so he was succeeded by his grandson, **Thomas**, (d. 1557) who married Eleanor Horsey. He died only seven years after his grandfather; and with the succession of his young son, **Sir George Trenchard** (d. 1630), Wolveton entered its second golden period. Sir George, like Sir Thomas, was a man of pre-eminence in Dorset. In 1573 he married Anne Speke but she died in 1588, the year that her husband may have been knighted. A little before this he had been appointed as a commissioner to carry out an inventory on the Spanish ship, the San Salvador, which had been brought into Portland. He was Governor of Sandsfoot Castle, Weymouth, which had been built in 1541 by Henry VIII fearing a French invasion. In 1580, like his great-grandfather, Sir George was obliged to entertain royalty when the Prince of Conde landed at Weymouth.

His building works at Wolveton House - the main south front with the dining room and parlour on the ground floor and the magnificent Great Chamber above – are evidence of his wealth and taste. Arthur Oswald has pointed out that the most likely date for Sir George's lavish building programme is the last decade of the 16th century. After his marriage to Jane, daughter of Hugh Bamfylde, their eldest child was born in 1595 and this and his earlier match were recorded in stained glass in the once picturesque bay window of his new Great Chamber. Apart from his fine rooms in the house, Sir George was also responsible for the Riding House. This fascinating rectangular building of ashlar with a slate roof is still extant, situated amongst the farm buildings about 125 yards north of the house.

In 1594, when Sir George was a Justice of the Peace, an Irish Roman Catholic priest called Cornelius was arrested at Chideock and taken to Wolveton where he was detained in the south room on the first floor. He seems to have got on well

with the Trenchard family and their circle, especially Sir Walter Raleigh, who was then living at Sherborne. He was not however, prepared to forswear his religion and after imprisonment in London, he was returned to Dorchester where the poor man was hung, drawn and quartered.

Sir George's son, the second **Sir Thomas** (1582 - 1657) came into his inheritance in 1630 after the long and settled period of his father's tenure. He was Sherriff of Dorset and was knighted by James I at Theobalds on 14th December in 1613. Sir Thomas married Mrs. Motford, nee Elizabeth Morgan, by whom he had seven daughters and three sons. She tragically committed suicide in circumstances foreseen by a dinner-guest. In about 1640 one of the Assize Judges from Dorchester came to dine with the Trenchards, but before he had taken one mouthful his lordship hastily jumped up and left the house. He told his marshal that he had seen an apparition of her ladyship behind her chair with her throat cut and her head in her arms. Before they had reached the town, hardly a lengthy distance, a messenger caught up with the carriage and related the gruesome story.

During the Civil War, Sir Thomas Trenchard supported the Parliamentarians and helped out at the siege of Corfe Castle sustained by the Bankes family. Sir Thomas's youngest brother, George, was the first husband of **Lady Penelope D'Arcy**, the subject of one of Thomas Hardy's saddest short stories in 'A Group of Noble Dames'. Burke's *Landed Gentry* tells us:

This fair lady and wealthy heiress was wooed by three suitors at the same time, and the knights as in chivalry bound, were disposed to contest the prize with targe(t) and lance; but the lady herself forbade the battle, and menaced the disobedient knights with her eternal displeasure, promising jocularly that if they had but patience she would have them all in their turns, which promise was fulfilled.

After the death of George Trenchard, she was a widow at seventeen and next married Sir John Gage of Firle in Sussex. Finally, she married Sir William Harvey of Ickworth in Suffolk, whom she truly loved.



Lady Penelope D'Arcy, Lady Hervey (d.1661)
(National Trust)

The second Sir Thomas Trenchard was succeeded by his son, **Thomas** (1615–1671). He married Hannah Henley of Bramshill in 1638 and one of their daughters, Anne, married Walter Erle of Charborough, another important family in Dorset. His heir **Thomas** (b c.1639—?1694) was M.P. for Bridport and he married, Anne, daughter of Thomas Erle of Charborough, so it seems that a Trenchard brother and sister married an Erle sister and brother.

Thomas's younger brother, **Sir John Trenchard**, is the only Trenchard to appear in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. He was born at Lytchett in 1640 and matriculated from New College, Oxford, in 1665, becoming an M.P. for Taunton from 1678–9. In 1682, he married Phillipa Speke of the Cromwellian family. He soon became embroiled with the group of puritans who were opposed to the succession of the Catholic James, Duke of York. In 1680 he contended that the Crown was held by statute law and that pro publico bono, Parliament should step

over any private rights of James. He seems to have helped the Rye House plot on its way and he was arrested in July 1683 but 'the steady refusal of William, Lord Russell, to implicate him and the great skill he showed under examination' ensured his release for want of evidence. Fearing re-arrest, he spent some time in Dorset.

In June 1685, his conduct at the landing of the Duke of Monmouth was cowardly in the extreme. He was with the Spekes at Ilminster and recognising the danger he raced to Lytchett where he hid in a keeper's lodge until he could flee to the continent. Meanwhile, his brother-in-law, Charles Speke, was hanged at his own door. In 1687 James II magnanimously signed a petition of free pardon on his behalf and the next year he became M.P. for Dorchester but, notes the Dictionary, 'his parliamentary demeanor was strictly subdued'. But he was an influential Whig, who represented accurately the feelings of his county.

In 1689 he was knighted by William III, becoming Secretary of State in 1692 and a Privy Councillor. One of his first jobs was to reorganise the system of spies at the chief French ports, 'an undertaking of no common difficulty' and one he must have relished, concerned as it was with keeping popish plots at bay. He bought Bloxworth House and was buried in the parish church there in 1695. His son, George, was eventually to marry Mary, the heiress of Wolveton.

In 1695, the next **Thomas Trenchard** (d.1702) married Elizabeth Henning of Poxwell. He was a colonel and had a parliamentary career, becoming M.P. for Dorchester in 1689, Wareham in 1695 and for Dorset County in 1700. Elizabeth Trenchard died in 1725 and it seems that at this stage Wolveton ceased to be the main family seat. From then on, their other house at Lychett Matravers was preferred.

Lytchett, built in gracious landscape between Wimborne Minster and Poole, was the catalyst for the neglect and subsequent demolitions at Wolveton. It had been in the family certainly since the time of Thomas Trenchard, the nephew of Sir Thomas (d.1550), for Burke's Landed Gentry describes him as 'of Lytchett Matravers'. Sir George Trenchard, builder of the Elizabethan wing at Wolveton, later bought Lytchett from his cousin. It seems to have become the home of the eldest sons of the Trenchards before they inherited Wolveton, because Sir John Trenchard (1640–1695) was born there. Dr. Pococke described Mr Trenchard's house at Lytchett as having

a view of the north of the fine hills on his estate, covered with wood, and of the vale which opens to Charborow, Mr Draxs improvement,

when he visited George Trenchard there in 1750.

Thomas and Elizabeth only had one daughter, **Mary**, who was married to her cousin **George** (see above). They in their turn had two daughters and Wolveton was inherited by George Trenchard (presumably another cousin) who married Mary Serjeant and died in 1763. He owned Wolveton when Dr. Pococke visited the house in the autumn of 1754. They had two sons, the eldest of which was **William**, who married Lady Hester Amelia de Burgh, daughter of the 12th Earl of Clanricarde, on 6th August, 1790.

As far as Wolveton is concerned, William, to whom ironically the 1774 Walker engraving is dedicated, was a disaster. After the death of his father in 1763, he succeeded to the ownership, but certainly not the care, of the house. It was he that removed most of the heraldic glass and allowed the bay windows to be demolished on the south side. He may be held responsible for the destruction of the glass on the way to Lytchett. After more than three centuries, he sold the house away from the Trenchard family, although by that time the family were no longer living there and it was let.

William was not a 'good and careful man of business' and in a Bill of Complaint to the Lord Chancellor of the 1850s, brought by the Trustees of William Trenchard's will against the Hennings, we learn that in 1807, he,

being short of money agreed to sell his estate at Wolfeton ... to his solicitor, Robt. Henning: a sale to be kept secret from his uncle, John Trenchard, from whom he had an expectation for he did not wish him to know his financial position.

In 1820 the uncle died and in 1823 Wolveton was released to Robert Henning but he died five years later and left it to his son, James Henning. In 1829 William Trenchard himself died. The Trustees of his will then lodged their Bill of Complaint urging that the secretly negotiated sale of Wolveton to Henning in 1807 should be void. They did not succeed and James Henning then sold Wolveton House but not the farm, with title undisputed, to Mr Weston, who after much renovation and rebuilding sold it with its furniture to Mr Wynne Albert Bankes in 1874.

Mr Bankes's diaries 1874–1913



Wynne Albert Bankes (National Trust)

Albert Bankes's diaries, housed at the County Record Office in Dorchester, describe the life of a typical country gentleman of independent means. The first volume was written in 1909 so he must have been keeping notes over the years. In a sense, he was the Victorian and Edwardian equivalent of his predecessors, the first Sir Thomas Trenchard and Sir George. A younger son of one of the foremost Dorset families, the Bankes of Kingston Lacy, he was a cultivated and genial person. He embodied the greatest Victorian virtue – a sense of duty, manifested in his devotion to family, parish, and county. His father was George Bankes and his mother, Georgina-Charlotte Nugent; her real father was the Duke of Cumberland, who became King of Hanover in 1837. Born in 1840, Albert was the fourth and youngest son and was christened at St. Peter's Church, Pimlico, on 31st May. He was dispatched as a navel cadet and midshipman on board the

St. Jean D'Acree to the Crimea where at the tender age of fifteen, he witnessed the taking of Sebastopol. Later he received the Baltic and Crimean Medals. On his return, he read law at Trinity Hall, Cambridge and was called to the Bar in 1867. He regularly worked amongst the poor in London whilst he was living at his mother's house in Old Palace Yard, Westminster. On 10th September, 1873 he married Florence (Florrie) Fane.

Just over a year later the newly married couple bought Wolveton House and moved in on 7th January, 1875:

The first night in our own house, Mr W.H.P. Weston, the vendor, had been most kind throughout the business and had labelled all the keys and seen that the furniture was arranged in all the rooms. From 1875 to the present time (1909) Mr Weston has seldom missed a week, when he was at home, in coming over to see us.

In April Mr Bankes paid a cheque for £10,000 to Mr Weston for the purchase of Wolveton and in May a further £60 for a billiard table which cost him £120. The Billiard Room was then in the Gatehouse in what is now the sitting room, and a diary entry in May, 1878 reads:

Arranging to heat the Billiard Room with hot water pipes.

Mr Bankes plunged himself immediately into in the affairs of the county. For such activities, he was well placed, living so close to the county town of Dorchester. Two days after moving in he attended a meeting about starting the Royal Dorset Yacht Club at Weymouth. He notes sadly in July, 1878 that they were

Defeated by two votes on the proposal that ladies should be admitted for lunch and tea at the Weymouth Yacht Club,

although by the end of his life he and the other supporters of this measure won Dorset County Hospital at Dorchester. One of the less enviable requirements of this post was a monthly visit to the two County Lunatic Asylums at Forston and Charminster itself (built 1871). Five days after his election he describes

My first official visit over the two lunatic asylums ... very glad when it was over but after fourteen years of it, I got quite accustomed and did not mind the visits.

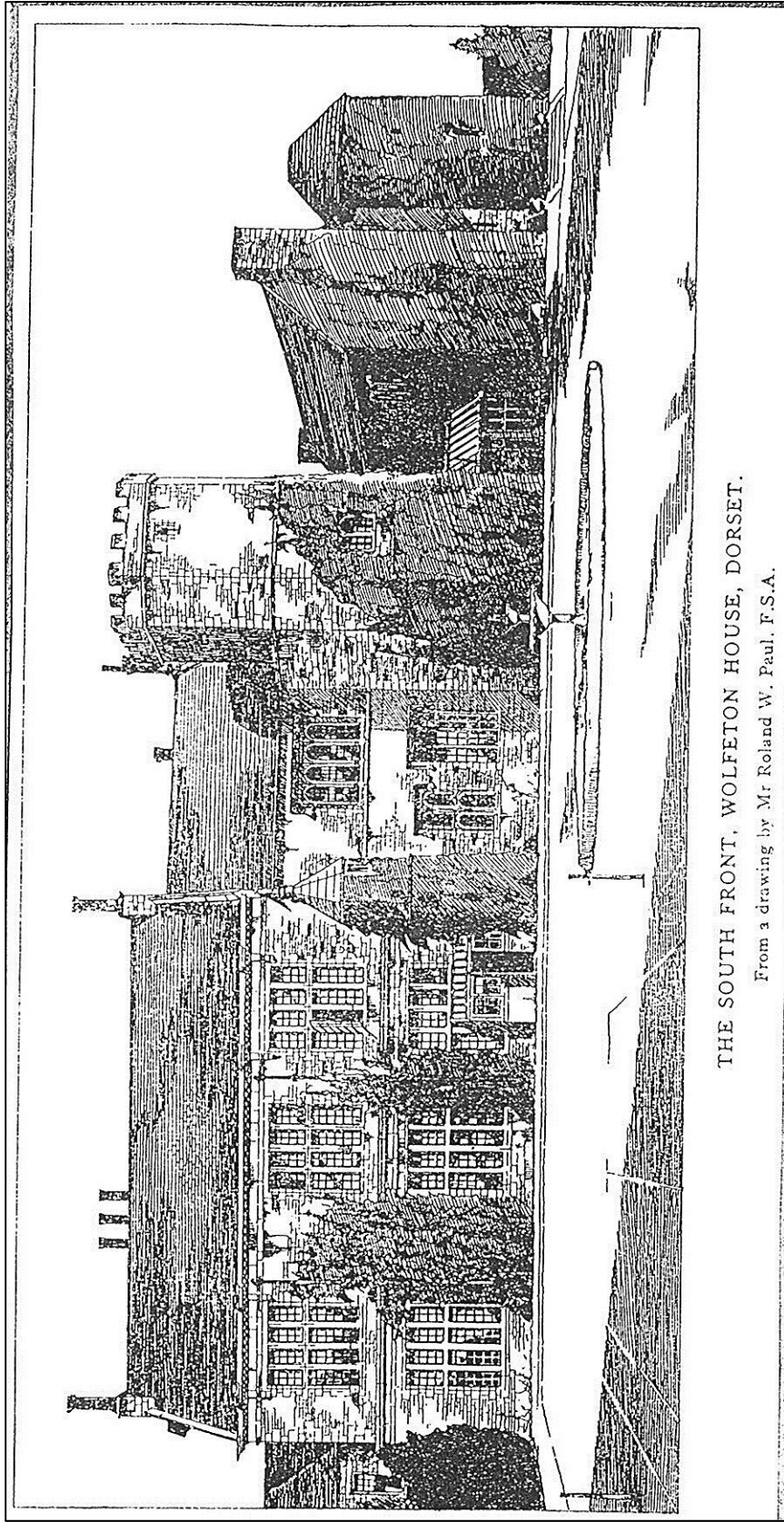
On 9th March, 1875 he was made a County Magistrate and on the same date went to a concert in Dorchester in aid of the new Trinity Church. He was heavily involved with the Dorset County Museum, something he much enjoyed supporting by overseeing its move as well as arranging various functions.

Albert Bankes was a staunch supporter of the parish church in Charminster throughout his life at Wolveton. In a laconic statement of 10th January, three days after his move, he writes

Our vicar The Rev. Brynmer Williams we never saw as he was in Usk prison for 15ys.

Bankes held the post of church warden more than once, ran a Sunday school for the village boys, and was instrumental in the church restoration of 1895–7 when it was reroofed, reseated and properly drained. He was much amused by the sit-down protest of the congregation in March, 1876 when *Hymns Ancient and Modern* was introduced. He himself rather liked the new hymnal. Village affairs were also close to his heart and he held evening classes for the Spare Time Movement as well as giving tea parties for the village school children; at the one on 30th July, 1883 they entertained 170 pupils in the gardens at Wolveton.

Mr and Mrs Bankes moved in high society, both in Dorset and London where they spent part of their time, although it always seems to have been a relief to return to Wolveton. They met the Prince of Wales at Newmarket and when he attended Hunt Balls in Dorset; in November, 1876, they entertained Princess Christian to lunch, who looked *very German, but pleasant*, while she was staying at Canford. At Kingston Lacy, they supported their cousin Mrs Bankes on three separate occasions when she entertained Edward VII, the Kaiser and the Princess of Wales, (later Queen Mary). Keen advocates of amateur dramatics, they held exhausting theatrical weeks at Wolveton. For these, Mr Bankes had removed the



THE SOUTH FRONT, WOLFETON HOUSE, DORSET.

From a drawing by Mr Roland W. Paul, F.S.A.

The grass tennis court is in the bottom left hand corner

wall between the present dining room, which housed the stage, and the parlour which accommodated the audience. One Hunt Ball was held at the house, along with what seems to have been almost annual Tyrolean parties, much enjoyed by all the guests, as well as lawn tennis tournaments held on the grass court in front of the south wing. Mr Bankes seems to have been quite the life and soul of these gatherings and describes a garden party at Lulworth Castle on 7th August, 1884 when it poured with rain,

so I led an improvised cotillon from 5.30 - 6.30 which was most successful.

Very occasionally, he does not warm to his guests:

Mrs Patrick Campbell came for tea ... I was not taken with Mrs Patrick Campbell's manner.

On 22nd July, 1900 he had another tea party with visitors from the literary and artistic worlds:

Mr and Mrs Thomas Hardy, the Novellist brought Mr and Mrs Thorneycroft, the Sculptor to tea.

This does not seem to have been the first time that Hardy came to Wolveton, for in 1891, he had published 'A Group of Noble Dames', of which Dame the Eighth was Lady Penelope D'Arcy, second wife of George Trenchard. In this tale, Hardy had described Wolveton thus:

In going out of Casterbridge (Dorchester) by the low-lying road which eventually conducts to the town of Ivel (Yeovil), you see on the right hand an ivied manor-house, flanked by battlemented towers, and more than usually distinguished by the size of its many mullioned windows. Though still of good capacity, the building is somewhat reduced from its original grand proportions; it has, moreover, been shorn of the fair estate which once appertained to its Lord, with the exception of a few acres of park-land immediately around the mansion.

No laggard in doing his historical research, Hardy later describes Lady Penelope's life at Wolveton as

now passed mostly within the walls, or in promenading between the pleasance and the bowling green; and she very seldom went even so far as the high road which then gave entrance from the north, though it has now, and for many years, been diverted to the south side.

