

NOTE ON WALTON OLD HALL

by *T. M. Felgate*

The site of the 'Old Hall', that is, Walton Manor House, was investigated from Easter 1967 until the end of 1968.⁴⁹ Walls from 2ft to 6ft high and 4ft wide ran for a length of about 150ft. The 2ft-high freestone base was surmounted by a core of septaria in 2ft layers, faced with mortar and having dressed Caen stone at the corners and elsewhere. There is no documentary date for the building of the Old Hall, the earliest date so far traced is 1292.⁵⁰ The Rolls of 1399 disclose a wide range of buildings needing repair, and by 1514 the 'Corte House', no doubt the 'Old Hall' was in a ruinous state (Plate XI).

The Manor came into the possession of the Bigods soon after the Conquest and remained with that turbulent family until the death in 1306 of Roger Bigod, the fifth and last Earl of Norfolk and Suffolk. It then passed to Edward II who granted it to Thomas Plantagenet de Brotherton, a son of Edward I. It became the headquarters of Edward III in 1338 when he was collecting forces for an expedition against France and there are several other historical connections. It remained in royal possession, or tenure by the Mowbrays and Howards, for over 300 years, to the middle of the 19th century.

A description of the site in 1829 (B.M. Add. MS. 19,087, f., 46, David Davy MS) reads:

'Remains . . . at present in the middle of a cornfield and of no very considerable extent. A portion of wall extending 32ft in length and rising to the height of about 24ft is the chief of what now appears, though there are evidently many foundations of walls and buildings to be traced; but the space about them is so grown up with weeds that little can be made out from them. The remaining wall appears to be the north end of a considerable room, 73ft in length by 32ft 7in in width. The space enclosed seems hollowed out; I could not find any foundations at the south end; a small portion of the east wall, about 6ft above the ground remains. The rest of the walls are nearly level with the ground. Some foundations may also be traced northward of the wall which still remains, but they are too slight to furnish the means of ascertaining exactly what was the nature of the buildings. In the middle of the wall now standing was a window.

⁴⁹ Notes on the work have appeared in 'Archaeology in Suffolk' in the *Proceedings* for 1961, 1967 and 1968.

⁵⁰ *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxii (1939), p. 155.

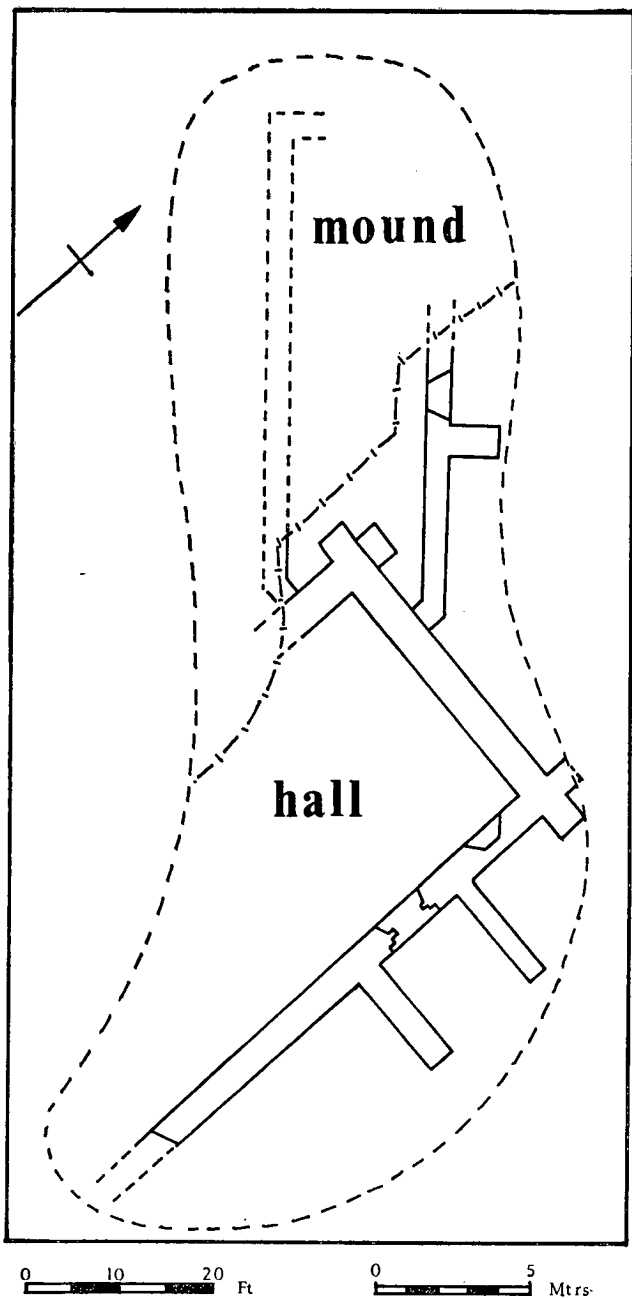


FIG. 43.—Walton Old Hall. Plan of excavated walls, dotted outlines suggested by Davy MS, 1829.

