

THE ROUGHAM ESTATE AND ROUGHAM HALL

by SIR GEORGE AGNEW, JAMES BETTLEY and EDWARD MARTIN

1. THE ROUGHAM ESTATE

by Edward Martin

THE MANORIAL HISTORY given by W.A. Copinger in his *Manors of Suffolk* is unfortunately confused and does not correctly explain how the existing estate came into being.¹ Around 1005 an Anglo-Saxon thegn named Ulfketel gave his estate at *Rucham* to Bury St Edmunds Abbey and it continued with the abbey down to the Reformation.² Subsequently the manor was acquired by the Drury family, who were already seated in Rougham by the fourteenth century, holding the sub-manors of *Netherplase* (Rougham Place) and Lawneys by knight service from the abbey. The male line of the family came to an end with the death of Roger Drury in 1634, and in 1645 his nephew Robert Wells (son of his sister Elizabeth and William Wells, rector of Rougham 1620–35) sold the Rougham Place part of his inheritance to Sir Jeffrey Burwell (1606–84), a Suffolk-born London lawyer who was already residing in Rougham by 1640.³ By 1674 Burwell's Rougham Place was a substantial house with twenty hearths. Wells, however, retained the part later known as Rougham Old Hall, which went on his death in 1660 to his under-age daughter Susan. In 1665 she married Captain Augustine Skottowe, a Norwich merchant, and soon afterwards, in 1668, they sold this part for £3000 to Roger Kerington (1633–1703), a mercer of Bury St Edmunds, who had been a witness to Wells's will in 1658.⁴

Kerington came from a family of Suffolk yeomen and clothiers, but they liked to maintain that they were 'extracted from an Antient Family of Gentry' seated at Kedington Hall near Haverhill, and they increasingly tended to give their surname as Kedington rather than Kerington.⁵ Roger had, however, achieved sufficient wealth and status to be listed, as an esquire with an estate of £800, among those to be created Knights of the Royal Oak in 1660 – but unfortunately for him this order of chivalry never came into being. He was taxed on an eleven-hearth property in Rougham in 1674, served as sheriff of Suffolk in 1690 and was buried from Rougham Hall in 1703. Roger's heirs were his sisters – Ann (1634–1717), Judith (c. 1636–1717) and Martha (1643–1719). Martha married John Westhropp of Bury and left an only surviving daughter Martha (d. 1767) who married John Cooke esq. of Bury (d. 1739). In 1735 it was recorded that in Rougham, as well as 'one seat called the Place' there was 'Another good Mansion being the seat of John Cooke, Esq.'⁶ The Cookes' daughter Ann (c. 1709–76) married, in 1755, the Revd Dr Gerard Neden, rector of Rougham from 1723 until his death in 1768. Anne had no children and she willed her estate to her young cousin, the Revd Roger Kedington (1750–1818).

Roger was the son of a country lawyer in Sudbury and after graduating from Cambridge he entered the church, serving first as a curate at Hartest, and then had brief spells as the rector of Little Chishill in Essex (1774–75), rector of Market Weston in Suffolk (1789–94), vicar of Felpham in Sussex (1794), and finally as prebend of Louth in Lincoln Cathedral (1796–1801). His lukewarm commitment to his calling was said to have been due to 'not getting the preferment he expected from B[isho]p Tomline (a connection)' and as a result 'he exchanged his black coat for a blue one and would not be addressed as *Reverend*'.⁷ Sir George Pretymman Tomline, 5th baronet, bishop of Lincoln 1787–1820, was indeed a 'connection' of Roger's – they were the same age, both were educated in the Bury St Edmunds Grammar School and

both went on to Cambridge, and George's brother John even married Roger's sister Anne in 1784. Roger clearly expected more results from such a close connection! He was, however, said to be 'much attached to agricultural pursuits' and was a friend of the noted agricultural writer Arthur Young.⁸ Roger's main agricultural interest appears to have centred on the advantages of oxen over horses for ploughing, and he published several papers on this subject.⁹ And it is from Young that we learn a bit more about Roger's character. In December 1809 Young wrote: 'Sir Thomas Gage ... is in Kedingtons house at Rougham [i.e. renting the Hall]; Kedington is gone into his Cottage,¹⁰ and is now again the Reverend, and his Shepherdess sent about her business' and adds 'Kedington called on me in the morning, the present Reverend, and took the name of God in vain five times in a quarter of an hour; nor is a man in the smallest degree, less respected for such opinions; but he is liked the better for them. This utter deadness in every thing that respects religion is the great curse of this vicinity'.¹¹ To explain the 'shepherdess' reference one needs to explore the Revd Roger's complex marital (and non-marital) history.

In 1774 he married Jane Butts, the granddaughter of Bishop Butts of Ely, but she died a year later having given birth to a daughter, Jane Judith. He married secondly, in 1786, Elizabeth Brundish, the daughter of a Norfolk clergyman, but she died childless in 1808. He married thirdly, in 1813, Susanna Russell, the widowed sister of Lord Berners, but they seem to have been living apart by the time of her death in 1818. But in between his second and third wives he seems to have had a dalliance with Sarah Balls, a young woman from Bardwell. She was married off to a miller named Thomas Eagle in 1813 and in his will of 1818 Roger made sizeable bequests to the two 'natural children' of Sarah Eagle – £4000 to Sarah Martin (b. 1808) and £2000 to John Martin (b. 1810). The use of Martin as a surname for the children is not directly explained, but it was Roger's mother's maiden name. John went on to establish a successful farming family in Barmer, Norfolk, having 900 acres and employing 37 labourers by 1851. There can be little doubt that Sarah Balls was the shepherdess sent on her way in 1809 (and equally doubtless she was pregnant at the time).