The description of the garden and change of driveway are both entirely accurate. The immaculately kept gardens surrounding the ivied manor house are exactly what the photographer from *Country Life* found when he came to take the pictures for the article on Wolveton published in 1902, sadly not mentioned in Mr Bankes's diaries. With its long and romantic history of the Trenchard family, the house was precisely the type that *Country Life* liked to feature in its early days, when architectural history was subordinate to genealogy. Perhaps it was no coincidence that the Gatehouse and silhouette of Wolveton closely resemble the building featured in the highly decorated headpiece of the article, used for the magazine's series *Country Homes – Gardens Old & New*.

The history of the house was undoubtedly of great interest to Mr Bankes. In July, 1887 he had

A very interesting visitor, Mr Edmonds, who lived here 50 years ago when Wolveton was a farm house.

He took a party from the Royal Society of Archaeologists round in January, 1881 and he was bringing out a new edition of the guidebook in June, 1907. Rather worryingly, he mentions in July, 1883 that the

The Council settled to begin moving things from the old museum into the new one. I busy all day with Mr Wood and his men taking plaster statues into the School of Art (vacated by the County Museum) from Wolveton House staircase.

In November, 1884, he adds

Cooper cutting up the stone pedestals on which the Venuses used to stand on the staircase. We utilised the stone for steps in the gardens where they still are 1909.

In the summer of 1892 the house nearly burnt down but it was put out *with the help of my new 48 fire buckets*. Like every other country house not on mains drainage, there were intermittent problems with unpleasant smells and once Mr Bankes had to send a bottle of well water to a London analyst. However, he always resisted putting in what he called *modern drainage*.

The drains gave him most cause for concern when he thought they might have made his beloved daughter, Gladys, ill. Throughout the diaries there are touching references to her childhood progress, first steps, new dresses, birthday parties, and later on, her coming out ball and then her engagement to Hugh Stucley in December, 1901. The description of her wedding at Charminster on Thursday, 6th February, 1902 is particularly poignant:

Church beautifully decorated with flowers and similar over the chancel arch ... but we had no choir or hymns and the service was as short as possible as I was so afraid of Florrie breaking down, but she managed most bravely though I felt what a wrench it was for her losing Gladys. The 'Reception' at Wolveton went off well and we managed some most interesting photographic groups in spite of the weather being so raw and cold. (The couple) left by the Great Western Station for Paris, Rome and Naples.

Gladys's father writes of the birth of the Stucley son and heir, Dennis Frederic Bankes, born on 28th October, 1907 with particular pleasure.

Albert Bankes began to suffer from heart problems in the winter of 1908 and the entries become fewer and fewer. In 1911 he was *no longer enjoying London visits* and the summer heat that year troubled him. The only entry in 1912 reads for August:

Rented manor farm at Studland. Over walked myself and brought on a heart attack. Laid up the whole of September.

In about 1825, Mr Bankes's father, George, had built a marine villa at Studland where the family spent many holidays. (It is now the Manor House Hotel.) Wynne Albert Bankes, a beloved man, died at Wolveton on 16th April, 1913 and his well-attended funeral was held at Charminster church but he was buried at the Bankes family resting place at Studland.

Mrs Bankes continued to live at Wolveton until she died in 1947 when she left the house to her daughter, Lady Stucley. Gladys Stucley herself died in 1950 and the house became the property of her daughter Priscilla, Countess Zamoyska. From her it was acquired in the early 1960s by the Thimbleby family.



The south façade of the Gatehouse



The Weston coat of arms above the porch of the main house



Carvings on the west front of the Gatehouse





St Mary the Virgin, Charminster



The Riding House

When the Royal Commission Inspectors visited Wolveton in 1948, they wrote a three-page report on what they believed to be an unusually fine barn. In about 1973, the Commission visited the building again, revised their earlier opinion, and it is now known as the Riding School. This building, which lies about 125 yards North of Wolveton House, today forms part of the farm-yard, standing end-on to the lane. It is built of ashlar with a slate roof and is 105 feet long and 25 feet wide, with two storeys. Originally, there may have been a gallery and staircase at the east end where there are two rows of round windows.

The form of the Wolveton Riding House is very similar to two buildings: Prince Henry's Riding House of c.1604, at St. James's Palace (drawn by Robert Smythson on a London visit) and a Riding School at Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire, designed in 1622–3 by his son, John Smythson, for Sir William Cavendish. This likeness prompted the RCHM to identify the building at Wolveton as a Riding House. However, this may not give the complete picture as it is surprisingly long and thin, making it impossible to lunge a horse or carry out exercises across the building. Riding Houses had to be at least 30 feet wide and preferably more. It is more likely that it was used for many recreations, including bowls on the first floor and *haute école* (or dressage) below, like the 'Hospice' at Ansty Manor in Wiltshire.

Giles Worsley has pointed out that if *haute école* did form part of the design of the Riding House at Wolveton then the date of about 1610 is too early. The building has been given that date due to its stylistic similarities – the round-headed south doorway with a round-headed hoodmould over, with a small lion mask above – to Lulworth Castle. There, work began in 1608 on a castle for Thomas Howard, 3rd Lord Bindon. Who designed the Riding House at Wolveton and when, is a tantalising question and is part of the rich seam of research waiting to be carried out on Sir George Trenchard and his architectural



The Riding House – the north front



The Riding House – the south front

connections. Whilst not a man of the Court, the quality of the work in his Great Chamber, with its possible link with Allen Maynard at Longleat, the two rooms below and on his new staircase, show that he was in touch with the latest fashions and could call on the finest craftsmen in the area.



The Riding House in May 1967 (RCHME)



The Riding House – the east front



Just visible in the centre is the lion mark above the archway on the south front

The Wolfeton Riding House Trust has been formed to protect the building, and at the time of writing (2016) structural repairs are ongoing. Access by appointment for a small charge may be possible. Please visit www.wolfetonridinghouse.org.uk for more information.



Haute école as it was practised in the 17th century.



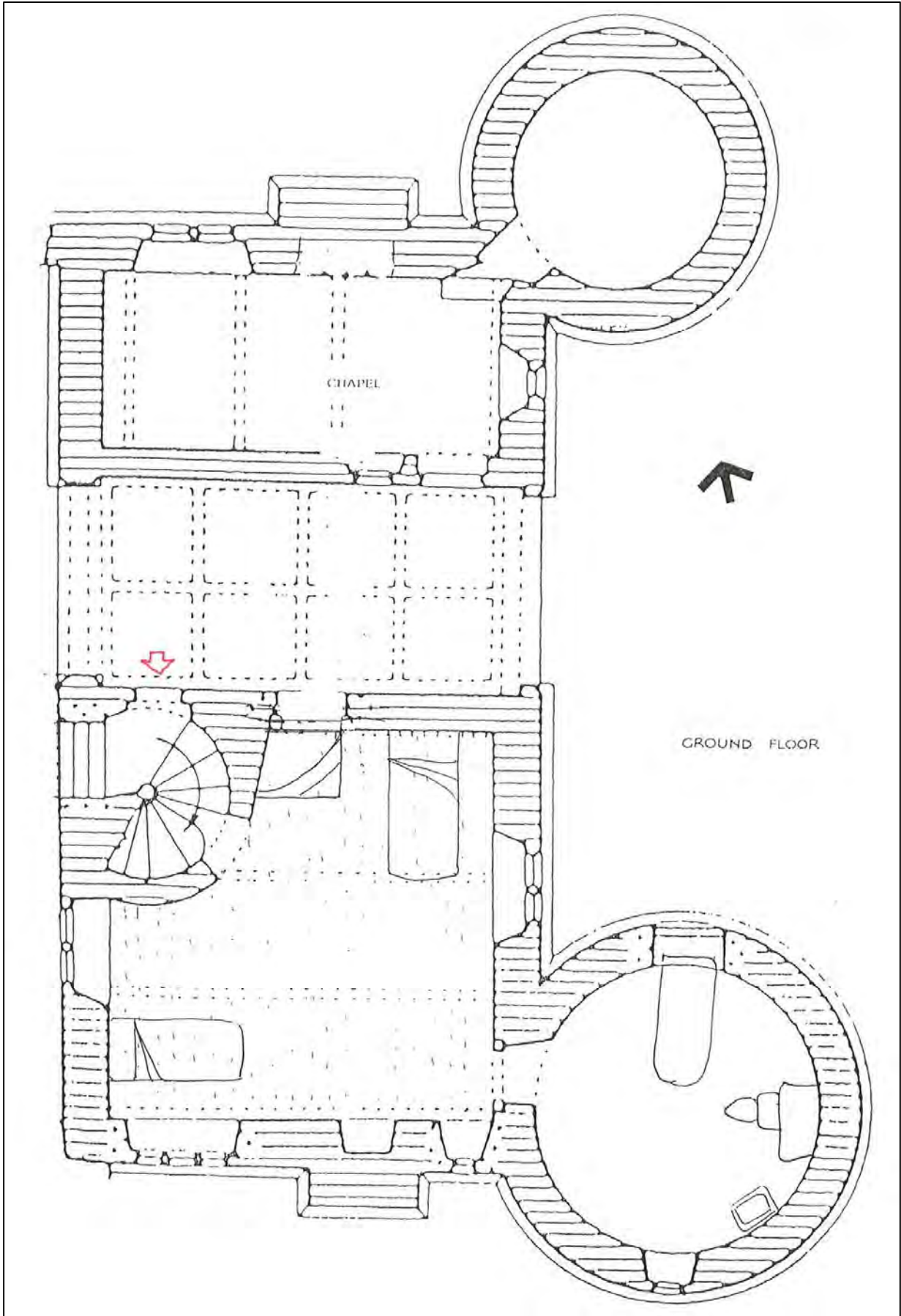
An artist's impression of how the interior may have looked.

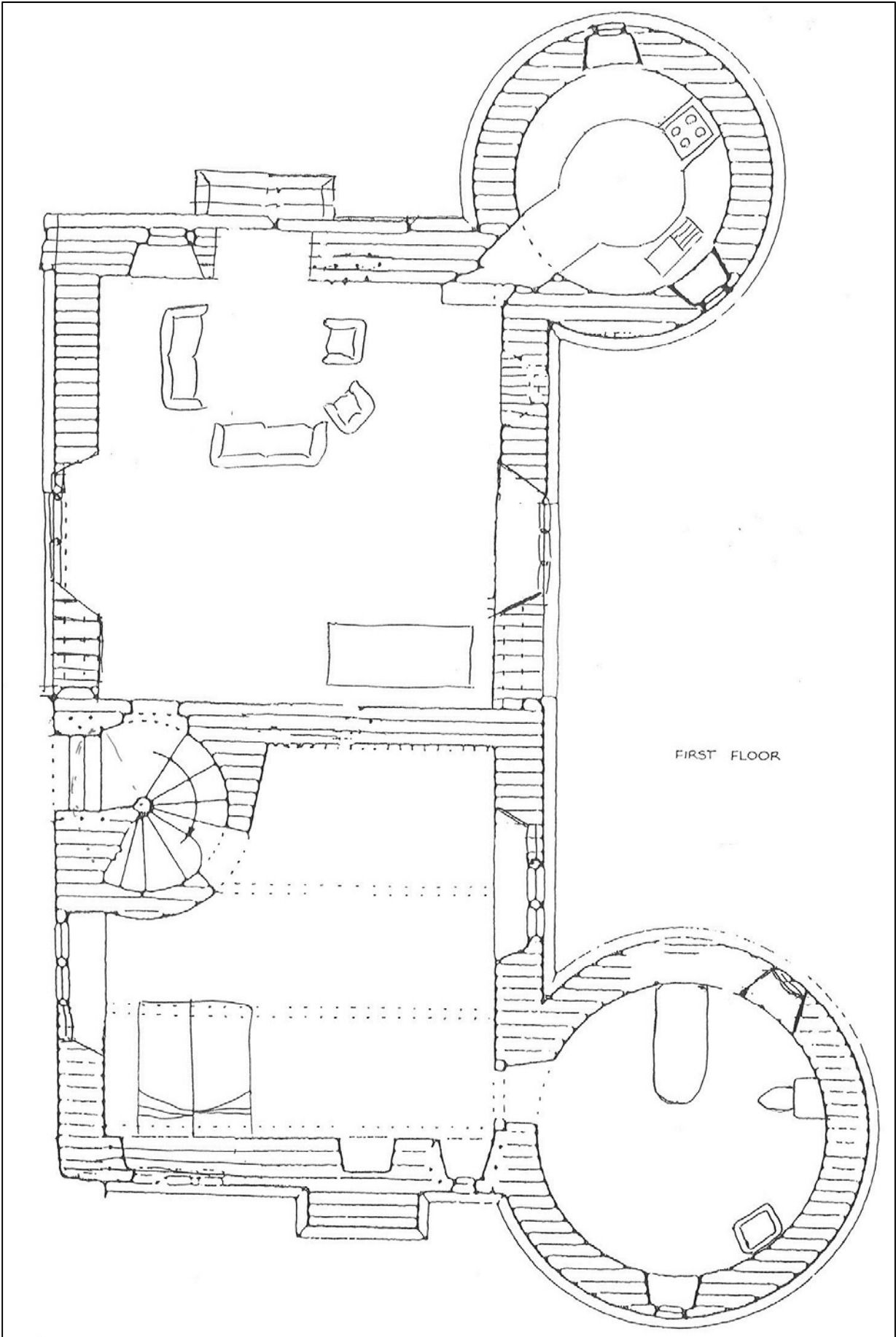


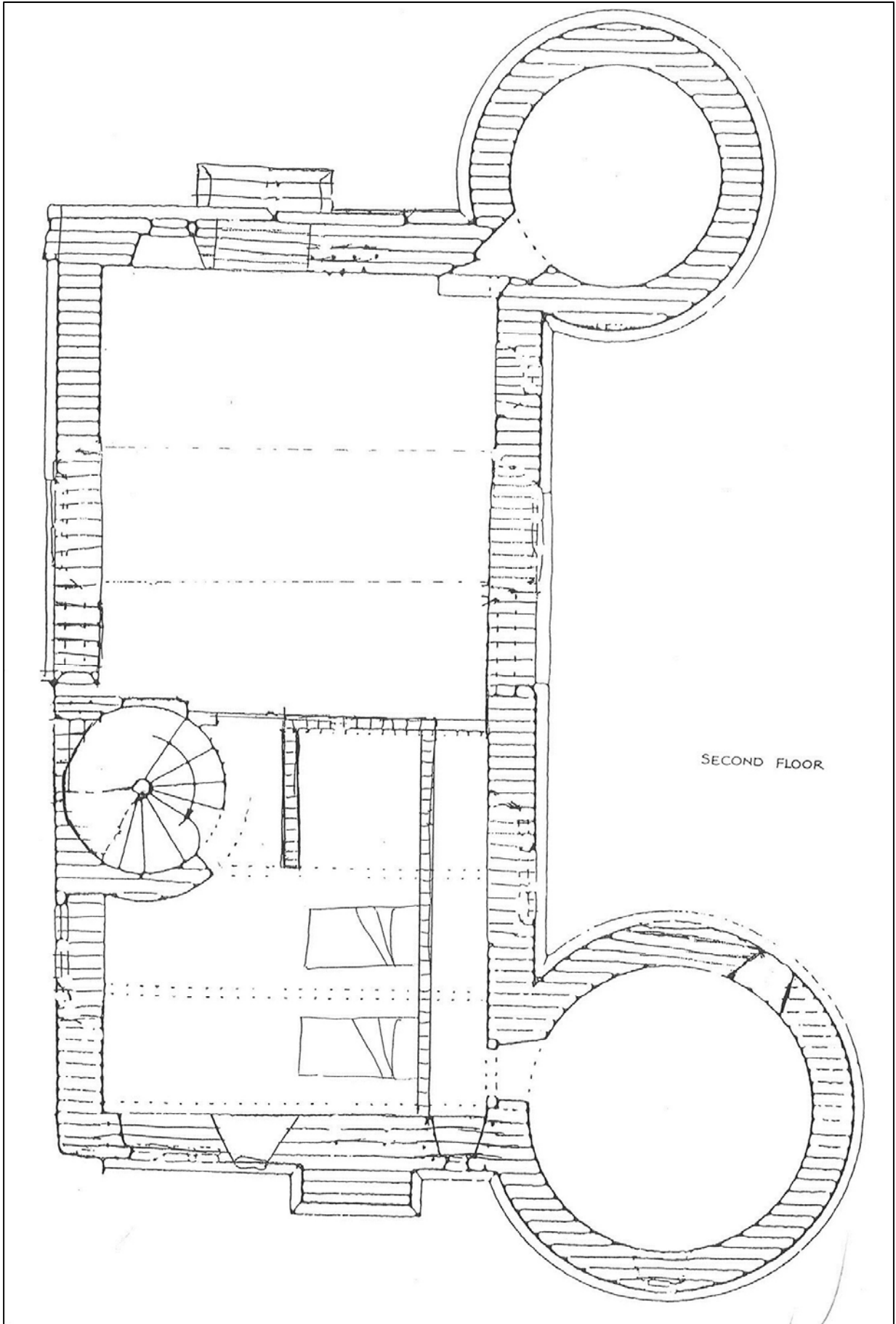
The Riding House, south elevation today.



The interior today.







References to Wolveton and Trenchard in the Diaries and Letters of Edward Gibbon and Dr Richard Pocoke

Gibbon's Journal to January 28th, 1763 with introductory essays by D.M. Low, Chatto & Windus 1929, July, 1760

Our stay at Blandford was very agreeable, the weather fine, the quarters as good both for the officers and men as cheapness plenty and pleasantness could make them; the Battalion coming every day under the care of the Abbot. The Gentlemen of the County shewed us great hospitality particularly Mssrs. Porteman Pledydwell, Bowers, Sturt, Brain, Jennings, Drax and Trenchard, but partly tho'their fault and partly thro;ours that hospitality was often debauch.

The Travels through England of Dr. Richard Pococke, successively Bishop of Meath and of Ossory during 1750, 1751 and later years. Ed. J.J. Cartwright, printed for The Camden Society, 1888. Letters written to his mother.

Lychiet in Dorset, Sepr 15, 1750, (p 89)... I landed three miles west of Pool, at Hutchin's, and passing by South Letchiet ascended to Upper Letchiet, where Mr. Trenchard has mad a plantation of firs and walks on the hill, which command a fine view of the Isle of Wight and of Pool. We descended to Mr. Trenchard's house, having a view of the north of the fine hills on his estate, covered with wood, and of the vale which opens to Charborow, Mr. Draxs improvement.

