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Two Bellarmine Bottles from Coddendam.

Two Bellarmine Bottles from Coddendam. In January, 1955, two stone bottles of the type usually known as Bellarmines were discovered by Mr. Waspe, landlord of the Duke's Head Inn at Coddendam. Such bottles, imported into this country from the Rhineland in considerable numbers during the 17th century, are of interest on account of their common use as 'witch-bottles'.

As has been pointed out by M. R. Holmes, F.S.A.,⁵ the belief which occasioned the use of the name Bellarmine, 'that the mask and jug are intended to satirize the features and rotundity of Cardinal Bellarmine', is erroneous, as such jugs were made long before the Cardinal came into prominence and disfavour with the Protestants of Germany and the Low Countries for his pronouncements on heresy; moreover, the mask bears no more resemblance to a contemporary description of the face of the Cardinal, a long visage with a small pointed beard, than does the rounded contour of the bottle to his lean figure.

The more damaged of the Coddendam specimens (Plate XXIX *b*), a smooth brown bottle bearing a mask of Holmes's Type VIII, and an armorial medallion, dates from the second half of the 17th century; it was found in the garden. If it had ever been used as a witch-bottle, the occurrence of a small hole, apparently deliberately bored in the base, is unusual, as 'an essential feature of a witch-bottle was that it should be free from leaks and tightly corked. Perhaps the charm was deliberately broken for some reason'.⁶

An excellent account of the use of Bellarmines as witch-bottles has already been given by Ralph Merrifield, F.S.A., F.M.A.,⁷ and includes an example from Stradbroke, now in Christchurch Mansion.

The other Coddendam bottle (Plate XXIX *a*) bears a mask which may be compared with Holmes's Type V, and a medallion portraying a lion rampant. It is roughly contemporary with its fellow, or perhaps a little earlier, and is handsomely mottled, with a high glaze. There can be no doubt that this bottle was used in the practice of counter-witchcraft. It was found at a depth of three feet under the hearth of the tap-room of the Duke's Head, lying on its side, and apparently corked. When it was opened, a number of blackened pins dropped out. The significance of this will be readily appreciated on reading Merrifield's account of the manner in which these bottles were used, their contents frequently consisting of 'hearts' of cloth or felt, pierced with pins, iron nails, human hair and nail-parings, and so forth. The position in which the bottle was found is also significant, as the charm appeared to be more effective if the bottle was kept in a warm place.

⁵ *Antiquaries Journal*, xxxi, 1950, pp. 173-179.

⁶ Ralph Merrifield, *in litt.*, 29.4.55.

⁷ *The Guildhall Miscellany*, No. 3, February, 1954.

During the demolition or reconstruction of old cottages and inns, it is desirable that a watch should be kept for witch-bottles under the hearth or threshold. The position should be carefully noted, and whether the bottle is corked; if possible, it is advisable to submit it for examination in as complete a condition as possible.

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Great Saxham Hall. The Hall with its fine portico replaces Nutmeg Hall, an Elizabethan house rendered fantastic in 1774, and burnt down in 1779. This note attempts to establish the authorship of the design of the present house.

Shoberl, in the Suffolk volume of *The Beauties of England and Wales* (1813), noted that 'the old house was accidentally burnt down in 1779' and that a new one had been 'erected N.W. of it from a plan of Mr. Adam'.⁸ H. M. Colvin, in his standard *Biographical Dictionary of English Architects, 1660-1840* (1954), on the authority of Shoberl, lists Great Saxham Hall, 1779, under the works of Robert Adam.⁹ It seems, however, that Adam produced two separate designs, neither of which was executed.¹⁰ Craven Ord visited the house in 1788, and recorded that, after the fire of 1779, a new house was begun N.W. of the old one, 'from a plan of Mr. Adam but was not proceeded in. Mr. Hutchison Mure now resides in a very good house built from a plan of his own'.¹¹

Gage, writing in 1838, in a work familiar to Suffolk antiquaries,¹² confused the name of the architect, calling him William Adams, and wrongly attributed to him the fantastic alterations of 1774. But he made amends by reproducing an elevation of that vanished fantasy, and by remarking that it was Hutchison Mure 'who built the centre' of the mansion, which 'was finished by Thomas Mills in 1798'.

It is nevertheless uncertain whether Hutchison Mure's centre-piece is the one we see to-day, though it is probable. Thomas Mills' son, in a MS. diary written in 1818,¹³ recorded that Hutchison Mure 'commenced building a mansion upon a most extensive scale. He however never completed it, and sold the property to

⁸ p. 129.

⁹ p. 35.

¹⁰ His first plan was apparently produced early in 1763, the second in 1779: see A. T. Bolton, *The Architecture of Robert and James Adam* (1922), I, 49-50. Bolton reproduces plans of both (I, 40-42). He also gives references to the originals in the Soane Museum, with details (II, appendix p. 15).

¹¹ Add. MSS. 7101, fol. 11.

¹² *Thingoe Hundred*, 109-110. An engraving of the elevation of the S. front after the alterations of 1774 faces p. 108. It is possible that Gage was thinking of Robert's brother William, who supplied the business ability to the famous firm of the Adam brothers: it was Robert who supplied the architectural genius.

¹³ *Penes Mrs. G. St. John, of The Dove House, Stutton.*