Roger did, however, apply himself successfully to his estate. In 1791 he added Battalies Farm with 323a and in 1808 he was involved in a tripartite partition and settlement of the estate of Sir Charles Davers, the 6th and last baronet, who had died in 1806.¹² The other parties to this were the marquess of Bristol (Davers's nephew and heir-at-law) and Robert Rushbrooke (who had exchanged his Little Saxham estate with the marquess of Bristol for the Rushbrooke estate, and whose son Robert had married one of Sir Charles's numerous illegitimate children). Roger emerged from this with 1280 acres in Rougham and the neighbouring parishes of Rushbrooke, Beyton, Hessett, Bradfield St George, Thurston, Tostock, Great Barton and Drinkstone. Not long afterwards he was one of the principal promoters of the enclosure of 1054 acres in the parish of Rougham under a Parliamentary Act of 1813.¹³ In the same year he achieved a major coup by purchasing the manors of Rougham, Lawneys and Nether Place alias Nether Hall, with the mansion called Rougham Place for £26,000 from Edward Bouverie of Delapré Abbey, Northamptonshire, and his wife Catherine.¹⁴ By this transaction he had managed to re-unite most of the old Drury estate in Rougham. The Rougham Place estate had been sold in the 1680s by the Burwell heirs to Sir Robert Davers, 1st baronet, newly arrived from Barbados in the West Indies with a fortune made from his sugar plantations. His son, another Sir Robert, acquired the neighbouring but grander Rushbrooke estate in 1703 and then sold his Rougham Place estate to his son-in-law Clement Corrance. Catherine Bouverie was Clement's great-granddaughter and heir. In 1815 Roger employed the surveyor Richard Payne of Bury St Edmunds to produce a sumptuous atlas of his enlarged Rougham estate, which includes an elevation drawing of the house then known as Rougham Hall, but later as the 'Old Hall' (Fig. 156). Now demolished, its site lies



FIG. 156 – Rougham ‘Old’ Hall, as depicted in the atlas of estate maps commissioned by Roger Kedington from Richard Payne in 1815 (*courtesy of the Rougham Estate Trust*).

on the south side of the Rougham Hall Nurseries complex on the A14 road, from which the remains of an avenue of lime trees stretches southward towards Rougham church. In 1816 Roger leased this house, then the main one on the estate, for three years to George Battye esq. of Kensington, Middlesex.¹⁵

On Roger’s death in 1818, the Rougham estate passed to his only legitimate daughter, Jane Judith (1775–1845), who had married, in 1794, Philip Bennet of Tollesbury Lodge in Essex and Widcombe House in Somerset. It was this couple who, by 1821, were employing the architect Thomas Hopper to build them a new mansion in a part of the estate that had been just a plantation of trees in 1815 (Fig. 157). Philip was sheriff of Suffolk in 1821, and one might think that the new mansion was born out of his desire to proclaim his new status in Suffolk society – but, curiously, his coat-of-arms is absent from the new building. The only arms visible are on the two-storey bay window on the south side and these relate only to his wife’s ancestry – at the apex is a shield with the Kedington crest (a crowned demi-lion holding in its right paw a cuttelax or cutlass (see Fig. 158) and across the middle are six shields: (from left to right) 1. invisible under ivy, but probably Butts, for Jane Judith’s mother; 2. Martin of Barrards Hall in Whatfield (for her grandmother); 3. Brinkley of Lawshall (great-grandmother); 4. Burlz of Depden (great-x2-grandmother); 5. Copinger of Buxhall (great-x3-grandmother); 6. Brage of Raydon (another great-x3-grandmother). The overwhelming Kedington flavour to the heraldry raises a suspicion that the building was actually

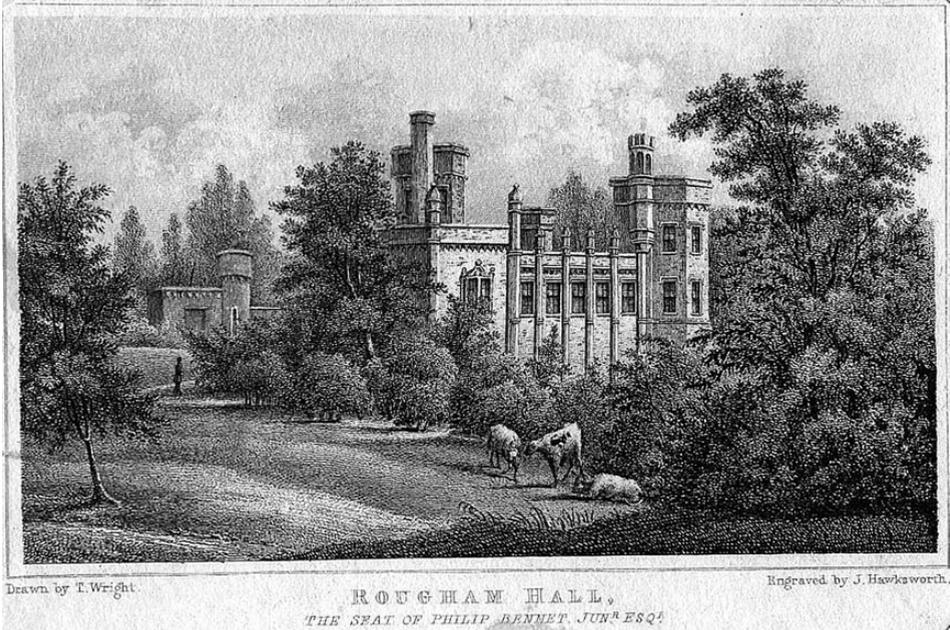


FIG. 157 – Mid 19th-century engraving of Rougham ‘New’ Hall (courtesy of C. Hawkins).