Axminster in Devon, Sept. 20th, 1750

I writ to you on the 15th from Lytchet, and rid out with Mr. Trenchard's son, the lawyer, that morning to see Mr. Drax's improvements, and through Mr. Trenchard's park, at Charborow, a mile from Mr. Trenchard's. It was the estate of his ladies father, General Erle. The great beauty of it is the prospect and fine walk through a wood, for about half a mile along the top of the hill.

The soil about Mr. Trenchard's is a gravelly sand, and about twelve feet deep is a bed of red sand stone, which is very soft at first digging up, but grows hard with the weather or air.

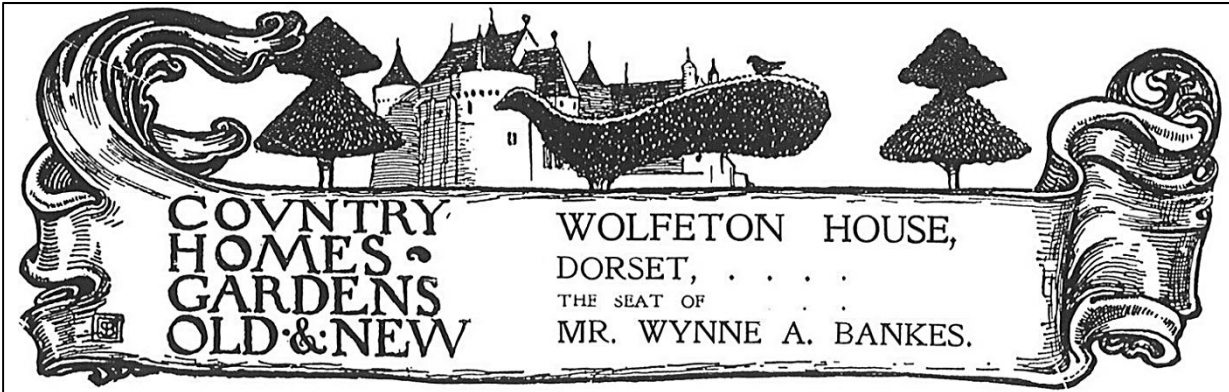
16. (?) I saw in the church of Upper Lichet, call' Lichet Maltravers, a very ancient inscription in old French over the tomb of the Lord Maltravers, who serv'd Edward III against the French.

17. Mr. Trenchard carried me three miles in his coach, and I went a mile farther to Wareham... I visited Mr. Hutchins, the minister (of St. Mary's Wareham the abbey church in the past), who walked with me round the town. He is compiling an History of Dorsetshire. (Later visited Lulworth

Castle 'said to be the design of Inigo Jones, but erroneously, belong to the Welds, Roman Catholics'.)

Travels through England Vol II Ed. JJ Cartwright, 1889

Page 144 Sherborn, October, 1754. ...I came mostly along the valley in which the Cerne runs to Charminster, where in the church some of the Trenchard family buried. The east window is the ancient Saxon arch, which led to the chancel. I went a quarter of a mile further to Wotton in this parish, the seat of Mr. Trenchard, a very ancient house built at different several times. One part next to the garden I handsomely built, with large windows such as were in use in Queen Elizabeth's time and King James I., with fine entablatures and ornaments. They speak of it as Inigo Jones's design, but I rather take it to be of the architect of Somerset House. There are fine chimney pieces and carved door frames and wainscoat in the house all of wood; this screen of the old hall is finely carv'd and the kings of England, small and at full length, are round this wainscoat. There are a great number of arms in painted glass all over the house, some of the family, and many of the abbeyes, nunneries and monasteries in Dorsetshire, which the family collected at the dissolution of them. There is a pile of hewn stones building which is for very grand stables. This house married into the Russel Family of Kingston Russel in the time of Henry VII. In that reign Ferdinand, coming from Germany to take possession of the Kingdom of Castile, was drove into Weymouth. Sr Thomas Trenchard, being the principal gentleman of the country, waited on him and conducted him to his house, and acquainted the king of it, who invited him to London. Sr Thomas Trenchard, not understanding foreign languages, had sent of Mr. Russel, a younger brother of the family he had married into, a very fine gentleman, who had travelled abroad, and understood foreign languages. The king asked Sr Thomas Trenchard if he could serve him, who declining any thing for himself, said is he had an opportunity to recommend Mr. Russel to the king he would be obliged to him; and when he mentioned him to King Henry VII. he said he had taken particular notice of him, and had him in his thoughts to serve him. He took him into his court, made him a peer, and this is the ancestor of the Duke of Bedford; and the elder branch failing, the estate of Kingston how belongs to the Duke.



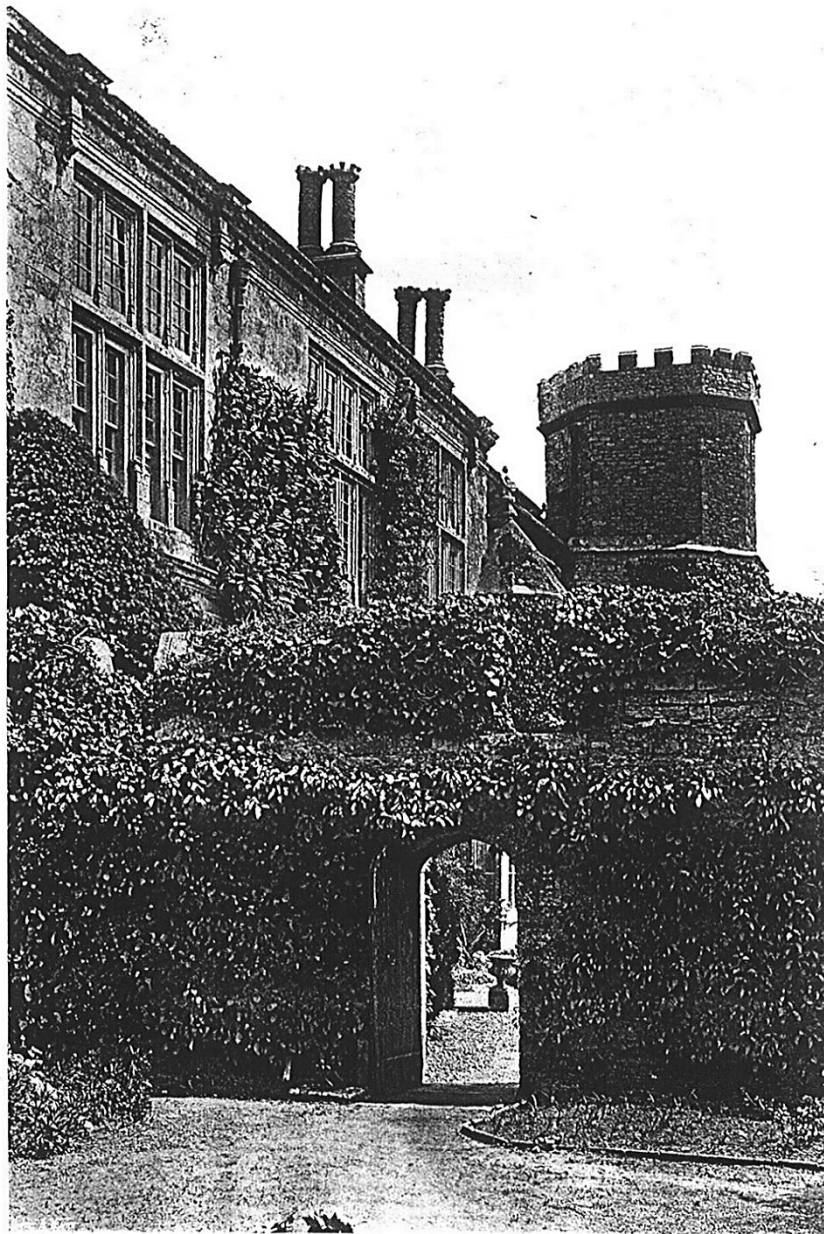
WITHIN something more than a mile of Dorchester town, in the valley of the River Frome, stands one of the most interesting and characteristic houses in the whole county of Dorset. Wolveton House, as the historian of the shire says, makes a grand appearance from

Exeter, one mile south of it, and it retains the features of different ages, and has many historic memories of its own, with a sweet and beautiful garden withal to add to its attractions. Into the ingenious theories which have been hazarded as to the origin of the name of Wolveton, Wolveton, or Wolverton, let us not enter. Enough to know that it was anciently a possession of the Trenchards, who traced their descent from one Paganus of the name in the time of Henry I., and from Elizabeth, daughter of Edward I. They intermarried with many great families of the West, and Sir Thomas Trenchard, who died in 1505, built the house we depict, now the valued possession of Mr. Bankes. Sir Thomas was the grandson of the first Trenchard of Wolveton, and the son of John Trenchard, whose house was partly incorporated in the new structure. A very noble mansion it is, with its principal fronts to the east and south, the north side being sheltered by a grove of trees. The south front is, indeed, entire,

and the east front is a fine example of the enriched style of Henry VII., while on the west are mullioned windows and semi-classic detail of James I.'s time added by Sir George Trenchard. The entrance is on the east, through a fine gatehouse, with ancient round towers of rare picturesqueness, giving admission to a small forecourt, where the richness and beauty of the structure, the

elegance of the many windows and carvings, and the characteristic boldness of the chimneys, impress the beholder. Framed in the mullions and transoms was, within memory, a magnificent array of stained windows (removed, unfortunately, by the last Trenchard of Wolveton), whose storied armorial panes were a veritable history of the mansion, and in many a place bore the motto of Sir Thomas Trenchard—"Nosce teipsum." By good fortune some of the old glass was found at Bath, and restored to its place by the present proprietor.

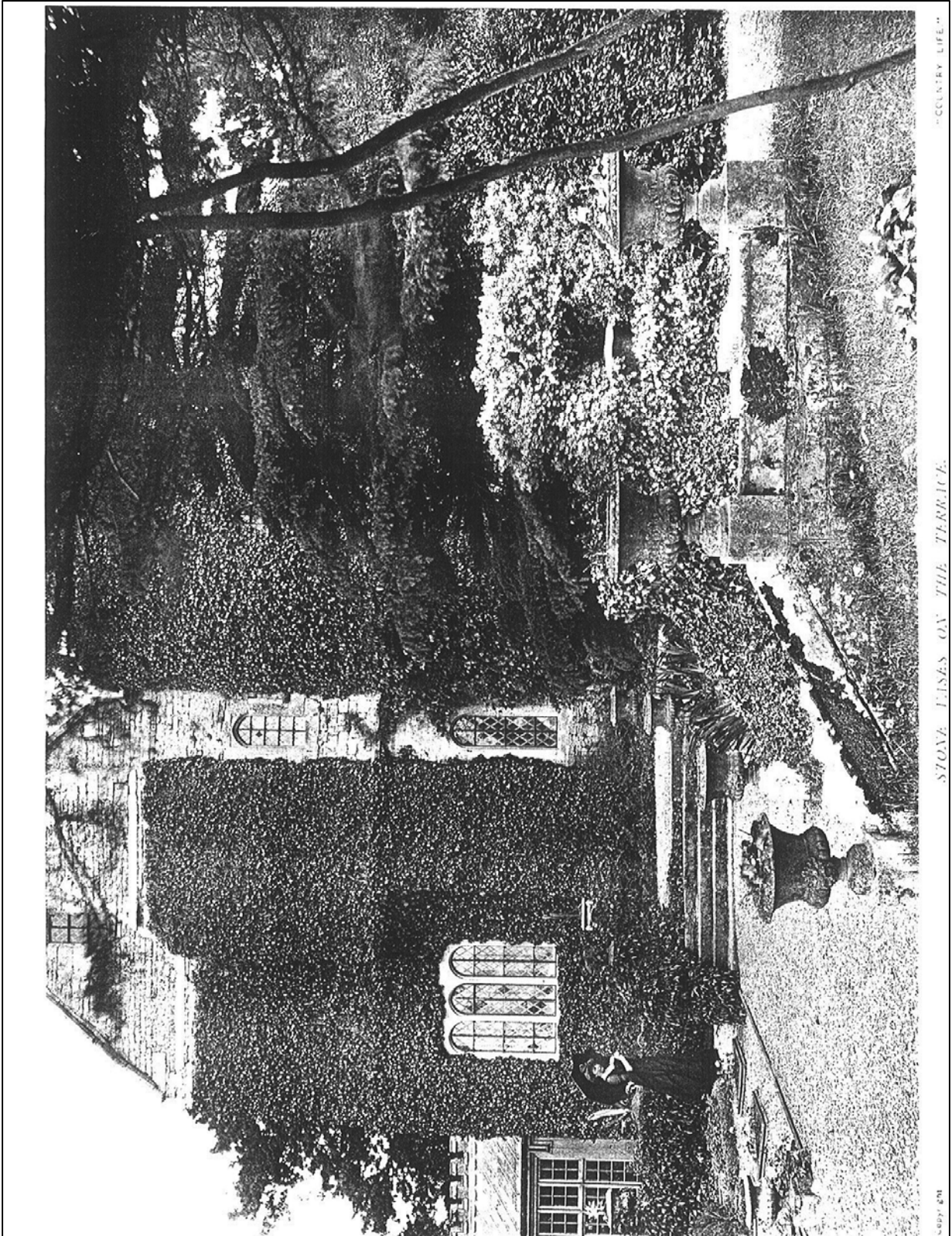
An interesting anecdote is told of Wolveton House in Sir Thomas Trenchard's time, which shows that within its walls the fortunes of the Russells, Dukes of Bedford, began. (Grantley Berkeley's "Anecdotes.") Philip the Handsome, Archduke of Austria, accompanied by his wife Joanna, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, being on his way from the Low Countries to Spain in January, 1502, was driven into Weymouth by



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THE GARDEN DOOR.

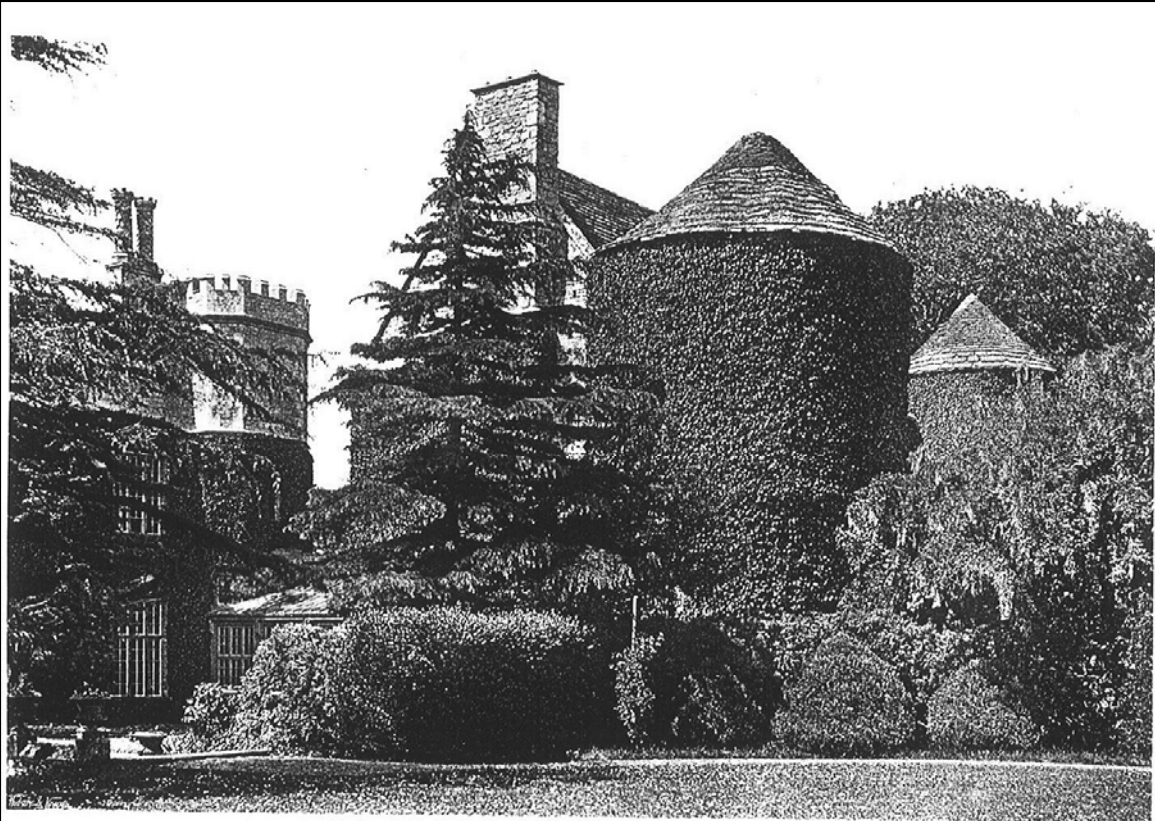
"COUNTRY LIFE."



"COUNTRY LIFE"

STONE FINES ON THE TERRACE

1907-08



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ANCIENT TOWERS.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

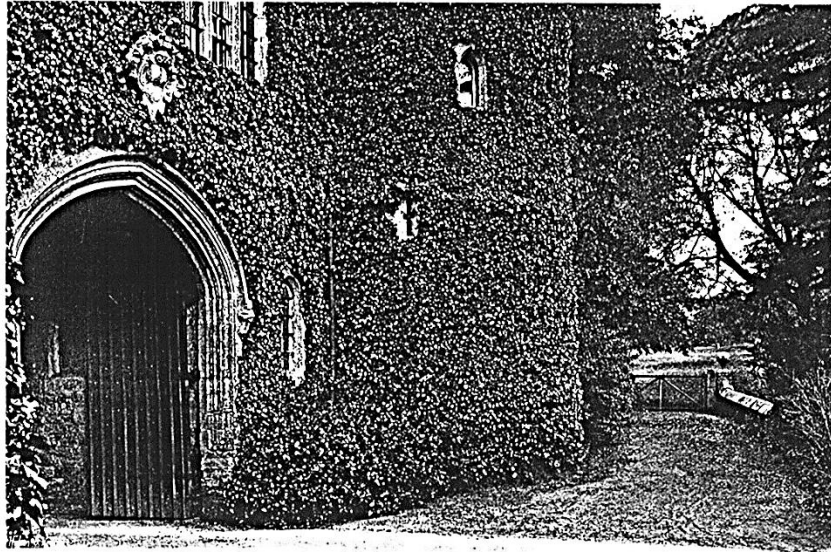


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A SOUTH VIEW.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

...st... of weather, and the royal sc... factors, were hospitably received at Wolveton by Sir Thomas Trenchard. The good knight knew no Spanish and his royal guests no English, but he bethought him of his young kinsman and neighbour John Russell of Kingston Russell, who was recently returned from Spain, and immediately sent for him to act as interpreter. The young man knew how to ingratiate himself with the royal Spaniards, and Philip, being pleased with him, afterwards intro-



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THE CREST IN THE IVY.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

...piece in the same room, and a magnificent doorway, and the ceiling is covered with fine plaster work of early date.