There is no house very near these remains. The following is a rough sketch of the remaining fragments: the dotted part shows those parts which are now level with the ground but still very visible. Visited July 1829.'

This account accords very well with the remains recently uncovered, which represent a large hall, 19m by 8m aligned north-south, with squared buttresses and an elaborate doorway with an external porch. Abutting onto the north-west corner of the hall, a narrow, buttressed room, just over 4m wide, forms an angle to the hall and extends for at least 8m. Further remains, clearly existing beneath the mound of earth still covering that part of the ruins, are indicated as a dotted outline on the plan (Fig. 43), the extent of which is drawn from the sketch referred to in the Davy MS above.⁵¹

Fig. 40, 8. Fragment of carved limestone with a portion of a wing and drapery.

Fig. 40, 9. Stepped finial on a ridge tile with a large splash of brown glaze. Cf. those from the Priory site, nos. 4 and 5 (above, p. 138).

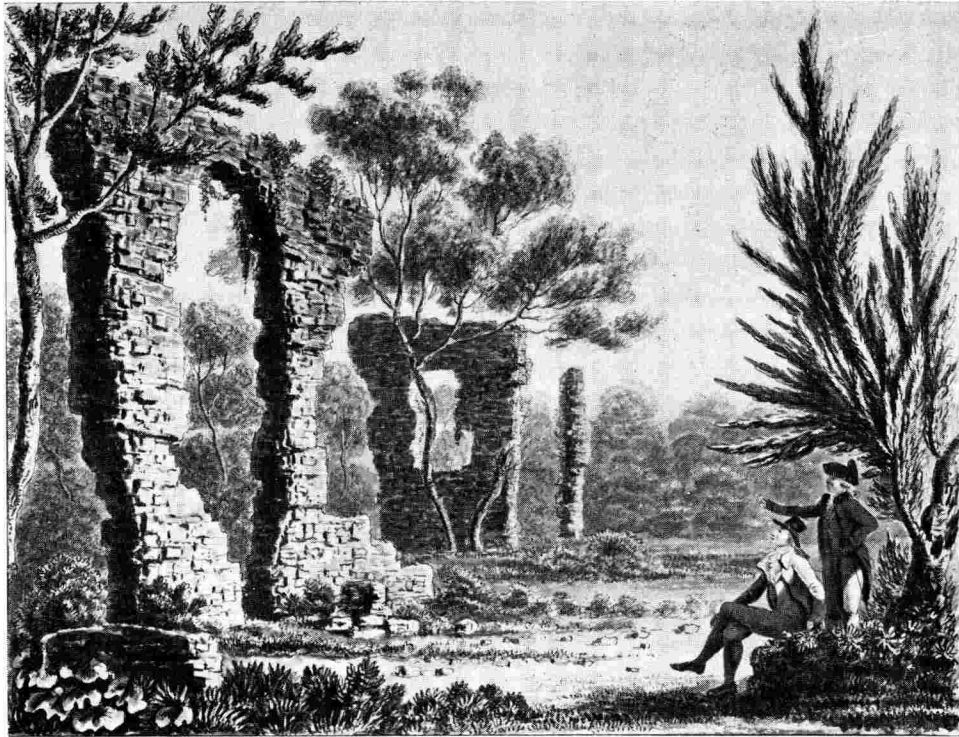
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⁵¹ There is also a pencilled drawing by Davy (B.M. Add. MS, 19177, f. 197) of a flint wall with one window robbed of dressed stone and described as 'Remains of Felixstow Old Hall . . . measuring 73' from N. to S. and 32' from E. to W. and 24' high N. side'.



'The West Prospect of Ruins of Walton Abbey', by Joshua Kirby (Suffolk Record Office).

PLATE XI



'Old Hall Ruins' by Isaac Johnson (British Museum Copyright).

*Davy 1839 is more
reverting than this*