FIG. 158 – The Kedington crest on the apex of the bay window on the south side of Rougham Hall with, inset, the arms of Roger Kedington from his 1815 estate atlas.

commissioned (?and started) by the Revd Roger before his death in 1818; Tudor-Gothic would probably have been very much to his taste.

It is also possible that the new mansion was intended primarily for the Bennets' eldest son, another Philip (1795–1866) who was married in 1823, for the census of 1841 records the young couple as the residents of the 'New Hall', while Philip senior was in the 'Old Hall' with two of his younger sons, but an absent wife; for whatever reason, Jane Judith was living in London at her death in 1845. Philip senior was still in the Old Hall in 1851 and he was probably still there at his death in 1853. In 1861 it was occupied by Charles Barker, the farm bailiff, and he was still there in 1881, but in one of the Old Hall Cottages, which suggests that the Old Hall had either been demolished or subdivided. In 1851 the New Hall was unoccupied except for a small group of servants; in 1861 it was being lived in by the recently married Major Philip Bennet (1837–75) and his heir was born there in 1862. But in 1871 he and his family were living in Percy Lodge in Ryde, Hampshire, and the New Hall only seems to have been occupied by the family of Charles Frost, an agricultural labourer, and they were recorded in lonely occupation in 1881 as well. But it does seem that the Hall was being let, from at least 1875, to a William Morris esq.,¹⁶ who is listed at the Hall in the *Kelly's Directories* for 1875 and 1879, and in *Pawsey's Ladies Fashionable Directory* for 1883. 1883 saw a changeover of rental to Mr Spencer Brunton, a London stockbroker who is listed at the Hall in the *Kelly's Directories* for 1883, 1888 and 1892 (his daughter was the Edwardian actress Enid Spencer Brunton).

In 1893 the last Philip Bennet (1862–1913) sold Rougham Hall and the estate to Edwin James Johnstone (1872–1946), the wealthy young son of James Johnstone, editor of *The Standard*. A year later he married Marion Ada Yeo, the stepdaughter of Professor George Henslow (the son of the Revd Professor John Stevens Henslow of Cambridge and Hitcham, the tutor and lifelong friend of Charles Darwin and the excavator of the Roman burial mounds on the Rougham estate in 1843–44). Described as a 'great aviculturist', she was the first to both keep and breed the Mikado Pheasant and the Mount Apo Lorikeet (named *Trichoglossus johnstoniae* in her honour).¹⁷ To aid this interest a substantial group of aviaries was added to the north of the Hall complex by 1904. Additions were also made to the original building and to the gardens, including the stone balustrade on the terrace on the south side of the Hall (Figs. 159 and 160). The upgraded gardens were felt to be worthy of an article in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* (24 Oct. 1896, pp. 491–92). But Johnstone's interest in the property was short-lived and in 1904 he sold it to George William Agnew (1852–1941), a partner in the firm of Thomas Agnew and Sons, fine art dealers and publishers of London. Agnew almost immediately commissioned extensions to the Hall from the London architect John Macvicar Anderson. In 1912 Agnew succeeded his father as the 2nd baronet and served as sheriff of Suffolk in 1922. In September 1940 Sir George, then aged eighty-eight, was in the house when it was hit by a German bomb (see below). Luckily he survived but the house was ruined and remains in that state today. Sir George's great-grandson, another Sir George, has recently set up the Rougham Estate Trust to care for the estate for the future.



FIG. 159 – Rougham Hall (south façade) c. 1900 (courtesy of C. Hawkins).



FIG. 160 – A room inside Rougham Hall (marked as 'Dining Room' on the plan in Fig. 161) from the sale catalogue of 1904 (courtesy of the Rougham Estate Trust).

2. ROUGHAM HALL by James Bettley

Philip Bennet's architect for the new Rougham Hall was Thomas Hopper (1776–1856) who had an extensive practice, mainly but not exclusively domestic; he was responsible for a large number of country houses in England, Wales, and Ireland, designed in a variety of styles. His belief that 'it is an architect's business to understand all styles, and to be prejudiced in favour of none', may have won him clients, but it did little for his posthumous reputation, as it opened him to the charge of a lack of principles and discernment, particularly in the eyes of the generation that immediately followed him. His career was helped first by his attracting the attention of the Prince Regent, for whom he worked on Carlton House from 1807 onwards, and then by his appointment in 1816 as county surveyor of Essex, a post which entailed a certain amount of mundane work but also brought him into contact with the county's leading landowners.¹⁸

Hopper's first work in Suffolk came in 1813 at Melford Hall, Long Melford, for Sir William Parker; he did further work at the house in 1840 for Sir William's brother Sir Hyde Parker. Also in 1813 he began Glemham House, Great Glemham, for the Revd Dr Samuel Kilderbee, work that was not completed until 1823. During this time he made alterations to the Public Hall in Beccles, 1818–19, and built Thorington Hall for Henry Bence Bence, under construction in 1819 and still not finished in 1824. Rougham was under way in 1821 and nearing completion in 1827. Hopper's later work in the county was at Brome Hall and Woolverstone Hall (both 1823), and at Kentwell Hall (1825–27).¹⁹