To complete our description of the house, let it be said that the gatehouse, with its flanking towers and its priest's chamber, is probably the earliest part of the structure, and that the hall is rich in carving, and originally had over its mantel-piece fourteen kings of England, the last of them being Charles I. Those who will may believe gossiping old Aubrey's

...duced him to Henry VII. as a man of ability "fit to stand before princes and not before meaner men." Thus did Russell go to Court and rise by his ability, and his family later on grew fat with monastic spoils. Philip was not unmindful of the courteous hospitality of Sir Thomas Trenchard, and on his departure presented to him two bowls of blue and white Oriental porcelain, which are still preserved, we believe, at Bloxworth House, near Wareham. One of the bowls is in an original Italian silver-gilt setting, curiously hinged. The grateful Spaniard is also believed to have sent to his host the magnificent carved chimney-piece in the great drawing-room, which we illustrate. It rises to the height of the wall, and is enframed in a carved entablature supported by lofty Corinthian pillars, within which are two sunken panels, with figures emblematic of Hope and Justice, while below are sculptured rural and hunting scenes, emblems of trades, satyrs, heads, etc. There is a second carved mantel-

...story that, on November 3rd, 1649, the day when the Long Parliament began to sit, the sceptre fell from the carved hand of Charles, to the amazement and alarm of a large company assembled at dinner. Those who love the mysterious legends of our old houses may also like to be told another story of gruesome character, which some lover of the wonderful long ago told of the same hall at Wolveton House. A certain judge of assize, being at Dorchester, was invited out to Wolveton to meet a goodly company of the neighbourhood, but no sooner were the guests at table than the judge arose, called his carriage, and abruptly left the house. As he rode with his marshal along the dark lane to Dorchester he told the latter that as he sat at table he had seen behind Lady Trenchard a ghost or wrath of herself standing, with the throat of the spectre cut, and its head under its arm, and, as if to confirm the portent, they heard a galloping behind them, and a messenger arrived to



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FROM THE SOUTH LAWN.

"COUNTRY LIFE."



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THE OLD GATEHOUSE.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

say that her ladyship had in very fact committed suicide since they left.

The Trenchards, as may have been inferred from Aubrey's story, were adherents of the Parliament in the Civil Wars, and Sir Thomas Trenchard played an active part in the county as a commander on that side. He had been knighted by James I. at Theobalds in December, 1613, and he died in 1657. His son was also an ardent supporter of the cause, and his grandson, Sir John Trenchard, who lived until 1695, was a very prominent politician and bitter partisan, of whom Wood says that he was ready to promote "Oates his plot, busie against papists, the prerogative, and all that way." He attempted to dispute the title of the Duke of York to the throne, on the plea that the crown was held by statute law, was somewhat concerned with the Rye House Plot, was in danger in the time of Monmouth's rebellion, but fled with discretion, and later on showed great zeal against the Jacobites.

John Trenchard's eldest son, George Trenchard, married his cousin Mary, the heiress of Wolveton, and did much to beautify the place, adding many of the later features. In that family the house remained until the beginning of the last century, when it was

purchased by Mr. James Henning, passing later on to the hands of Mr. Bankes. But the devices and arms of the Trenchards still remain in the house they so long inhabited, and the splendid tower of the neighbouring church of Charminster has the rebus of Sir Thomas Trenchard, who added it, about the year 1590, to the massive Norman structure, wherein the mutilated monuments of his family are.

For the special charms of Wolveton House our pictures are warrant enough. They also reveal how lovely are the surroundings of that ancient abode. Ivy clothes those splendid flanking towers of the gateway, as it fondly vesting their venerable age, and it will be divined how superb are the colour contrasts between the cool stonework and the dark hue of the clinging green.

Those who care for the place are judicious in curbing the vigorous luxuriance of the old growth, which otherwise would conceal structural and decorative features, and perhaps do damage by its close embrace. Ivy is also upon the house itself, and upon the splendid old barn, but nowhere to the detriment of the architecture, and often in friendly neighbourhood to other evergreen climbers which have good rootage there. The level expanse of lawn on



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THE FORECOURT

"COUNTRY LIFE."

the south side is the frontage to an exquisite picture, and the grouping with the green surroundings is most delightful. On the north side was a little cloister leading to what was the chapel, but it was pulled down some time since. Yet the old chapel garden is there to delight, and is the fairest retreat we could wish for an evening in summer. Or we may linger, if we will, on the low terrace by the house, where rhododendrons are in glorious masses, with aromatic azaleas, and a multitude of sweet and beautiful blossoms. The feathery foliage overhead gives shade enough, but the skillful gardener has apportioned all things well, not jeopardising his flowers for the sake of his trees, nor stinting the masses of green, which give character and harmony to the whole. The pleasure grounds cover about fourteen acres, and constitute a realm of beauty, where man and Nature may commune in one of the fairest spots in beautiful

Dorsetshire. It is a county made famous by the novels of Thomas Hardy, many of whose Wessex scenes are found hereabout. There is variety in it, and a subtle charm wherever we go. Traverse it from north to south and you will admire its contrasts and variety. From the land of rich meadows and farms embowered amid gardens and woods, where many productive dairies are, you reach the chalk hills and downs which lie between that radiant country and the sea, and when, from ancient Dorchester, you have climbed the heights, what a prospect is there, for before you lie the broad expanse of Weymouth Bay, the lofty bulk of Portland Bill, and the wide western sea. It is in a hollow in the hills traversed by the River Frome that Wolveton stands, and certainly in itself and its surroundings it is one of the most charming among the many charming houses of the West Country.

THINGS ABOUT OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD.

"I THINK," said the Countess, who had ridden over, "that you manage wonderfully. The proof is that you get *nothing* done. Now I don't."

"I have been disappointed if not my house-keeping; it is still a sufficiently new study with me, and I had been afraid my Continental ideas would not work out well in an English household; but they have."

"But then, this is such a small place," I replied, comfortingly. "Of course it is much easier. We have actually only room for six people at a time, whereas you—"

"Exactly. I have room for about twenty; but as we are too poor to have twenty, or too lazy to want twenty, I am no better off." She smacked her habit once or twice, and looked

troubled. I am always sorry for the Countess. "The only things that ever get done with us are the things that had better be left undone," she went on. "I came round by the Brickfield Coverts. Somehow I had forgotten the wood-gate key, and a man had actually been round and mended the little gap I always use when I have Roger. Roger, as you know, has only three legs, and can't jump a beehive; but he knew that gap, and liked to think he was fencing, poor old dear. As it was, I had to try back and come all the way round by the marl-pits and down Cleastor Old Lane. It took another half-hour. All that time I was thinking about Ryman."

"You are not really thinking of parting with her?" Mrs. Ryman is the housekeeper at the Court.

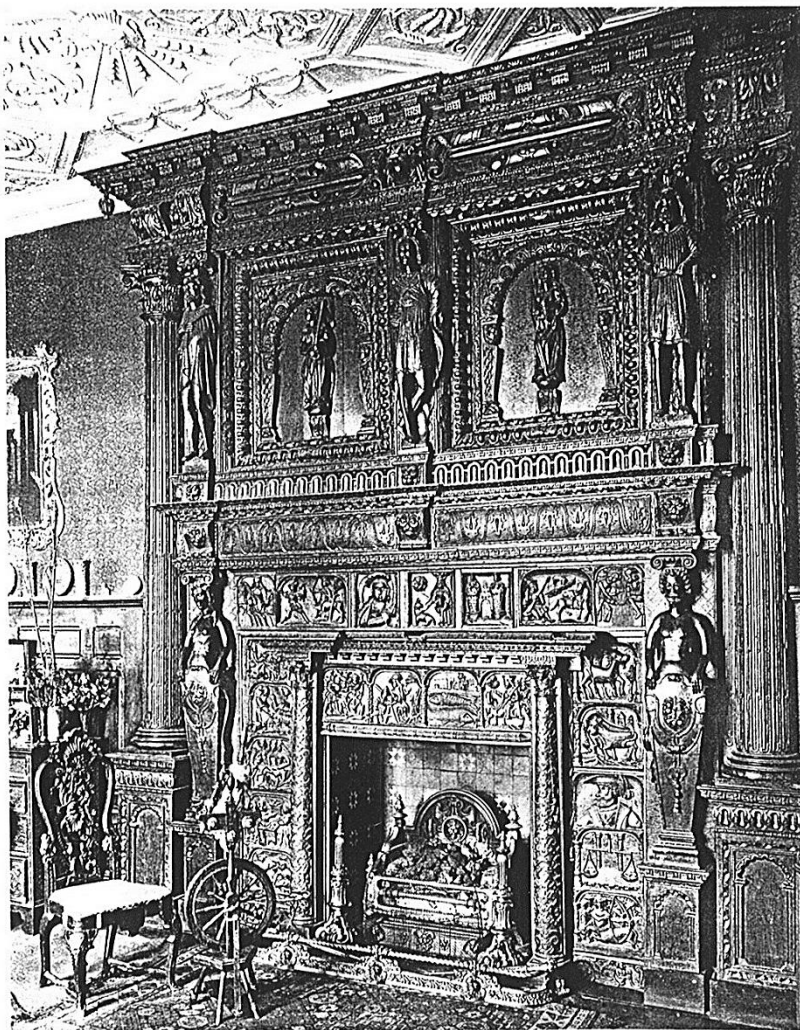
"I am *always* thinking about parting with her," said the Countess, despondently. "Sometimes I wake up to find there had been nothing else in my mind for about ten days except Ryman and parting with her."

I couldn't help smiling, though, after all, it is not kind to smile at people's difficulties; the Countess's old servants are her leading difficulty. Esmeralda has no sympathy in the matter; she thinks that if people want very much to do a thing they do it, but I know that that isn't true of all temperaments. Esmeralda further says the Countess's *laissez aller* is either affectation, or it is preposterous. She can't understand the predicament of a woman who sits and longs for the moment at which the butler will come and say he has decided to take a public-house—so that she can have a new butler; or the head-gardener remark that thirty years of it is a round term, and he thinks of retiring to look after his property in the town—so that she can have a new head-gardener; and so on. I can. I can sympathise, too. If you are born tired and easy-going and lazy—or if somehow people round you have agreed to think you are these things—it is very difficult indeed to brace up and dismiss a lot of people who have always been round you, and who, quite unconsciously, are making your life a burden.

I shall never forget our poor neighbour's almost girlish excitement last August, when her maid Paston, who had of course started a bicycle, broke her leg in two places, poor soul, and could be honourably retired to the care of a sister who was a milliner at Bath. It was positively touching.

"My dear child," she said to me, with a sudden grip of both hands on my arm, "you simply won't know my hair!" And it has been much looser over her ears and much less heavily netted down as to her fringe ever since the new woman came.

She even discussed in a whisper whether Mrs. Ryman could be induced to take to bicycling, and then hushed herself into silence like a naughty child.



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WOLFETON: THE SPANISH CHIMNEY-PIECE.

"C.L."

Things were better with them this summer, for they let the place for three months, and it was delightfully clean and tidy for them when they got back. The tenants had brought an excellent staff, and everything was in beautiful order.

"But then I hate having to go away all the summer just in order to have my own house made as I like it. No, the more I think of it the more I see that I am sacrificing the best years of my life to Ryman; she simply must go."

"Why not tell her so?" enquired Esmeralda, who was in the room that day when the Countess came in, and had remained.

"H'm?" was the only reply, with a vague eye. "Tell her to go?—I don't for a moment think she would go! And then Wynne says" (Wynne is her equally lazy, good-natured husband) "that one *must* consider her past services. Having been his nurse and his mother's maid before that, and having kept his poor epileptic brother alive *much* longer than he *need* have been kept alive—which meant keeping Wynne out of the place for years, don't you know—one can't do anything harsh."

"But a pension?"

"Yes, of course; but she doesn't want a pension. She wants to stay and manage the house all wrong for another fifteen years. Sometimes we have wondered if it would not be better *not* to let the Charles Street house, and put her in there and just keep it open and go up for a very few weeks in the Season—all the time that Wynne can be induced to leave the Court for; but against that you have to set the fact of the really delightful breathing spell we have at Cummins's Hotel in Dover Street,

it fell through somehow. Paston hinted that they were disappointed about each other's savings. Ryman had been putting into a Building Society recommended by her nephew, and had lost quite a lot of money, and then it came out that Turner's property in the town was not going to be wanted by the Railway Company, for their new goods station extension, which would have meant a round sum; and they quarrelled, I believe, quite fatally!"

I think I broke down and roared with laughter; her dolour was so comic.

"It is all very well for you, Ermyngarde, who have none of these restrictions to cope with. If *you* want to get rid of all your copper cooking things and have nice French pots, you can do it; there is no Ryman to work upon your cook and incite her to violence. If you want to abolish that ridiculous survival of a linen-maid who sits and darns things that one doesn't want darned—your hands are free. Why, pray, should I have to keep a woman, at five-and-twenty pounds of wages and forty pounds of 'keep' to darn house linen, when I could replace the wear and tear every year for a twenty-pound note and spend the forty-five saved on something really useful? Such a ridiculous fad of English life, that linen-maid—so unreasonable and stupid; but one can do nothing, absolutely nothing, that one wants to do! I heard of a most excellent *chef* who wanted—who actually wanted to live in the country; but I knew it was no use beginning with the man—he would never have stood Ryman."

"Why can't you tell her that you want to see her in a home of her own, and offer to furnish it for her—and then with the pension—"

"That is *not* practical, my dear. I did once begin to say something about a milder climate—it was two years ago when she was threatened with dropsy and had to have a wheel-chair to go down the corridors. . . . Not the least use. She threw the epileptic brother at me, as I knew she would, and of course I did the only thing possible and let it all go."

"Well, then, what about subsidising Turner? Couldn't you do that? Couldn't you—"

"Buy her a boarding-house at Bournemouth," broke in Esmeralda, "or a Nursing Home; that was what Aunt Pleydell did with one of her people—you remember, Ermyngarde? I forget which it was, but I know she bought her one or other, and it only meant about a thousand down, which she thought exceedingly reasonable, considering."

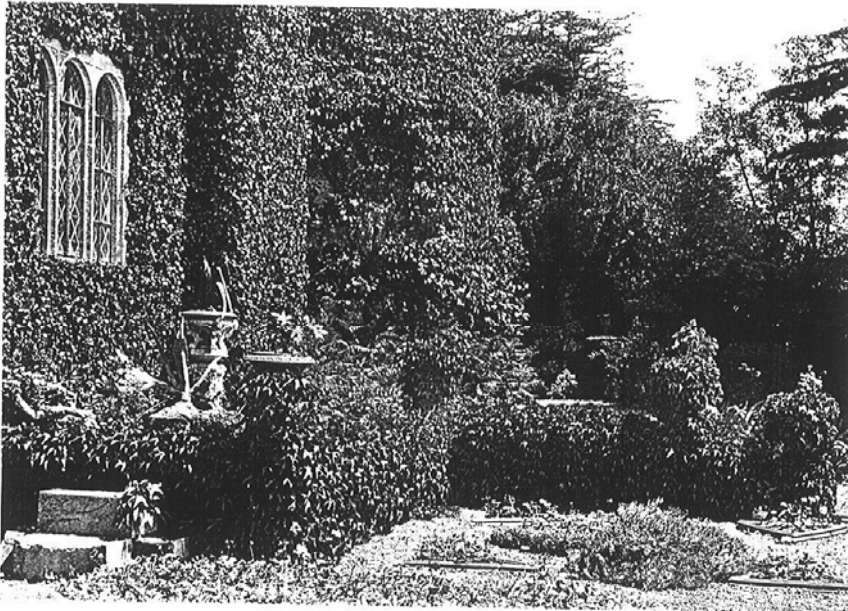
"Some kind of a reform is wanted in connection with this subject," the Countess said, with the sudden air of a responsible

legislator. "One ought not to have to be heartless, or to be considered heartless, about it; one ought not to submit to a system which has such coils and toils. As it is, there is nothing but to wait for somebody to die in cases like these. All over England there are miserable people like myself and Wynne keeping up establishments for persons like Turner, and Ryman, and Blunt (Blunt is the butler major-domo person who is also a thorn, though not quite so sharp a one). Something is fundamentally wrong about it. But, as I say, nothing but death relieves it. Somebody has to die, and as we are the most worried (for, after all, *they* are perfectly happy!) it will no doubt be us."

After which lugubrious pronouncement she called for her horse, and rode sadly home.

A PLOUGHING MATCH.

PLOUGHING is perhaps the most picturesque work on the land that we have left. There is something so full of the earth, so touched with the poetry of the soil, in the patient bend of the horses, in the stride of the ploughman after the plough, in the gleam of the up-turned furrow. On the street of the town the ploughman is no graceful figure, but in the fields, guiding the plough with his two hands and calling his "heck, heck" to the horses, he seems at one with the earth and the grey sky, with the seagull and crow that hover over him; and no Greek youth throwing the disc, or gladiator in his poised proportionate grace, has more of that inner beauty of things that is touched with the vague *Weltschmerz* than has the ploughman guiding his plough. Not for the grace



Copyright THE CHAPEL GARDEN AT WOLFETON HOUSE. "COUNTRY LIFE."

where they know us so well and where I like the rooms, and it is such a rest to be, with only the three servants."

The Countess flushes with a sort of rapture as she recalls this almost Bohemian experience of her Mays and Junes, and I can quite appreciate the fun she gets out of it.

"You know we had the most tremendous excitement the Christmas before last because it came to me through Paston that Turner had actually screwed up his courage to ask Ryman to marry him." (Turner is head-gardener at the Court.) "She must be sixty at least, and he is only a year or two younger. They have despised each other cordially for years, but it seemed possible that that was their method of cloaking a really solid regard. Then, you see, they would *both* have gone, and it would have meant a new era for us—almost like inheriting over again. I can't tell you how eager we were. Wynne hung about in the chrysanthemum house, throwing a word or two to Turner now and then, and trying to give him an opening to say something. I almost made up my mind to lead up to an avowal from Ryman. The world seemed full of possibilities for both of us, and we used to sit up in the billiard-room at night planning out things. Wynne said, after the marriage it would be better to shut up the Court for at least two months, and pretend it was going to be six, so as to have an excuse to get rid of everybody almost, and we could just have kept the few we like (who are, I suppose, the ones we don't know much) on board wages in the usual way, or given them holidays or something . . . but of course it was too good to be true;

WOLFETON HOUSE, DORSET—I

THE HOME OF COUNTESS
ZAMOYSKA

By ARTHUR OSWALD

The gatehouse and the south range are the surviving portions of the old seat of the Trenchards, formerly a courtyard building, which was among the finest Tudor houses in Dorset. The gatehouse, dated 1534, was built by Sir Thomas Trenchard, who was also responsible for the east end of the south range.

"AN ivied manor house, flanked by battlemented towers and more than usually distinguished by the size of its many mullioned windows" is Thomas Hardy's description of Wolfeton in *A Group of Noble Dames*. In recent years the ivy has been cleared away, to the manifest advantage of the stonework, and the great mullioned windows, which more faithfully than the battlemented towers declare the former glory of the place, now have to relieve them a fine magnolia and some discreet climbers that appreciate a south wall. This front of silvery stone, over which the sunlight seems to play so lightly, is an evocative survival of Tudor Dorset and its great families, among which few stood higher than the Trenchards of Wolfeton. Hardy, with one of those slight mutations which amused him, made them "the Drenghards or Drenkhards . . . whose name, according to the local chronicles, was interpreted to mean *Strenuus Miles vel Potator*, though certain members of the family were averse to the latter signification, and a duel was fought by one of them on that account."

Wolfeton is not much more than a mile north-west of Dorchester, standing on the right-hand side of the road to Cerne Abbas and Sherborne and close to the point where the Maiden Newton road forks left to continue up the Frome Valley. The village of Charminster lies a little to the north. Between



1.—THE GATEHOUSE, WITH ITS TWO DRUM TOWERS, FROM THE EAST

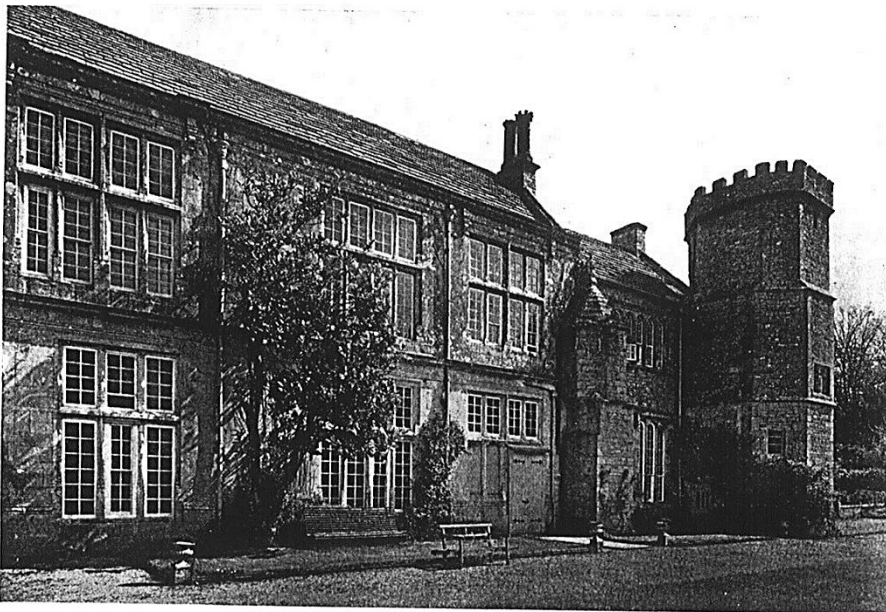
the house and the high road comes the Cerne on its way to join the Frome, and at this point, where the tributary meets the parent river, the valley widens and for some distance they flow in two channels through the green water meadows to Dorchester and beyond. No doubt, use was once made of the water to protect Wolfeton with a moat. The name (Wulf's settlement) denotes a Saxon origin, but if the manor was originally independent it came to be regarded as subordinate to the prebend of Charminster, that "golden prebend" of the dean and chapter of Salisbury, as it was commonly called. In 1495, when inquisition was made on the death of Sir John Trenchard, it was found that he held Wolfeton of the prebendary of Charminster by rent of a red rose at midsummer and suit of court twice a year.

It was through Sir John Trenchard's

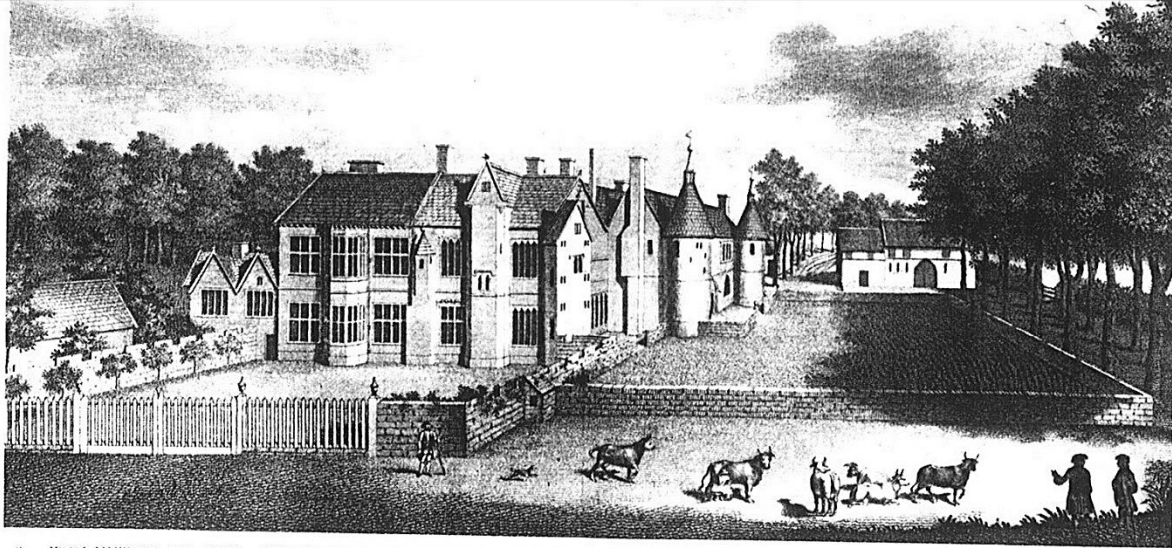
mother, Christian, that Wolfeton came to him. In the 14th century it had belonged to the Jurdains. John Jurdain added to his patrimony by marrying one of the co-heiresses of Walter Chantmarle of Chantmarle (died 1422), but left no son, and his daughter brought the manor to her husband John Mohun, whose daughter and heir, Christian, married Henry Trenchard of Hordle, near Lymington. John Mohun outlived his son-in-law and died in 1480. His family is commemorated in the name of Hammoon, near Sturminster Newton, where there is a little manor house with a thatched roof of much charm. The Trenchards had for long held lands in Hampshire on both sides of the Solent. Besides their manor at Hordle, they possessed an estate at Shalfleet, in the Isle of Wight, which their ancestor, Payne Trenchard, held as early as Henry I's reign.

John Trenchard, following his mother's inheritance, settled in Dorset, and in 1483, in the general act of attainder passed by Richard III, was described as "late of Charminster." As a Lancastrian he was restored to his estates by Henry VII. His will shows that they were extensive and were not confined to Dorset and Hampshire but also extended into Wiltshire and Devon. It also shows that he went in for sheep farming on a large scale.

His son and successor, Thomas, who was a boy of sixteen when his father died, lived until 1550, and for half a century was one of the great men of Dorset. Knighted by Henry VII, he was Sheriff of the county at least twice, and for many years a Commissioner of the Peace. The most famous event associated with Wolfeton took place in his time. In January, 1506, the Archduke Philip of Austria and his wife, the mad Joanna, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Castile, were caught in a storm in the Channel when on their way from the Netherlands to claim



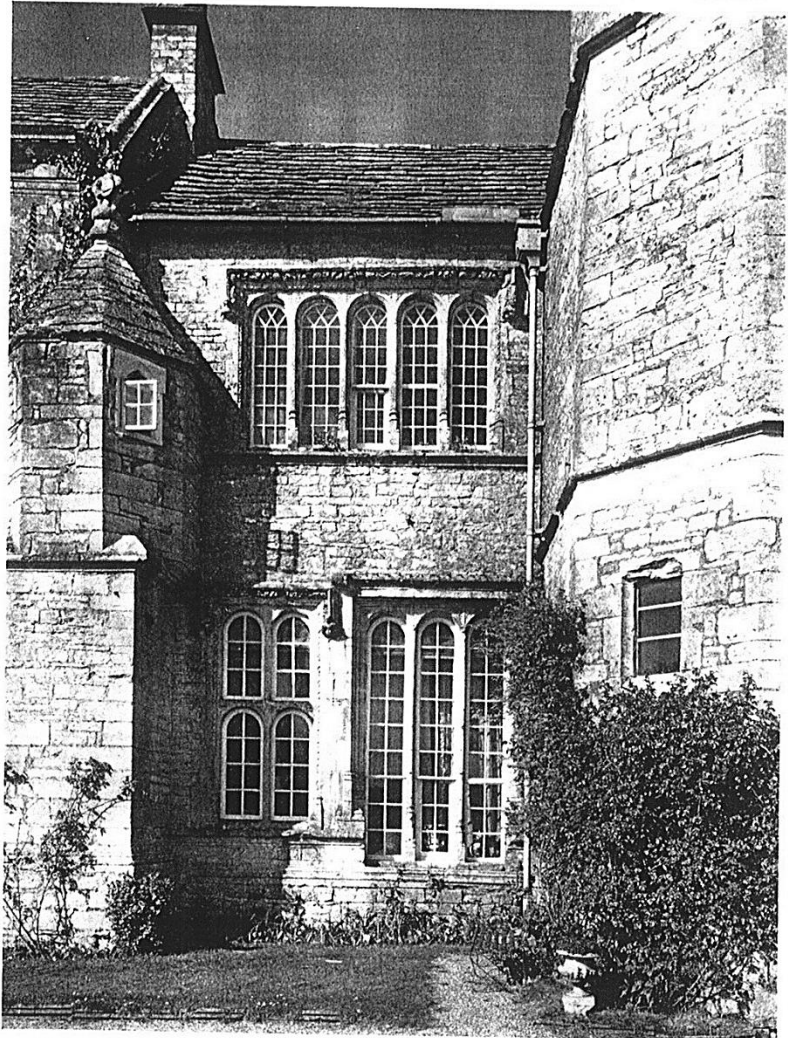
2.—THE SOUTH FRONT, SHOWING SIR GEORGE TRENCHARD'S BUILDING (circa 1600) ON THE LEFT WITH ITS GREAT MULLIONED WINDOWS



3. WOLFETON IN 1774. FROM THE ENGRAVING IN THE FIRST EDITION OF HUTCHINS'S HISTORY OF DORSET

the throne of Castile in consequence of Isabella's death. Their ship and two others managed to put in at Portland after nearly being wrecked. There they were met by Sir Thomas Trenchard, who took the royal pair to his house, near Dorchester, where they were entertained until instructions arrived from the King. This was the occasion when, so the story goes, Sir Thomas sent for young John Russell of Berwick, near Bridport, who had travelled abroad, to help him out with the language difficulty. Russell made himself so useful that when Philip and Joanna were invited to Windsor he went with them and, attracting the favourable notice of the King, was soon afterwards made a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber. Thus were laid the foundations not only of his own successful career, but of all the subsequent fortunes of the ducal house of Bedford.

Henry VII had actually helped to finance the expedition of Philip and Joanna. Nevertheless, their appearance caused a considerable commotion, as one can tell from entries in the Household Accounts (*The King's Book of Payments*, 1505-1509.) In the week of January 22 the expenses which the unexpected visit entailed began with a payment of 10s. "to a man that brought the King Worde of the Landing of straungers in ye West Contre." One who "brought the King tydings from Waymouth" received 5s. in reward and 6s. 8d. was paid "to one Bewell," yeoman of the Crown, for bringing of letters from the abbots of Milton and Cerne and from "other knights & gentelmen in Dorsetshire," including (no doubt) Sir Thomas Trenchard. To keep the King fully informed "posts" were set at intervals on the route between Southampton and London. It is as King and Queen of Castile that the refugees figure in the accounts and it is clear that they were treated right royally. The clerk and yeoman of the palfreys were dispatched with 26 horses and hackneys for the "conveyance" of the Queen. Meanwhile, William Kingston had been sent to Philip with "mewles & hobeis." The procession came by way of Alton and Farnham. After arrival at Windsor "the King of Castell" was installed a Knight of the Garter. The visit of the royal strangers lasted about two months. They were conveyed down to Falmouth, where



4.—ENRICHED EARLY TUDOR WINDOWS AND A GARDEROBE TURRET ON THE SOUTH FRONT

they embarked in ships of their re-united fleet.

There used to be preserved at Wolveton two portrait medallions of Philip and Joanna and a bowl of Chinese porcelain, possibly the earliest to have reached England, which by old tradition were presents made to Sir Thomas Trenchard by his royal guests. These have passed as heirlooms to the Lane family of Poxwell and Bloxworth, the present representatives of the Dorset Trenchards. On his death in 1550 Sir Thomas was succeeded by his grandson, also a Thomas, who, however, survived him by only seven years and left as his heir a boy who had an even longer reign than that of his great-grandfather. This Sir George Trenchard, as he became, was Governor of Sandisfoot Castle. At the time of the threat of the Armada a Spanish ship called the *San Salvador* was brought into Portland and George Trenchard (not yet a knight) was one of the two commissioners ordered to make an inventory of her ordnance and stores. Like Sir Thomas before him, he had the honour and expense of entertaining foreign royalty when, in 1580, the Prince of Condé landed at Weymouth. He lived until 1630, surviving his eldest son.

Sir Thomas and his great-grandson, Sir George, were between them responsible for the ancient parts of the house that remain, with the exception, perhaps, of the two round towers of the gatehouse (Fig. 1). An engraving reproduced by Hutchins, the county historian,

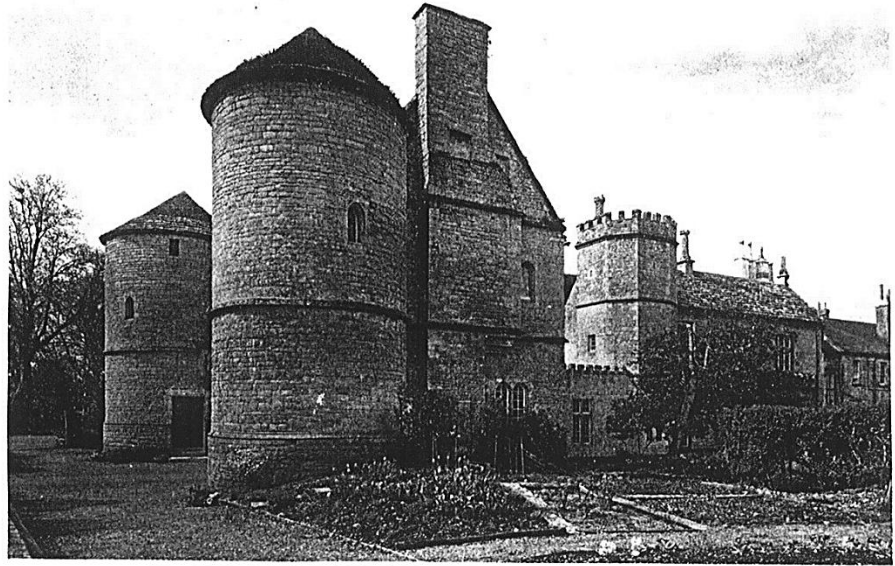
shows the appearance of the house in 1774 as viewed from the south-east (Fig. 3); and in the later editions of the *History* there is an account of the interior with a description of the heraldic glass in the various rooms before its removal. In 1798 the glass was taken to the Trenchards' house at Lytchett Matravers, but it was so badly packed that most of it got smashed. At that time much of the back part of the house was demolished, and in 1822 the south range was curtailed by the removal of the eastern portion containing the hall. The Trenchards had by then sold Wolveton to James Henning, from whom the house with the demesne was purchased in 1862 by Mr. W. H. P. Weston. He proceeded to restore it.

Drawings in the British Museum made by Buckler in 1828 (Add. MSS. 36,361, f. 197-199; 36,439, f. 287) show Wolveton at the nadir of its fortunes. The demolition of the hall had left the east end of the house in a rough, unfinished state and the projecting staircase tower was without the gable which is shown in the engraving, having been cut down to the string course at the level of the caves. Mr. Weston, who had romantic Victorian ideas, raised this tower and gave it its present battlemented top, built the matching tower at the north-east corner (Fig. 6), added an entrance porch in Tudor style on the north side and ran out the screen

wall (right of Fig. 6) connecting the main building to the gatehouse.

The two round towers on the east side of the gatehouse are structurally independent of it. Their upper portions have been dove-cotes and were probably still so used in 1774, for the engraving shows that they then had taller conical roofs with louvres surmounted by weathervanes. There are several indications suggesting that they may antedate the gatehouse building, which is entirely of early Tudor work. Their base moulding is of earlier and simpler section; the string-course of the gatehouse range at its north and south ends does not align with that of the towers, though it has been made to do so on the east front (Fig. 9); the south tower is larger than the north one; and there are cross-slits for bowmen commanding the entrance. It is difficult to believe that such antiquated features would have been introduced in the 16th century, or that round towers, by then obsolete in England, would have been built at all, except, possibly, by way of antiquarianism and self-conscious feudal display. The anomaly might be explained by the incorporation of the lower portions of earlier and perhaps unfinished towers in the Tudor gatehouse.