The style chosen for Rougham Hall was Tudor Gothic. There is no telling whether was this was Bennet's suggestion, or Hopper's, but this romantic, historicist style was very fashionable in the 1820s; this was, after all, the age of Sir Walter Scott, whose novel *Ivanhoe* was published in 1820, and *Kenilworth* in 1821. It was a style that could be used to emphasise – or suggest – the antiquity of a client's family. The result combined the aesthetic appeal of the Tudor age with modern conveniences. The construction of the house can be dated by two entries in the *Kalendarium* of the Revd Thomas Mills. On 11 July 1821 he wrote, 'We went to Rougham Mr Bennetts for a couple of days he is building a Gothic Residence under the direction of Mr Hopper.' By 11 March 1826 he is able to say that he 'called on the Philip Bennets who are living in the new House at Rougham in two Rooms – it is modern Gothic, built at considerable expense under the Inspection of Mr Hopper – there are no very good rooms.' *A Concise Description of Bury St Edmund's and its Environs* (1827) said of the house that 'it is in a forward state, and presents an elegant and singular diversity of Gothic architecture'.

The house was built of local red brick, with dressings partly of stone and partly of cement. There were two large polygonal towers, one at each end of the main south-facing range, and at the west end of this range a block with polygonal buttresses, pinnacles, and attractive windows: a two-storey bay on the south side, and an oriel to the west. There is also a frieze decorated with trefoils and a cornice with machicolations. That much is 'Tudor'. Elsewhere the windows may have Tudor hoodmoulds, but they are large, with modern sliding sashes, and a Georgian desire for symmetry led to the inclusion of some blind windows.

The plan of the house seems wilfully picturesque, consisting of two ranges at an angle of about thirty degrees to each other. The main range, facing south, contained the drawing room, ante room and main stair, library, and, at the base of the east tower, a boudoir opening into a conservatory. The other range contained the entrance hall and dining room, followed by extensive service quarters. A porte cochère extended from the main entrance. Most visitors to the house would never have gone beyond the dining room, drawing room, and perhaps the