The gatehouse itself is dated to the year 1534 (not 1528, as given in Hutchins) by an inscription in a recessed panel high up in the north wall (Fig. 5), which, with contractions expanded, reads: "*Hoc opus constructum est anno domini MDXXXIII.*" In the 18th century this inscription is said to have been on a building called the store room "south of the southern round tower." The label over the western arch (Fig. 6) is ornamented left and right, and above the apex, with shields, each held by a cherub bearing Sir Thomas's initial both singly and joined by a love-knot to an E for his first wife, Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Strangways. The T on the left-hand shield is an exaggerated Gothic capital that also occurs several times on the tower of Charminster Church which Sir Thomas built. On the outer arch the label ends in the hairy figure of a woodhouse (left) and a man with a musical instrument (right). The 17th-century shield carved with the quartered arms of Trenchard seems to have come from over the



5.—THE GATEHOUSE FROM THE NORTH-EAST AND THE NORTH SIDE OF THE HOUSE. There is an inscription with the date 1534 on the chimney-breast



6.—THE WEST SIDE OF THE GATEHOUSE. THE TOWER AND LINKING WALL WERE BUILT IN THE 1860s

It is not shown above the gatehouse arch in Buckler's drawing. The Tudor windows are notable for the way in which the little spandrels of each arched light are carved with foliage. On the south side of the entrance way there is a spiral stair with steps of solid oak, each cut in a single piece so that their rounded ends take the place of a newel (Fig. 7). There is a similar staircase at Athelhampton.

When Hutchins wrote, the gatehouse opened into a small courtyard, on the north side of which stood the chapel, but this had disappeared earlier in the 18th century. The principal rooms were in the south range, which, as Fig. 3 shows, consisted of three portions. The east end, meeting at its north-east angle the south-west angle of the gatehouse, was an early Tudor building erected by Sir Thomas. West of it Sir George Trenchard, about 1600, added a new range with a two-storey bay window in the middle. A low office range with a pair of gables is shown beyond. This last has been modernised, but a three-light mullioned window of 17th-century date has lately been opened out in the south wall on the ground floor. Running out at right angles to the front in the engraving are shown two battlemented walls, of which the western one remains (Fig. 8). In Tudor times they will have enclosed either a pleasure or a bowling green.

In the early Tudor part of the range the hall occupied the ground floor, and the half-octagon, which is shown projecting from the middle of the south wall and is now the southeast tower, contained the staircase, being corbelled out at the top over the splayed

angles to take a gable. An early Tudor house in South Street, Bridport, which is now the town museum, has a similar feature, and it also occurs on the front of the manor house at Winterbourne Clenston, an early 16th-century building which, in its dispositions,

has several analogies with this work at Wolveton. At the east end of the hall range a lower gabled projection probably contained closets. The smaller projection on the south front (left of Fig. 2) was a wardrobe. Its conical roof is capped by a finial in the form of a seated figure playing some instrument. The windows in this part of the building are remarkable for their enrichments. Their labels are ornamented with foliage, which in the upper window takes the form of a vine trail, and they terminate in little figures skilfully carved. There is an inner enrichment of ribbon form which is carried down the jambs, and the mullions are stopped with base mouldings. As on the gatehouse, the spandrels of each arched light are enriched with conventionalised leaf motives. All this elaboration is very unusual, and Garner and Stratton are probably right in suggesting French influence in the work. The right-hand lower window shows signs of disturbance, and its sill has been dropped.

When the Elizabethan addition to this range was made, the mullions of the great windows were again finished with little bases. The same refinement occurs in the old manor house at Kingston Maurward, on the east side of Dorchester, and it is likely that the same master mason worked on both buildings. The bay window seen in the engraving was removed in 1798 and the wall built up flush. The ashlar masonry in this

part of the building is of fine quality: one may note the modillion cornice forming the eaves. But further consideration of the Elizabethan work must be left until next week, when we come to look at the interior.

(To be concluded)



7.—WINDING STAIR MADE OF BLOCKS OF OAK IN THE GATEHOUSE



8.—THE BATTLEMENTED TUDOR WALL AND THE HOUSE BEYOND. (Right) 9.—THE TOWERS OF THE GATEHOUSE

WOLFETON HOUSE, DORSET—II

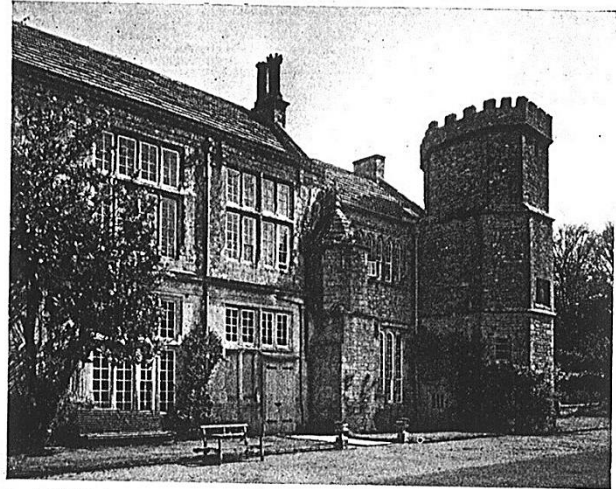
THE HOME OF COUNTESS ZAMOYSKA

By ARTHUR OSWALD

The interior of the house, as completed by Sir George Trenchard circa 1600, was richly decorated with carving and plasterwork, much of which remains, along with a remarkable series of early Tudor carved panels.

FROM 1495 to 1630 all but seven out of the 135 years were covered by two Trenchard ownerships at Wolfeton, those of Sir Thomas, who died in 1550, and of his great-grandson, Sir George, who inherited as a minor in 1557. Between them they were responsible for the fine courtyard house which arose from the meadows in picturesque irregularity a little to the south of the village of Charminster and of which now only the gatehouse to the east and some two-thirds of the south range remain. The date 1534 occurs on the gatehouse, which was built by Sir Thomas; he also built the eastern half of the south range (to the right of the break in the roof in Fig. 1), but this was curtailed in 1822, when the house underwent the last of a series of demolitions that had begun with the destruction of the chapel about a hundred years earlier. A description printed in the second and third editions of Hutchins's *History of Dorset* makes it possible to some extent to visualise the interior as it was in the 18th century, though it is not possible now to identify all the rooms mentioned in the detailed account of the armorial glass which was still in the windows. Wolfeton had by then become a farm-house, but the building had not been appreciably reduced in size.

The early Tudor portion of the south range when complete contained the hall with a room over it called the long parlour. Both had windows facing east as well as south, and it is probable that the east end of the hall was the dais end. Presumably, the hall extended as far west as the little garderobe turret at the junction of the earlier and later work and included the room which became



1.—PART OF THE SOUTH FRONT, SHOWING THE JUNCTION OF THE ELIZABETHAN AND EARLY TUDOR WORK

the dining-room after the restorations effected in the 1860's. Carved over the fireplace in the hall were 14 Kings of England. There is a story, told by Aubrey in his *Miscellanies*, that on the day when the Long Parliament began to sit (November 3, 1640) the sceptre fell from the hand of Charles I while the family were at dinner. The east window of the hall contained

shields bearing the arms of five abbeys—Bindon, Sherborne, Cerne, Glastonbury and Milton. "Behind the hall chimney," which seems to have been on the north side, there was a small panelled room, which had been known as "Mr. Trenchard's smoking parlour." "The cornice of the wainscot" in this room was "charged with signs of the zodiac and works of each month and grotesque heads in pairs."

Much of this carved woodwork, which is of early 16th-century date, was taken down and preserved, and sections of it are now to be seen filling part of the fireplace opening of the great chimney-piece in the drawing-room (Fig. 3) and mixed with later woodwork over two doorways in the passage at the east end of the drawing-room which now has a door to the garden broken through the mullioned window seen in Fig. 1. Mr. W. H. P. Weston seems to have been responsible for this confused and confusing re-arrangement at the time when he restored the house after purchasing Wolfeton in 1862. Unfortunately, many of these early Tudor carved panels have been cut to squeeze them in, losing all or most of their framework—the arched heads and dividing colonnettes which remain intact in the section above the fireplace (Fig. 8). Probably, the Signs and the Works of the Months alternated, but all are now muddled and appear with other carvings not of those two series. To the right of the caryatid in Fig. 4, four of the Months can be made out, and in Fig. 5 the Goat and the Bull are to be seen above a typical early Renaissance profile head, with the Balances and the Archer below. Above the doorway in Fig. 6 is the Sower, then three Signs (the Ram, Scorpion and Crab), what appears to be half an Annunciation scene, and a fourth Sign (the Water-bearer). Four little carvings above the opposite doorway (Fig. 7) comprise two exquisitely carved profile heads flanking two caricatures which show faces of animals in human attire.

Last week we saw how Sir Thomas Trenchard entertained the Archduke Philip and Joanna after they had been shipwrecked at Weymouth in January, 1506, when they were on their way from the Netherlands to claim the throne of Castile. In addition to the portrait medallions and a Chinese porcelain bowl, which, according to old family tradition, were presents which they gave to their host, the elaborately carved chimney-piece and doorcase in the drawing-room are said to have been gifts from them. These are much later in date, but it is possible that the tradition has been distorted and that the early 16th-century carvings which we have been considering were sent over from the Netherlands or done by Flemish craftsmen in England. The names of a number of Flemish carvers working in England during the reigns of Edward IV and

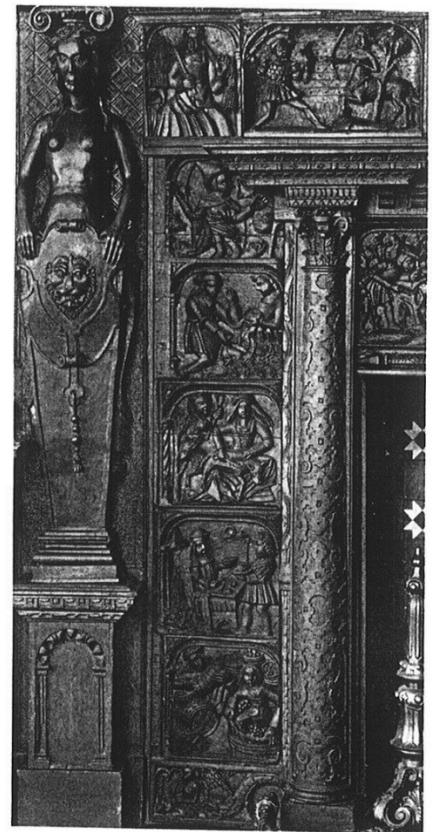


2.—THE STAIRCASE AND PART OF THE ENTRANCE HALL

the first two Tudors are on record, and the arched framing used for these panels is certainly un-English. It may be noted that in the top row in Fig. 8 the third subject from the right shows a castle with a queen and a king standing on the towers. This might well be an allusion to Castile and the royal visitors.

The range with the large mullioned and transomed windows which Sir George Trenchard built to the west of the hall provided withdrawing-rooms and a gallery above them that was reached by a staircase accommodated in a projection on the north side with an entrance from the courtyard. The engraving from the first edition of

whom he married in 1573, died in the year of the Armada. The eldest of the children by his second wife, Jane, daughter of Hugh Bamfylde and widow of Thomas Chafyn, was born in 1595. Both these matches were recorded in shields, in the lower bay window, figured by Hutchins. They were two of a set of four, with similar ornament, and therefore made after his second marriage. During the decade 1590-1600 the great Phelips house at Montacute was being erected, and two of the chimney-pieces at Wolveton, as we shall see, bear a striking resemblance to examples there. Indeed, it seems virtually certain that

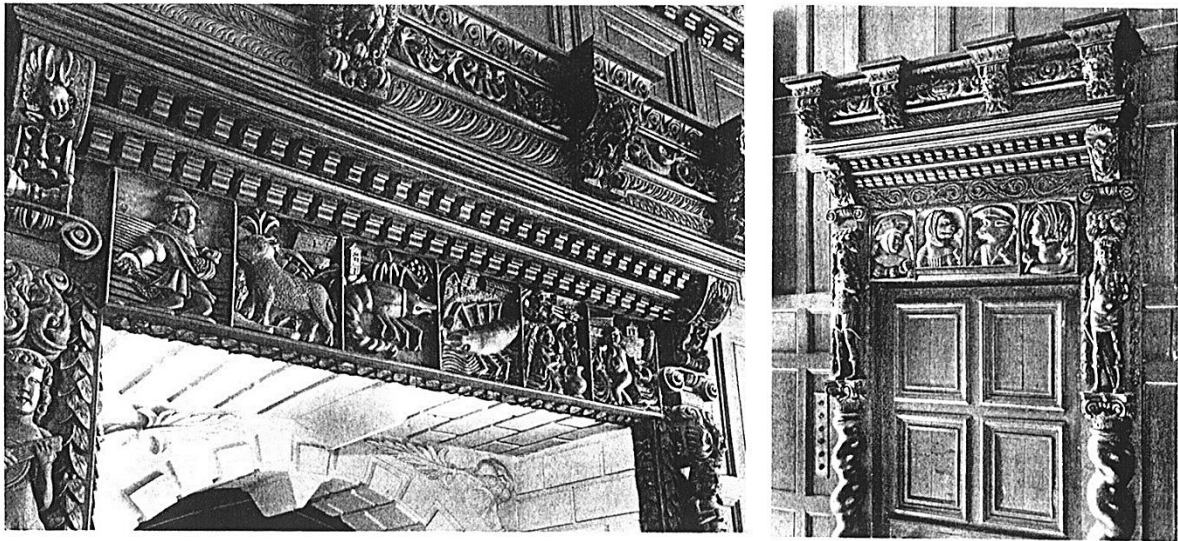


3, 4 and 5.—CARVED WOOD CHIMNEY-PIECE (CIRCA 1600) IN THE LARGE DRAWING-ROOM AND DETAILS OF THE EARLY TUDOR CARVED PANELS INCORPORATED IN THE LOWER PORTION. The panels include parts of a series of Signs of the Zodiac and Works of the Months

Hutchins's *History* (1774) reproduced last week shows that the middle pair of the three sets of southward-facing windows was originally a two-storey bay occupying the position of the left-hand windows in Fig. 1. As Sir George succeeded in 1557 when a boy and died in 1630, and none of his work is dated, it is difficult to say precisely when he enlarged the house, but perhaps the last decade of the 16th century is the most likely time, when he was in full career, having been knighted in 1589 or 1590. His first wife, Anne Speke,

the same stone carvers worked at both buildings.

Entering from the north by the Tudoresque porch added by Mr. Weston in the 'sixties, we find ourselves in a vaulted entrance hall or vestibule (Fig. 2) with a stone staircase going up in a broad flight on our right and doubling back to the landing from which the gallery was entered. The staircase in its present form seems to have been the work of Mr. Weston, but incorporated



6 and 7.—TWO 17th-CENTURY DOORHEADS IN THE SCREENS PASSAGE INCORPORATING FURTHER CARVED PANELS OF EARLY TUDOR DATE

in the stonework above the arch carrying the balustrade of the landing are two female busts looking out of sunk medallions. These are carved in stone, as is the fine doorway on the landing, which is an unusually restrained and correctly composed design for its date, almost suggesting the pre-Flemish phase of Renaissance work in this country. It has Corinthian pilasters carrying an entablature with a frieze, remarkably well designed and carved, in which the anthemion ornament appears. A bearded head is framed in the triangular pediment. The walls of the staircase are hung with panels of Mortlake tapestry, the subjects of which are scenes from the book of Genesis. These are thought to go back to the Trenchards' time and to have been bought with the house.

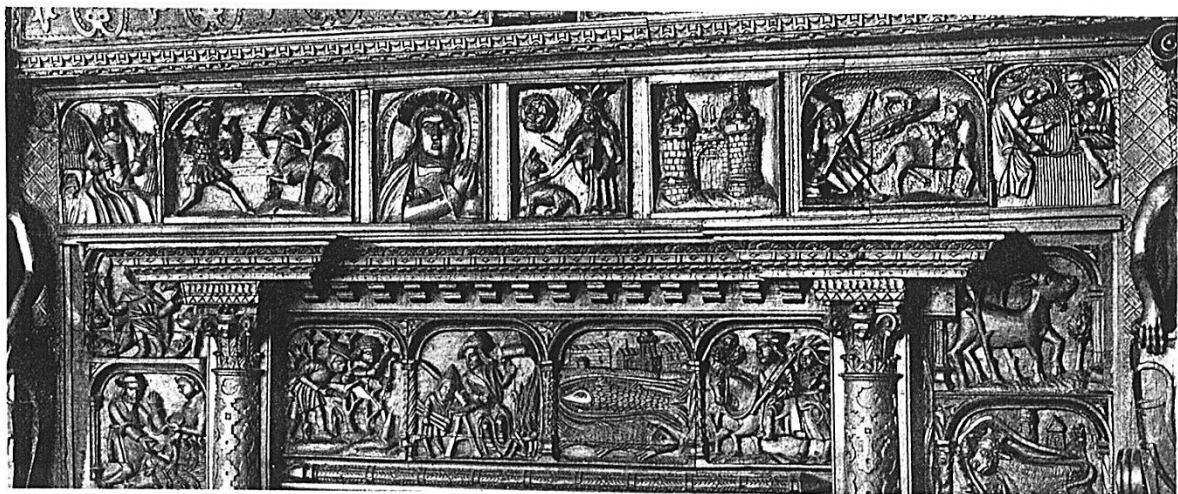
The gallery, or dining-room, as it is also called in the 18th-century account, though, perhaps, great chamber would have described it best, has long been cut up into smaller rooms, in one of which is a large stone chimney-piece (Fig. 10). In the great chamber (former library) at Montacute there is a chimney-piece very like it (Fig. 9), with a similar strapwork design for the overmantel

set in a frame of egg and tongue ornament, but the place of the upper pairs of fluted columns is taken by shell-headed niches. The reclining figures in the frieze above the lower pairs of columns have the emblems of Faith and Hope, and the third lady in the middle of the cartouche may, therefore, be Charity, though the surrounding heads and figures of naked children sporting among the scrolls might suggest rather the nightmare of the sleeper. Doubtless, the carver interpreted as best he could one of the elaborate engraved designs of Abraham Bruyn or Vredeman de Vries. At first glance the carving below the entablature might be taken for half of another overmantel brought from a different room, but two of the Montacute chimney-pieces show the same curious arrangement.