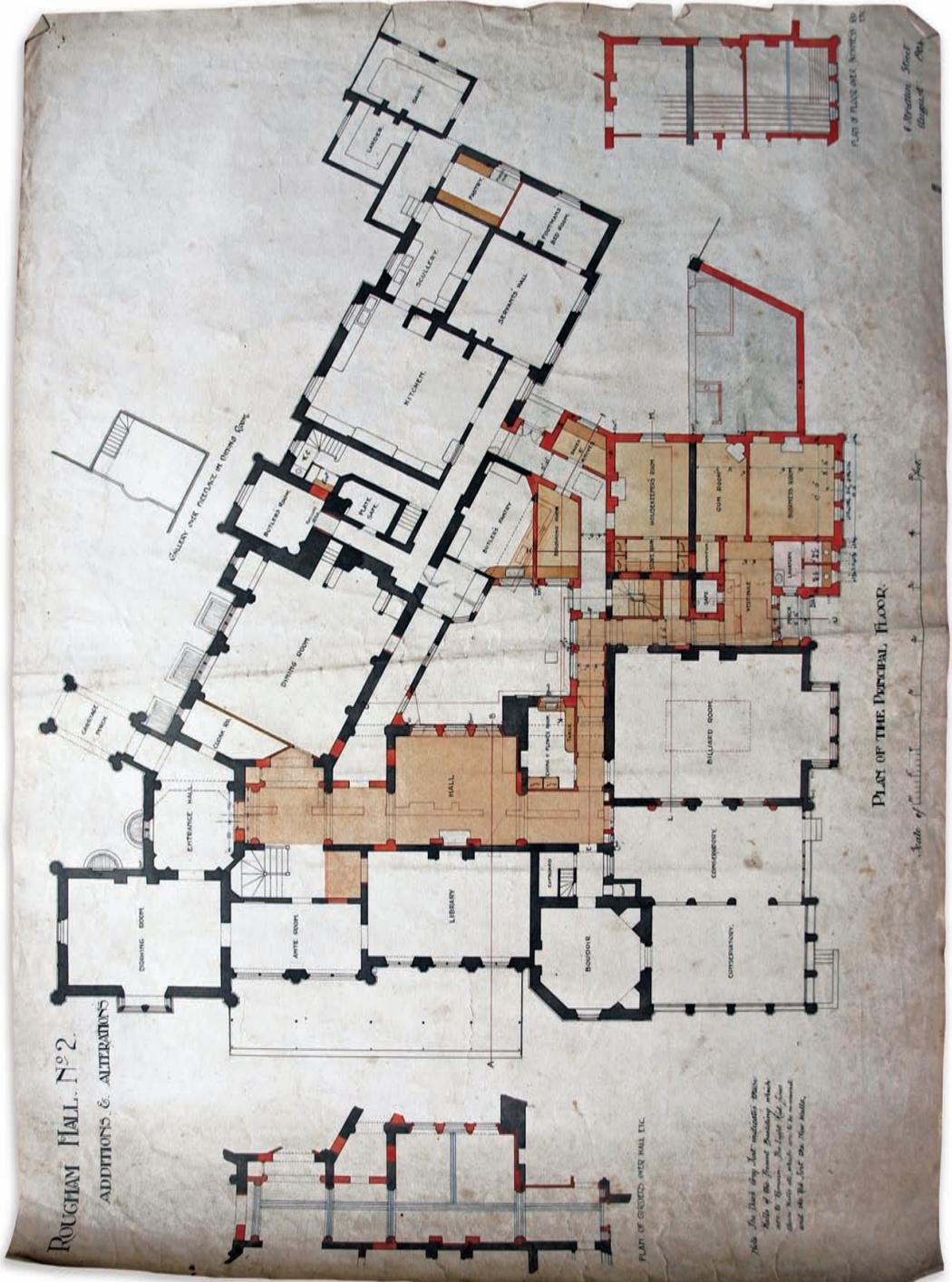


FIG. 161 – Ground floor plan of Rougham Hall showing the alterations proposed by the architect John Macvicar Anderson in 1904. (Courtesy of the Rougham Estate Trust).

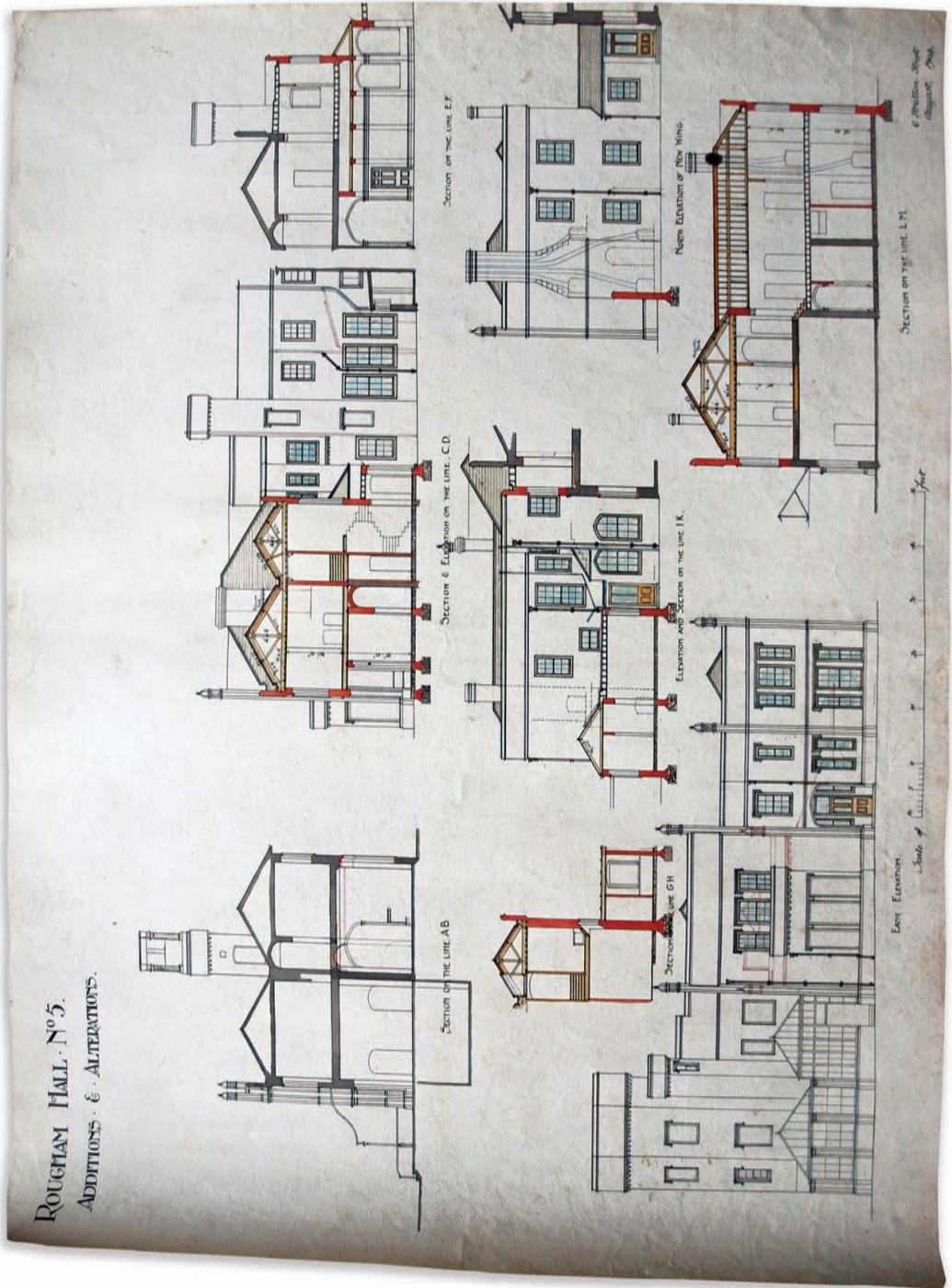


FIG. 162 – Elevations and section of Rougham Hall showing the alterations proposed by the architect John Macvicar Anderson in 1904 (courtesy of the Rougham Estate Trust).

library. More intimate guests might have penetrated as far as the boudoir and, later, the billiard room – the latter originally a single-storey structure, added to one side of the conservatory at the east end of the house, probably by E.J. Johnstone after 1893.

Further alterations and additions were carried out for Sir George Agnew in 1904–5. His architect was John Macvicar Anderson (1835–1915), nephew, partner, and successor to William Burn (1789–1870), another architect with a prolific country-house practice (Figs 161 and 162). Much of Anderson's own career consisted of continuing work begun by his uncle; examples in Suffolk are Orwell Park, Nacton, remodelled and enlarged by Burn between about 1852 and 1862, with further work (including the observatory) by Anderson in 1871–73, and Rendlesham Hall, which had burnt down in 1830, was rebuilt by Burn in 1868–71, and again by Anderson following another fire in 1898. At Rougham, Anderson knocked together the ante room and main stair to make a large reception hall, and created a new grand staircase to the north of the library, as well as building a new block joining the billiard room (which was raised to two storeys) to the service range, leaving a small internal courtyard.²⁰

The partial destruction of the house by the bombing in 1940 revealed details of its construction that might otherwise have remained hidden, most obviously the cast-iron beams that probably belong to the alterations of 1904–5. In the south range can be seen tie-rods that were most likely part of Hopper's original construction, as well as iron 'shoes' into which timber beams were slotted.

The stables were built at the same time as the house (a brick is carved with the date 1824 and the initials AB and PB for Philip Bennet junior (1795–1866) and his wife Anne (née



FIG. 163 – The entrance to the stable block with the clock tower on its right, and the low electricity generating house on the extreme right.

Pilkington; married 1823)) and were made to appear more medieval and fortified, with arrow loops and more pronounced machicolations, and a gateway with four-centred arch (Fig. 163). The stables were originally detached from the house, but by the end of the 19th century had been joined to it, probably as part of the alterations carried out for E.J. Johnstone. These alterations also included the addition of the electricity generating house on the east side of the stable yard, and the stone clock turret, as well the construction of a number of estate cottages.

THE AGNEW FAMILY AT ROUGHAM HALL

by George Agnew

The estate that George William Agnew purchased in 1904 comprised Rougham Hall, ninety estate cottages and houses and 3500 acres of land. George's grandfather Thomas and father Sir William had built up the firm of art dealers, Thomas Agnew and Sons, firstly in Exchange Street, Manchester, from 1810 and then in Old Bond Street, London, from 1860. They had enormous financial success and Sir William Agnew became a very wealthy man. George was educated at Rugby School and St John's College Cambridge, where he represented the university in the first three Varsity matches. He was a partner in the family firm from 1874 until his retirement in 1902. In 1878 he married Fanny, the youngest daughter of John Stuart Bolton of Oulton Hall, Norfolk.

George's passions were gardening, shooting, Liberal politics, music and the novels of Sir Walter Scott. In 1906 he was elected as the Liberal member of parliament for the Manchester seat of West Salford, a seat he held until 1918. To celebrate his election he had himself photographed with the estate staff, who were largely gardeners and gamekeepers, and with his eldest son John Stuart, who was born in 1879, seated beside him. In 1910 George inherited the baronetcy that had been given to his father in 1895 for services to the arts.

During the years before the First World War Sir George arranged an annual flower show that was held at the end of May at Rougham Hall each year. The last pre-war flower festival was held on 27 May 1914. Life at the Hall continued relatively unaffected by the war until 31 March 1916, when there was a large Zeppelin raid over eastern England and one flew over Rougham Hall on its way to bomb Bury St Edmunds. George saw his opportunity, grabbed his deer stalking rifle, ran to the top of one of the towers of the hall and opened fire on the airship. The Zeppelin continued on its way apparently unaffected by the attack and proceeded with its mission. George went back to bed.

In 1910 John Stuart Agnew married Kathleen, the daughter of Isaac Hewitt White of Leeds and they moved into the dower house known as The Battlies within the park of Rougham Hall. Their first child, John Anthony Stuart, was born on 25 July 1914, just days before the outbreak of war. John was called up and served with the Suffolk Yeomanry as a staff captain under General Hodgson at Gallipoli and then in Palestine, not returning home until 1918. He sent back regular diary entries to his wife during the campaigns in the Dardanelles and the Near East, which are currently being collated and edited with a view to possible publication.

When he came back to Rougham in 1918 John found that the agent who had looked after the management of the estate in his absence had been fiddling the books for years and had fled at the prospect of his impending return. So John gave this management job to his loyal servant during the war years, Arthur Daniels – trust counted for more than qualifications at times like this. The two of them ran the estate together right up to the 1950s.

John started to actively farm part of the estate. Like most agricultural estates, almost all the land, with the exception of the Home Farm, was let to tenant farmers and had been for generations. He established a pedigree herd of the local Red Poll cattle and named it 'Battlies' after his home, rather than Rougham Hall; possibly a telling detail. He also planted shelter

belts round some of the fields on light land and established a herd of Suffolk sheep.

Two of Sir George's grandchildren have committed to paper some of their memories of life at the Hall during the early 1930s. Firstly, Joanna Lillis (born Wentworth Reeve) wrote

My brother John and I were privileged to spend all our school holidays at Rougham. My mother was her mother's favourite daughter – a fact which earned us our own bedrooms at Rougham but which also, looking back on it, I think may have caused a certain amount of jealousy amongst some of her other grandchildren.

Grandfather was very relaxed and kindly. He had a large gold watch and chain and got us to 'blow' it open when we went to say goodnight. Grandma was beautifully dressed in full-length silk chiffon dresses, mostly made by Pacquin. She always sat bolt upright and expected others to do the same. When the massive gong was sounded for lunch you had to be there ready to file into the dining room behind her. To be unpunctual was not allowed!