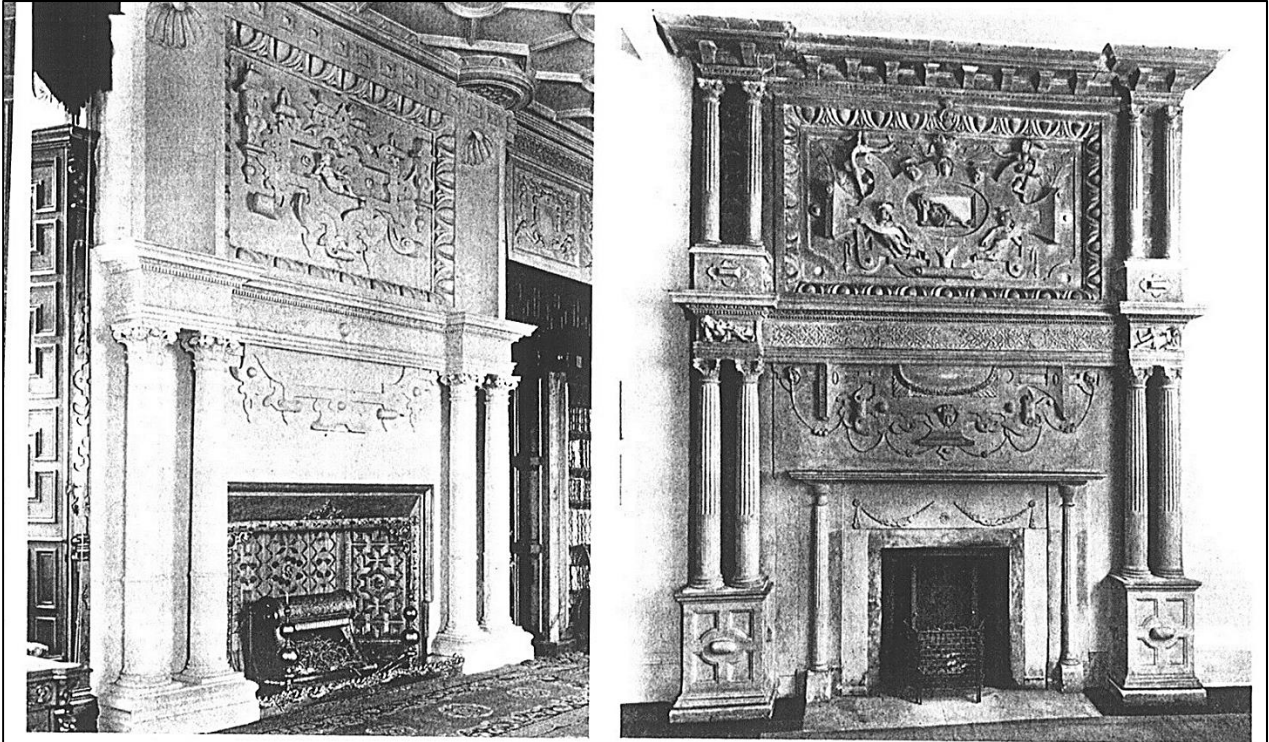
This gallery had a richly decorated barrel ceiling with pendants which probably resembled the one at Herringston on the other side of Dorchester. Portions of it still remain above the modern flat ceilings. In the bay window there stood "an octagon marble table on four wooden lions," which by the description seems to have resembled the stone tables (*circa* 1550) in the towers at Lacock Abbey,

though, if made for Sir George, it will have been of later date. It is now at Frogmore, having been given to George III, it is said, by a tenant of Wolveton.

To return now to the vestibule at the foot of the staircase (Fig. 2), it may be noted that the east wall is lined with linenfold panelling, which may have been brought from the smoking parlour or some other room in the early Tudor building. In the arched spaces formed by the vaulting above there are lion masks holding rings and pairs of bearded heads with sprays of foliage issuing from their mouths that recall a favourite motive of the mediæval carver. Above the entrance doorway on the inner side are the quartered arms of Trenchard, and the vaulting is ornamented with Tudor roses set in roundels. The vestibule opens southwards into a passage taken out of the east end of the large drawing-room. It has a different ceiling from that of the drawing-room, with intersecting ribs and beasts—lion, dolphin and unicorn—set in lozenges. It seems to have been a screens passage, giving access eastward to the hall through the doorway, the arched head of which can be seen in Fig. 6. This



8.—ANOTHER DETAIL OF THE EARLY 16th-CENTURY CARVINGS INCORPORATED IN THE DRAWING-ROOM CHIMNEY-PIECE



9 and 10.—CARVED STONE CHIMNEY-PIECES (CIRCA 1600) IN THE GREAT CHAMBER AT MONTACUTE (left) AND IN THE FORMER GALLERY AT WOLFETON SHOWN TOGETHER FOR COMPARISON

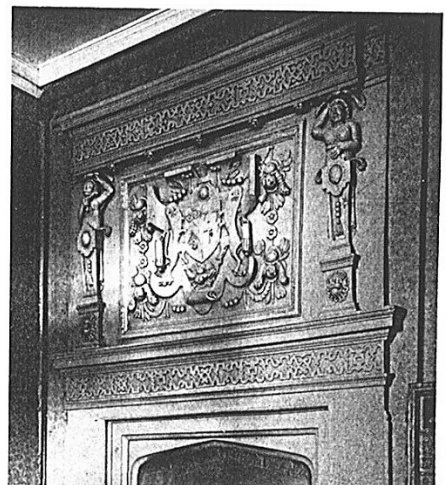
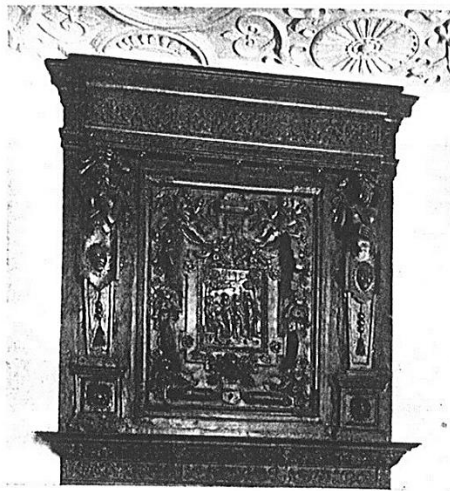
doorway is rusticated, and the motive of the bearded head with foliage issuing from the mouth recurs in the spandrels. The passage is lined with 17th-century panelling, above which is a run of early Renaissance arabesque carving of Henry VIII's reign. The two doorways, into the heads of which the early Tudor carved panels have been inserted, are flanked by twisted columns carrying carved figures and surmounted by a double cornice of extravagant fancy. The date 1647 appears on the doorway leading into the drawing-room (Fig. 7), showing that some of the decoration is due to Sir George's son and successor, a second Sir Thomas, who inherited in 1630 and died in 1657.

The large drawing-room and the inner drawing-room beyond both have decorated ceilings but of different patterns. The imposing carved wood chimney-piece in the larger room (Fig. 3) is remarkable for the great scale of the fluted Corinthian columns that flank it. The three large figures in the upper stage typify the three estates of knight, squire and serving man. In the arched panels there are smaller figures carrying the emblems of Hope and Justice. The doorway by which the room is entered is accorded the same elaborate treatment; it is also flanked by Corinthian columns and surmounted by caryatid figures of a king and queen. In the inner room there is a chimney-piece with overmantel almost identical in design with one in the garden chamber at Montacute (Figs. 11 and 12), only the caryatid figures, having grown tired, have each changed their raised arms, right for left and left for right. The overmantel panel at Montacute has a similar

cartouche and swags, but whereas the cartouche at Montacute is charged with a coat-of-arms, at Wolveton there is a mythological subject—the contest of the three goddesses with Paris awarding the apple. Though painted dark brown to match the woodwork below, the overmantel is carved in stone. The carved wood shelf below it bears the date 1652, but this is misleading, because the lower part of the chimney-piece and the woodwork surrounding the door to the right of it, are a pastiche, probably due to Mr. Weston. Heath and Prideaux in *Some Dorset Manor Houses* state that some carved woodwork was brought down from the upper floor and inserted in the drawing-room and (entrance) hall. It would appear from the date that the decoration of the gallery was

completed by the second Sir Thomas, whose arms, it is recorded, occurred over a doorway there, impaling those of his wife, a Morgan of Mapperton. This Sir Thomas sided with the Parliament in the Civil War and assisted in the siege of Corfe Castle.

Although the Trenchards continued to own Wolveton until the early years of last century, they had long ceased to live in the house. As restored by Mr. Weston it was bought from him in 1872 by Mr. Wynne Albert Bankes, of the Kingston Lacy family, whose widow died as recently as 1947. The present owner, Countess Zamovska, is their grand-daughter. Since the war the house has been divided into flats, submitting itself readily to an operation that was performed without difficulty or complications.



11.—CARVED OVERMANTEL IN THE INNER DRAWING-ROOM. (Right) 12.—OVERMANTEL OF SIMILAR DESIGN AT MONTACUTE

	CHARMINSTER	<i>Listed</i> Building Description
SY 6792		WOLFETON
13/32		Wolveton House
20.9.54	✓	
GV		I ✓
<p>Manor house and attached gatehouse. Gatehouse with date reset 1534. Early C16 courtyard house, of which only part of one range survives. House extended to west in later C16. Demolitions in early C19, see RCHM. 1862, house bought by W H P Weston and his works of restoration and rebuilding were extensive, including a passage way between the house and gatehouse, and alterations to the offices to the west. Purbeck rubble stone and ashlar walls. Stone slate roofs. Stone stacks, both rectangular, and round with C19 imitation of C16 work. <u>Gatehouse</u>, 2 storey and attics, standing 30 metres east of house, rectangular plan with 2 round towers of different dimensions. <u>East front</u>, the entrance archway is slightly north of centre. It has a four centred moulded head and jambs with pedestal base graded in height to create an illusion of greater recession. Moulded label with carved stops representing a satyr and woodmouse holding staves. Cartouche above, early C18. The windows on ground and first floors are of one, two and three lights with hollow chamfered 4 centred heads with foliate spandrels, early C16. North and south gable walls have projecting stacks. On north stack is an inscription panel: HOC OPUS FINITU[M] EST ANNO DNK MDXXXIIII. For detailed description of gatehouse, RCHM p 65 col 2. Originally the south range of the quadrangular courtyard house continued east to join the gatehouse and had a small wing projecting from the free south east corner. South front of house retains, at its east end, the surviving part of the C16 south range. South tower of 3 stages, with strings and an embattled parapet, has a topmost stage of c1862. West doorway has a restored square moulded head and jambs with pedestal stops. The tower has 2-light and single light windows, RCHM p 66 col 1. West of the tower, surviving early C16 walling, to and including small garderobe tower, 3-light and 2-light mullions to ground floor of high quality carving in the mouldings, arch-spandrels, labels and stops, early C16. 5-light window on the first floor with similar detailing. The garderobe immediately west comprises a small semi-octagonal first floor projection supported on a rectangular shaft with moulded plinth and capping, moulded corbelling at sides and small broaches to bring it to the semi-octagon above. The late C16 block adjoins to the west: 2 storeys, 3 windows, each mullion and transomed of 4 lights with square heads, moulded jambs and mullions with moulded pedestal-stops above transoms and sills. A door has been cut in the east window, comprising two lights and with blockings immediately west of this. The wall of the east front, north of the south tower is ostensibly mid C19, with 2 gables, the northern dying into the north east tower. The 3-light mullion and transom windows with labels are C19. The crenellated north east tower of semi-octagonal form is entirely C19. North front, much altered and re-faced in C19. To the east the mid C19 screen-wall to the passageway joins the house to the gatehouse. The north wall of the stair is late C16, refaced, but retaining over the porch a window of 3 mullion and transom lights, in a square head with moulded jambs and pedestal stops. The windows have iron casements with glazing bars. The north porch, mid C19, ashlar with moulded cornice and crenellated parapet, moulded jambs and 4-centred head, with trefoiled spandrels, label and head stops. Carved armorial over. 2-leaf plank door, C19. West of this is a range of office buildings of late C18 and early C19 date, with dressed stone walls and hipped slate roofs. 2 storeys, 5 windows in total, sashes with thin glazing bars and stone cills. Gauged stone voussoirs over. One canted bay at left</p>		

ground has C19 sashes with thin glazing bars. Door to the left of this has a round-arched head, 6 flush-panel door, early C19. South elevation west of the late C16 range has been much altered and rebuilt and is now largely late C18, or early C19 except at the west end, where the front has a moulded plinth, 4-light stone-mullioned window on the ground floor with square head and label. On the first floor, traces of another blocked window. Interior: Gatehouse many noteworthy features, RCHM p 67 col 2. Main house extensively remodelled in later C19, many of the fittings are of that date albeit in Jacobean style. East Drawing Room, ground floor, contains a doorcase and fireplace surround with overmantel all comprising highly enriched assemblages of early C17 woodwork from other parts of the house, RCHM p 67 col 1; plates 126 and 127. West Drawing Room, north door is made up of pieces of C16 and C17 carving. Great staircase, stone, probably restored C19, but following C16 form. Balustrade with a pierced arcade of round headed arches supporting a continuous moulded capping, returned along the first floor landing, terminating in a caryatid. Doorway into former gallery has a stone surround of late C16, similar to designs at Longleat of c1575. Gallery, original stone chimneypiece survives, rising to full height of room in two stages, late C16, full description RCHM and plate 127. This chimneypiece is similar in design and workmanship to that in Great Chamber at Montacute. For detailed building history, references to Buckley Drawings, Walker Engravings, Plans and Plates, essential to refer to: (RCHM Dorset III p 63(4)ff)

CHARMINSTER

SY 78 NW

WOLFETON

11/35

Gate Piers and low flanking walls 125 metres south east of Wolfeton House

Gate Piers and low flanking walls. Early C19. Stone. Rusticated piers with ogival capstones and massive ball finials. Very low flanking walls with coping stones to south of piers. (RCHM Dorset III, p 67 (4))

CHARMINSTER

SY 6792

WOLFETON

13/36

The Riding House (formerly listed as Wolfeton Barn)

26.1.56

II* ✓

Riding House. Late C16. Ashlar stone walls on the east, south and west, squared and coursed rubble on the north. Later alterations are in coursed rubble of poor quality. Slate roof with gable ends. South elevation has a plinth with chamfered footing course and ogee moulded capping, divided into 7 bays by weathered buttresses, easterly bay thrice normal width. Secondary external stone stair in westerly bay with buttress removed. Centre of wide east bay, round headed doorway, with plinth mouldings returned downwards each side, above the doorway is a small carved lion mask. The fourth and south bays from the east, mullioned windows of 3 square headed lights, blocked, with weathered labels. Remains of a similar label in the second bay. Alterations: Bay 1: 2-light casement with segmental head inserted. Bay 2: large openings to ground and upper floors, with planking. Bay 4: small single light C20 window. Bay 6: plank doorway inserted with segmental head, C19. Bay 7: plank doorway with segmental head at top of secondary stair. West wall has 2 weathered buttresses and moulded plinths. Round headed doorway to south with continuous ogee and hollow chamfered mouldings. Two 3-light mullion windows, ground and upper storey with labels. North elevation: weathered buttress near the north east corner, and another buttress near the middle of the elevation. Blocked round window near eastern buttress and 2 blocked rectangular openings near the eaves. All other openings on the north elevation are secondary. The large barn doorway may well replace a narrower original doorway. East wall has plinth, buttresses, upper window. Five small round windows in two tiers. Interior: original first floor removed, but most of the beams upon which it rested remain, chamfered and measure 300 mm by 300 mm in section. The beams supported both a floor and independent ceiling. To the north the beams are housed in the wall; to the south they rest on rounded stone corbels which project from the wall directly above the level of timber lintels spanning the window recesses. The roof has been extensively strutted and repaired. As a building type, this is of considerable architectural importance. (RCHM Dorset III p 69(5) for fuller description, plan, elevations and plate)

WOLFETON HOUSE

DORSET

THE HOME OF CAPTAIN AND MRS NIGEL THIMBLEBY by JOHN GOODALL

The choice of a medieval style design for this romantic manor house consciously proclaimed the antiquity of the Trenchard family, who remodelled it in chivalric spirit in the 16th century. It has recently been restored as a single dwelling by its present owners.



1—The exterior façade of the gatehouse. The roofs and towers give the house a French air



2—The interior façade of the gatehouse, viewed from the courtyard of the house

WOLFETON HOUSE stands in broad meadows at the junction of the rivers Frome and Cerne just to the north of Dorchester. It is entered through an imposing gatehouse, the massive towers and arrow loops of which make unmistakable reference to the military architecture of the Middle Ages (Figs 1–3). This martial display now seems oddly incongruous in this intimate setting. But in the 16th century, Wolfeton was one of the most important houses in Dorset. And in a world where ideals of knighthood and the architectural trappings of chivalry remained so prestigious, this castle-like entrance to the house was an appropriate symbol of the substantial standing of its owners and builders, the Trenchard family.

The Trenchards seem to have made their money through a combination of successful sheep-farming and advantageous marriages, through one of which they inherited Wolfeton in 1480. Work to the buildings was documented in the 1490s, but how they initially developed the house is not now clear.

During the 16th century, Wolfeton appears to have been completely redeveloped. It is to this period that the present building, with its superb interiors, belongs. The modern house, however, constitutes only a fragment of the whole as it stood in about 1600. In the mid 18th century, the Trenchards abandoned Wolfeton. The Tudor house, which appears to have survived largely untouched until then, was allowed to fall into ruin and between about 1770 and 1862 several parts of it were demolished.

Antiquarian descriptions and drawings—in particular that printed in the 1774 edition of Hutchins's *History of Dorset*—allow us to re-create something of the form and grandeur of Wolfeton before its reduction (see plan, page 58). They indicate that the house was arranged round a small court which visitors entered through the gatehouse. Confronting them on the western side of this would have been the lost great-hall range. Entrance to the hall was through a large door set in the side of the range roughly opposite the mouth of the gate passage. In typical English fashion, this door gave access to

the so-called screens passage, at the service or 'low' end of the hall. At the opposite end of the room was the dais, where the high table stood.

To the right of the hall, forming the northern side of the entrance court, was a chapel. This was allegedly the oldest part of the house but it was demolished before any proper record was made and nothing is known about it. The court was closed to the south by a third range extending the full distance between the high end of the great hall and the inner corner of the gatehouse. This southern range also extended west as a projecting wing beyond the line of the great hall.

It is from a section of this southern range that the present house was created, all the remainder of the buildings—except the gatehouse—having been destroyed. Within it are incorporated the high end of the hall—confusingly, the 'low' end has been demolished—and some of the inner chambers intended for the use of the family in the western wing

(Facing page) 3—The roofs and towers of the gatehouse

of the range. Also surviving is a small cottage-like block at the western extreme of the southern range, possibly a remodelled 16th-century service building.

Aside from the chapel, this courtyard house appears originally to have developed in two principal stages, each of which was undertaken by a long-lived head of the Trenchard family. Sir Thomas, who owned Wolfeton between 1505 and 1551, seems to have established all the principal elements of the plan including the gatehouse, the great hall range and the footprint of the southern range. A plaque fixed into the south range celebrated the completion of the work, which is likely to have been undertaken as a coherent rebuilding project. The plaque bears the date 1534 and is now reset in the north gable of the gatehouse.