On shooting days in the winter, the drugget (a thick white dust sheet) was always laid from the side door to the dining room. The table had a lovely white damask cloth, there would be a large bottle of beer by each place and several decanters of whisky on the table, but I don't remember any pre-prandial drinks at all. Four different puddings were laid before Grandma's place which she served out afterwards. She died in about 1936.

A small cart, drawn by a donkey, would come up from the kitchen garden daily (now Rougham Nurseries – they win medals at Chelsea most years for delphiniums). At this time of year [June] great bunches of sweet peas would arrive in all the different colours, and I loved to bury my face in them before arranging them for the house. Grandma's favourite flowers were carnations, and there was a special greenhouse for these. There were greenhouses full of peaches, nectarines and grapes, which we sometimes raided keeping a look-out for Jones the head gardener who was quite fierce.

The house had two towers (one came down in 1940 [actually in the 1970s] and the other is now badly cracked). John and I would get on to the roof of one of them and smoke 'de Reste Minors', which we bought for 4d (about 1.5p) for 10 at the Post Office, which was next to the Home Farm and run by a Mrs Sutton. My nanny, Al, married the head cowman on the farm and 'Maggie', my mother's cook, married the second cowman. Uncle Jack (Sir John Agnew, father of Keith Agnew) had a prize herd of Red Poll cattle, all milked by hand in those days.

John was allowed to dine with the grown-ups, but I continued to have supper in the nursery – usually soups, red jelly and biscuits until the time came to leave in 1938 for Southampton and the S.S. Ranchi, our P & O boat for Hong Kong.

Another grandchild, Dickie Kingzett, wrote in 2005 the following description of his Agnew grandparents during the period running up to the start of the Second World War

Grandpa allowed no cocktails to be drunk at Rougham, although he himself had a small glass of gin with his lunch every day – I believe for medicinal reasons. Wine did not interest him but he drank tiny glasses of port after dinner at night. I knew nothing about port then – and not very much even now – but I suspect that it was very good port. His two great passions in old age were the novels of Sir Walter Scott and his rhododendrons and azaleas. They suited Rougham soil and were absolutely spectacular and continued to flourish for several years after the bomb.

Towards the end of his life Grandpa was beautifully looked after by a butler named Mattins, a tall elegant ex-Life Guardsman. The family wrote glowing references for him to his next employers, a family whom I knew called Mackworth-Young. Unfortunately in their war-time absence Mattins drank his way steadily through their cellars and died of alcoholic cirrhosis.

One achievement of which Grandpa was proud was to have cultivated a special breed of melon in his greenhouse. He registered it as 'Agnew of Lochnaw' – a reference to the Wigtonshire home of the ancestors of the family who farmed there.

With the advent of the Second World War, the Hall became drawn into world affairs. In the summer of 1940, after the retreat from Dunkirk and with the country expecting a German invasion, ammunition dumps were being set up all around. The park of Rougham Hall became an arms dump with a considerable number of troops living in tents in the surrounding area. Munitions were piled up and hidden under camouflage netting. The park became ringed with barbed wire and there were armed guards posted at all entrances. The house itself was destined to become a military headquarters.

Fifth columnists were a real concern in the country at this time. In an attempt to combat this, an organisation was established called the Local Defence Volunteers or LDVs. Their job was to watch out for strangers in their local communities who might be parachuted in by the Germans under the cover of darkness. The LDVs became the eyes and ears of the local community and watched crossroads and other junctions particularly at night. In the area around Rougham it is known that there were several German sympathisers. A vicar in a local church, a district nurse who had access to a car, a doctor and a girl who later lived near the future airbase in Rougham called RAF Bury St Edmunds. The district nurse was actually caught trying to signal to German aircraft. The headlights of her Austin 8 had been modified to shine upwards and she was seen in Rougham flashing her lights at German aircraft at night. She was arrested and interned. With the presence of these German sympathisers it is perhaps not surprising that German Intelligence became aware of the arms dump, troops and plans for a headquarters at Rougham.

On the night of Monday 23 September 1940 the air raid siren went off in Bury St Edmunds. At Rougham Hall there were plans in place for air raids. The butler, Mattins, would listen out for the siren, which was audible at the house but probably not very clearly, depending on wind direction. He would then wake the household and everyone would go down into the cellars below the dining room for safety until the 'all clear' sounded. On that night the occupants of the house included the widowed Sir George, his daughter Bel and son-in-law Hinty, from Thurston Grange. His wife Dorothy had died earlier that year and he was spending more time at Rougham Hall. The live-in staff were in a separate wing and also in the accommodation in the stable yard. Monday night was Mattins's night off and he was out for the evening. No one else heard the siren or thought that it was their responsibility to raise the house. After all, who was going to deliberately target Rougham Hall, and a stray bomb from Bury was unlikely. A German aircraft circled the house for a while dropping flares. Then it dropped its bomb straight down through the dining room into the cellar where it exploded. It is hardly necessary to point out what would have happened to everyone if they had been down there. As it was, no one was killed, though the house was seriously damaged (Fig. 164). The bomber then flew on over Bury St Edmunds and strafed the area round the railway station and round the Spread Eagle public house. The incident is reported in a heavily censored manner on page three of the *Free Press and Post* of Saturday 28 September

Several flares were thrown out by the raiders during the night and a number of bombs fell in the area round. One did considerable damage to a fine old Tudor-style mansion in a park in a village, the residents having remarkable escapes from personal injury and being removed to other local accommodation.

Also on page seven of the same paper



FIG. 164 – North side of Rougham Hall showing the damage caused by the German bomb in 1940 and the eventual demolition of the West Tower in the 1970s. The exposed room was a bedroom, with another more fragmentary one above it, both over the entrance hall. The surviving section to the right contained the drawing room, with a bedroom with an oriel window above it. The East Tower, in the background, contained the boudoir, with ‘Mr Agnew’s Dressing Room’ above it, and a bedroom above that.

The S.E. Area. East Anglia has had its share of raids. Some towns had been damaged again but most of the bombs have fallen on rural areas.

On Monday night several S.E. area towns were visited. In one numerous houses lost their window panes, tiling etc, but no casualties are recorded, neither were there any at a well known aged Baronet’s magnificent hall which was wrecked. In another town bombs fell very close. A church in a rural area had a narrow escape.

In the aftermath of the bombing, many of the troops billeted in the park rushed over to see if they could help. Naturally an enormous effort was made to save furniture, paintings, family silver, etc from the ruins. Troops were running backwards and forwards carrying things. One of the paintings, a seascape by Stannard which was painted in oil on panel, had broken into three pieces. The top piece was just sky and as it lay in the ruins it looked like a piece of painted furniture to any untutored eye. Miraculously it was spotted and the picture was later repaired. Some of the dining room silver fared less well. Spoons and forks were scattered everywhere and were being picked up by many volunteer helpers. A surprisingly large amount was returned but the diner service was never the same again.

Joanna Lillis, who was not an eye witness, tells the family version of the event thus

A German plane circled the house for at least an hour before dropping a bomb in the centre of the house. Next day 'Lord Haw-Haw' broadcast from Germany 'Last night we bombed the house of the richest Jew in England' so it is thought that the bomb was intended for Rushbrooke Hall, the house of Lord Rothschild, a mile and half away as the crow flies. Amazingly, although there were still 16 servants in the house looking after my grandfather, Aunt Bel Chance (a daughter) and Hinton Stewart (son-in-law married to daughter Dorothy, known as Dots, who had died earlier in 1940), no one was hurt by the bomb which fell on the room occupied by the butler, who was away that night. Next morning my grandfather, Bel and Hinty had to be brought down from their bedrooms by ladder as the main staircase was destroyed. Grandpa was taken to Uncle Jack's house, the Battlies, at the end of one of the drives but he did not survive for very long. [Uncle Jack is JSA]

Repair to the Hall was not possible during the war, and by 1945 the weather had got in and the place was a ruin. Large houses like this were not considered to be an asset in the new post-war world and the ruin was left. The Hall remains a spectacular ruin to this day. In the 1960s a Christmas tree plantation was established in front of the Hall. Many trees were harvested from it but the remainder have become tall and now screen the ruin from further away. It is planned that they should be removed to restore most of the original view. In the 1970s the west tower was demolished for safety reasons. The stable yard remains intact and the two cottages are occupied by tenants. Repairs were made to the roofs of the stables themselves during the 1990s.

NOTES

- 1 Copinger 1910, 322–28.
- 2 Ulfketel also gave the abbey estates in Rickinghall, Woolpit, Hinderclay and Redgrave. He was probably the man who is referred to in later sources as *comes* (earl) or *ealdorman* of the East Angles, but in contemporary sources he is only referred to as a *minister* (i.e. thegn). He was killed fighting the Danes at the Battle of *Assandun* in Essex in 1016. See Robertson 1956, 146–47 and 392; Whitelock *et al.* 1965, 87 n.1 and 96.
- 3 Copinger 1910, 322; Redstone 1904, 174.
- 4 SROB, 839/2/34.
- 5 Copinger 1910, 325.
- 6 Kirby 1735, 156–57.
- 7 Venn 1898, 84.
- 8 Obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1818, 379.
- 9 'On the comparative Utility of Oxen and Horses in Husbandry', *Letters and Papers on Agriculture, Planting, &c, Addressed to the Bath and West of England Society*, vol. II (Bath, 1783), 279–84 (reprinted in *Dodsley's Annual Register* 1783, 91–92); 'Horses and Oxen compared', *Communications to the Board of Agriculture, on Subjects Relative to the Husbandry and Internal Improvement of the Country*, vol. VI pt. 1 (London, 1808), 335–40.
- 10 *The Cottage* is shown as being immediately to the north of (and across the road from) Rougham Hall on the 1813 enclosure award for Rougham (SROB, HA534/7592).
- 11 Gazley 1954, 417.
- 12 SROB, HA 507/2/222.
- 13 SROB, HA534/7592.
- 14 SROB, 839/2/211–13.
- 15 SROB, 839/2/45.
- 16 Probably of Wretham Hall, Norfolk, and 24 Eccleston Square, London (1883); sheriff of Norfolk 1886; died 1890.
- 17 www.avisoc.co.uk/table-of-contents/jean-delacour-and-the-avicultural-magazine-part-i/.
- 18 Burton 1985; Colvin 2008, 539–43. Neither mentions Rougham Hall, the only known source for which is the *Kalendarium* (1812–26) of the Revd Thomas Mills, rector of Stutton (two MS volumes in the possession of Christopher Hawkins, who has very kindly made them available for study).
- 19 Mills mentions Hopper's work at Glemham House (13 August 1818), Melford Hall (9 October 1819), and Thorington Hall (20 November 1824).
- 20 Designs for alterations and additions by J. Macvicar Anderson, August 1904, in the possession of Sir George Agnew. For Burn, see Walker 1976; for Anderson, Gray 1985, 89.

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