The tower and latrine turret on the south façade of the present house, as well as the section of wall that they flank, comprise the only externally visible section of Sir Thomas's south range (Fig 4). The wall, still set with fine 16th-century windows, formed the dais end of the original hall, and within the tower to the right of it was a stair. This led from the dais to the withdrawing chambers, which were arranged in a demolished section of the range that extended east from the present building to the gatehouse (Fig 6). Encased in the Classical building to the left of the latrine turret is another building which also belonged to Sir Thomas's house, but its purpose is not known.

Sir Thomas made clear proclamation of his contribution to the house through the decorative use of personal devices and heraldry. The only remaining traces of this today are carvings of his initials on the arch stops of the gatehouse. Much more prominent in the newly completed house, however, must have been the extensive



4—View of the south range. To the right are the latrine and stair towers of the 1530s house

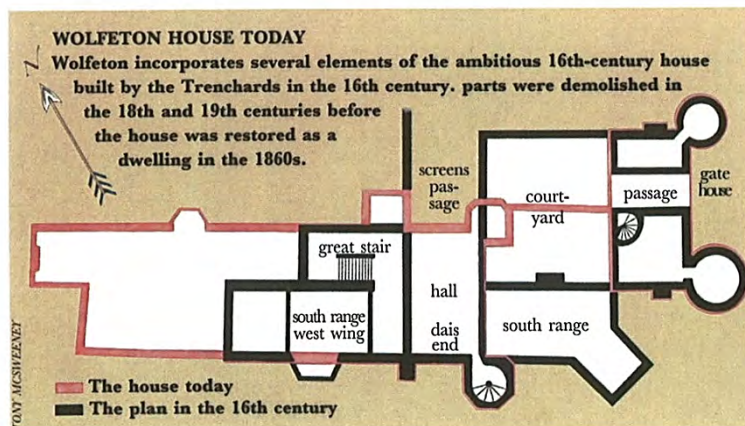
programme of heraldic stained glass that formerly filled the windows of all the principal apartments.

Nothing of this glass now survives—most of it was smashed through the negligence of workmen in 1798. An accurate reconstruction of the programme can be made, however, from notes published in the 1774 and 1863 editions of Hutchins's *History of Dorset* and a description of the house made in 1820 (British Library Add. Ms. 17459). To judge from these accounts, new shields continued to be inserted into the programme right up to the 17th century, but the body of the display followed a coherent scheme and can be dated to the 1530s.

The windows in the hall were all decorated with coats of arms—each

identified with a label—and scrolls bearing the Trenchard family motto 'Know Thyself'. Those in the body of the room celebrated local abbeyes and those over the dais—as far as the original display can be reconstructed—the familial connections of the Trenchard family. Immediately above the hall was another room, possibly a great chamber, with identically composed windows clearly contemporary with those below. These recorded the three marriages of Sir Thomas and the arms of other members of the family. The existence of this upper chamber is particularly interesting in architectural terms. Evidently the hall did

(Below) 5—A view of the vaulted lobby at the foot of the great stair



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not have a high, pitched roof in the medieval fashion, but a ceiling and a chamber set over it, a remarkable design for the 1530s.

Such statements of dynastic connections and prowess are fairly typical of grand domestic glazing schemes in this period. Much more surprising, however, is the glass in another large withdrawing chamber, which possibly stood to the north of the hall. This apparently celebrated the heads of the family from the reign of King John to 1529, a terminus which presumably offers a rough date for the glass. Beneath each coat of arms was the name of that head of the family and a note of his life span in regnal years. That Sir Thomas felt the need to advertise his lineage in this fashion perhaps further explains why the architecture of the new gatehouse looks as medieval as it does.

Sir Thomas's courtyard house at Wolveton was extended by his grandson, George, who inherited the property as a minor in 1557 and continued in its possession until 1630. His principal alterations were probably undertaken in the 1580s and 1590s and their details compare closely with contemporary work at Montacute and Longleat. A new set of withdrawing chambers was created off the dais end of the hall by altering the western wing of the south range. This was raised by a storey and recast with a Classical façade, the central bay of which projected as an oriel window on both floors. The façade still survives but the oriel was demolished in 1798.

Two new rooms were created within

(Below) 6—The gatehouse. The south range once extended to the corner of the gatehouse



7—The stair. The doorway to George Trenchard's great chamber is at its head

the altered section of the range at ground-floor level. Their interiors—restored in the 1860s—are richly ornamented with plaster ceilings and massive fireplaces, all of which are closely comparable to examples at Montacute. The most impressive of the rooms is that adjacent to the former dais of the hall (Fig 12). This has a magnificent carved door-frame and overmantle as well as a splendid chimney-piece (see box and Fig 11). The room beyond this has a more modest chimney-piece decorated with a scene of the Judgement of Paris (Fig 10).

Running above these rooms on the first floor of the enlarged wing was a new great chamber (Fig 8). A barrel-vaulted ceiling with pendants originally covered the interior, but none of this survives. Cen-



8—View of the great chamber. The room was formerly covered by a plaster barrel vault



trally set within it is a fine stone fireplace.

To connect the great chamber with the hall, a great stair was constructed at the rear angle of the hall and the south range (Fig 7). This rises from a vaulted vestibule and is magnificently designed with low treads and a monumental balustrade. At the head of the stair is a fine door to the great chamber, set with a bust. The date of this work is not known, but its austerity of style suggests a connection with Longleat and may justify its attribution by Mark Girouard to the French sculptor Allen Maynard.

Besides these alterations, Sir George also constructed a magnificent riding house at Wolveton in about 1600. It stands about 200yd from the main house and is the earliest example of such a structure in England. It appears to be modelled on that built by Prince Henry at St James's and there are now plans for its restoration.

In the century following the death of Sir George in 1630, the fortunes of Wolveton are somewhat obscure. The house remained in the hands of the Trenchards, however, and there is some evidence for decorative alterations to the



(Above, left) 9—The door into the high end of the great hall. (Above) 10—The chimney-piece. The carved overmantle relief depicts the Judgement of Paris

(Facing page) 12—The parlour. The marvellous carving is by an unknown hand

interior, such as the insertion of new armorial bearings in the heraldic glazing scheme. But in the mid 18th century, the house was abandoned by the family in favour of their seat at Lytchett Matravers. It fell into disrepair and began to be demolished. The chapel was the first to go, some time before 1774. This was followed by the hall range and the east end of the south range between 1820 and 1828.

This last demolition roughly coincided with the lease of the house to one Mr Henning in 1822, cuttingly described by one contemporary as 'a farmer but one who keeps his horses, dogs, grooms & like a man of fashion'. He turned the remains of the buildings into a house for himself and showed a strong dislike for antiquarian visitors. In 1862, the house was bought by W. H. P. Weston, who heavily restored both its fabric and furnishings, presumably as his own architect. As part of his work he crenellated the top of the 1530s stair tower and erected a second tower on the inner face of the range. After the Second World War, the house was divided into flats, an operation which the present owners have lovingly reversed. What they have created combines the intimacy of a family home with some interiors worthy of the grandest of English country houses.

Wolveton House, Dorchester, Dorset, is open by arrangement (01305 263500).

Acknowledgments: Laurence Keene, Mark Girouard. Photographs: Paul Barker.

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WOODWORK AT WOLFETON

11—The carved woodwork at Wolveton is of the highest quality and despite some restoration remains in a very good condition. This is a detail of one of the oddly attenuated figures decorating the magnificent fireplace in the parlour, which is pictured opposite (Fig 12). Also preserved in the room is a richly ornamented doorway overmantle. The contemporary door is also finely carved





Wolveton is – in the ownership of Captain N. Thimbleby – an eloquent and evocative house. The Captain showed Lucy Richmond around and talked about living in and looking after his Grade I home.

Wolveton

An eloquent and evocative house

On most days—just west of Dorchester, that is, and perhaps not long before the twilight sets in—you will see a horse and rider galloping through the meadows towards an area of ancient trees. Were you to accompany him you would soon find that the first of these trees form storm-broken avenues; that you were on one of a number of leafy, narrow tracks and that you could see a fine stone barn or a riding house. The horse is slowing down as it reaches the entrance to its Master's house. This is a Mediaeval gatehouse built of stone. It has a coat of arms and heavy doors. Perhaps because of the round towers at either end you might be reminded of one of the chateaux on the Loire. Having passed through the carriageway there is a brief stretch to the left hand side of castellated Victorian link corridor attaching the gatehouse to the rest of the house.

Now you are looking at what, despite being open on two sides, still feels like a courtyard: for this was once an early 16th century Courtyard House. The restful sound of swilling water from a delicate fountain can be heard. The area is mossy and leafy. To your left is a very long country house that has little massing and that falls in a chronological chain of variegated shapes. Its time span is early Tudor to late Tudor tipped by a 17th century house that has some 18th century additions to the facade. The appearance of this, the courtyard side, is haphazard.

The south front is the public face of the house because of the grandness of the three bayed late 16th century part of the elevation which “for its classicism... depends on the achievements of Longleat.” But it is the early part of the elevation that is exquisite. Here there is a candlesnuffer roofed garderobe tower, with a carved man holding a sword and buckler at its tip and a twisted garland of ribbon and fruits of Renaissance kind carved round its windows. This is Wolveton.

“Tom wants EIGHT AND A HALF million for his Titian” says Captain N. T. L. Thimbleby, Chargé for Christies (South Dorset and Hampshire branch) to his assistant. He has been trying to fire the Great and the Good into action on endangered Stinsford House nearby. Dark eyed and dark hair oiled back, casually smart in stripes, in navy wool and grey flannel, the man on the horse now holds court in the Office and Library of Wolveton. A wood fire crackles in the hearth of the imposing fireplace. Captain Thimbleby paces the room, circling the furniture restlessly as the route for the afternoon's viewing for the firm is mapped out. The voice is resonant and a bit of a purr.

“I inherited Wolveton 30 years ago from a cousin who had married a Polish man who shot himself,” he had explained earlier. This cousin, Countess Zamoyska, was the granddaughter of Wynne Albert Bankes of Kingston Lacy

(House) who had bought Wolveton in 1874.

Nigel and Katharine Thimbleby live with two teenage daughters and a 12 year old son in the later part of the house. They are a Catholic family and the house is furnished in the taste of grand Catholics. Whilst relaxed or formal where appropriate, there is a richness of colour and sense of pagentry appropriate to the most distant reaches of the building's history. Living there is done of course with an element of nonchalance—although expenditure on the house was one kind of bill that had prevented the couple from taking a holiday for a time. There is a well balanced feeling and all sorts of interests beyond the house are pursued. There are billiards tables, a gun room. Little murals have been painted on some shutters in a room in the later part of the house. Their son has a little archaeological collection in the gatehouse. Captain Thimbleby plays the bagpipes and the sheer length of the house means he can do this at a distance the rest of his family are happy about. They have a fine collection of paintings and the work for Christies means other objects of interest pass throughout the house.

Although Dorchester is visible from Wolveton, which stands in 30 acres, the immediate setting remains rural. However the field north of the gatehouse is not in the Thimbleby's control and the threat of development, though



Gatekeeper's room.



Ceiling in entrance hall.



South face of the 17/18th century end of the house.



defeated in the past, is liable to reappear. The Captain added "I am grateful to the SPAB for fighting planning applications which would affect the setting of the house. That is why I became a life member." He explained that they also had to fight the main road—the A37. He had managed to defeat proposals to put 18 lights on the nearby roundabout and succeeded in getting the numbers reduced to one light.

Captain Thimbleby sustained injuries early in his military career and was invalided out of the 11th Hussars. He has an unsentimental love of the country, of old country ways and of things that are beautiful and worth saving. This and a persuasive and extrovert nature means he's a valuable spokesman on issues that affect the environment. A seat on the local DAC enables him to fight unsuitable church extensions. He belongs to the South Dorset Hunt and is angered by moves to ban the sport.

Not formally an antiquarian—"I have no training whatsoever except as a soldier"—he is said to have the right eye and unflappable attitude, not to mention the contacts, for the Christies work. Of the work he says "I'm interested in it and you learn what you're interested in."

Having made his contribution recently to a book on what constitutes The Perfect English House he discovered he was the only one to have come down in favour of mediaeval buildings. People were less stacked up than in, say, a Queen Anne house and had real privacy when they wanted it as a result. He has written a guide to Wolfeton and it has been documented by the Royal Commission but he would like an architectural historian to study the house again.

Major restoration in 1862 brought castellation of the towers to the east end of the main house and some Victorian versions of Elizabethan or Jacobean features to the interior. In 1948 the house was fairly brutally divided into five flats which were still tenanted when Captain Thimbleby inherited. The marks of a bathtub installed in one corner of the

Great Dining Room remain as a deterrent.

On the south side of the 17th/18th part of the elevation the mature walled garden there, with rows of espalier apple trees, is particularly peaceful and lovely. Captain Thimbleby is concerned about the main wall which is Tudor of coursed rubble with embattled cresting. It is next on his repair list.

The carriageway through the Gatehouse has stone doorways with nail studded plank doors. On the north side is the small chapel which houses early 16th century carved panels of the signs of the Zodiac and Pre-Reformation processional crosses. On the south side one door leads into the gatekeeper's room or guard house which has flags and bits of armour. The other door, more ornate with an ogee arch, gives onto a circular stair made, apart from the initial steps, of oak with the newel continuous from the steps. The tower rooms are unlit and not used. In the attic is a mediaeval bell and frame, discarded by a church nearby, that the Captain rescued.

Inside the building there are a large number of important sometimes whimsical features. Some fixtures and fittings have been moved around. Most rooms have large ancient fireplaces.

The Tudor parts of the house are on two storeys and contain four vast chambers, a grand stone staircase and a fine entrance hall with linenfold and other panelling of the 16th and 17th centuries and the best—by virtue of being the simplest—of the plasterwork ceilings that survive.

The former Parlour leads off to one side. The plaster ceiling is ornamented with scrolling, foliage, masks, grotesques and little reliefs of animals. The fireplace has an overmantel showing in two alcoves figures of Hope and Justice, and also the three degrees of man: knight, squire and serving man. The doorway has figures of a king and queen. Both features stand the full height of the room and are flanked by giant Corinthian pillars.

A relatively small dining room leads on from the Parlour. Both these rooms are fully furnished. Here the plaster ceiling is decorated with dolphins, leaves, masks, flowers and foliage. Over the fireplace, strapwork with angels, fruit and foliage and a cartouche depicting the Judgement of Paris.

The late 16th century stone staircase shows signs of the dead hand of 19th century restoration work but is still monumental and has caryatids.

The principal room on the top floor is the Great Chamber. The doorway to this is definitively regarded as having "the classical purity of the pre-Flemish phase of Renaissance work in England" (Pevsner) because of its stone surround with pilasters, entablature, bust and frieze. The chamber runs the full length of the Tudor part of the house and has 3



groups of mullion windows and broad planked oak floors. When the captain inherited the chamber was divided into five rooms. He removed these partitions but less happily the plaster. Now you see exposed stonework, wooden floors, glass and a stone chimneypiece that rises to the





Top left: the fireplace in the Great Chamber is similar in execution and design to that of Montacute.
 Right: view of the chamber.
 Middle: the Gatehouse.
 Bottom: the early Tudor section of the South front. The missing windows are going to be replaced this year.

full height of the room. It has lost its tunnel vaulted ceiling but, although it only has propped up oil paintings, wooden chairs and Persian carpets in it, it is a poetic part of the building.

Another is the groin vaulted passage under the main staircase that joins the later, constantly inhabited parts of the house with the earlier showpieces. The brickwork of the vaulting has been exposed (an action the SPAB obviously wouldn't condone if asked) and lime-washed. The floor beneath is stone flagging and there is a strong smell of clay and tunnels. At the new end of the passage the mounted head of an open mouthed fox and a military banner draping down the wall are bold bits of Thimbleby set design.

The task of putting the building into a complete state of repair (and keeping it that way) is considerable and, as the situation in the Great Chamber illustrates, is not yet quite fully realised. Although the work has not always been approached in a way the SPAB would recommend, what has been done is nevertheless a major achievement.

One of the first tasks 30 years ago was to turn Wolfeton back into one house. The whole place has also been re-roofed (in stages). The fine stone carving on the early Tudor section of the south front has been gently cleaned and conserved. The team who worked on the statuary at Wells Cathedral—Nimbus of Bristol—did this work and employed the lime method. All the windows on the South front were partly bricked in or had wooden sashes. He opened the windows up and, choosing to restore rather than repair, replaced the sashes with leads.

In the dining room the overmantel and panelling were stained dark. Here he removed the coating and also opened up the fireplace. In the parlour he disposed of red flock wallpaper and removed a timber surround that was reducing the opening of the early 16th century fireplace.

In the gatehouse he has taken out breeze block partitions on the upper floors and has restored the floors and ceilings there to their original height. Victorian panelling in the Guard room was destroyed by fire 15 years ago, revealing the original plasterwork and here another fireplace has been unblocked. Captain Thimbleby has undertaken some joinery and made shutters for the room.

The coach house and stables have also been re-roofed. The stable roof has also been strengthened, work he did himself with the help of local unskilled labour.

Apart from the estimated £50,000 of work on the Great Chamber, all the plasterwork ceilings on the ground floor need attention and would, Captain Thimbleby says, involve lifting the floor in the Great Chamber above.

On the roof the lead in the central valley gutter has perished. Whole panes



are missing from the early Tudor windows on the South front but are going to be repaired this year; windows are also missing in the garderobe tower.

The house is eligible for grant from English Heritage and has already had money from them. Captain Thimbleby was grateful but not uncritical about the system. "English Heritage, although they are very generous, do require vast amounts of work to be done at one time. Frequently one can't find one's own

share of the cost." He tends to do what work he can when he can afford it and adds "I've got two friends who are about to have disasters because of this insistence of having work done at one stage."

Wolveton is open to the public on a small scale in the summer months and to parties by arrangement throughout the year. They have between 2,500 and 3,000 visitors in the Summer. Was there any problem with theft with having the house open? "Not really. Knic-knacs are

inclined to go. Irritating things like keys out of long clock cases." Visitors have the opportunity to buy The Wolfeton Cider.

"We all love living here in spite of everything" said the Captain. "(But) at the end of the day the children are the only reason one goes on living here. Although the environs have become extremely urban in the last 30 years one can still lead a reasonable life."