

HEMPSHILL HALL

(Draft)

Nuthall

Nottingham NG6 7AB

(richardhuntqk@hotmail.co.uk)

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From this.....



To this.....



This is a short account of the history and restoration of Hempshill Hall, significant parts of which were built in 1497, only twelve years after Richard III was killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field.

The first section details what is known about the previous owners of the house up to its purchase by the Hunts in 2005.

The second section describes some of the restoration work.

The third section gives a brief outline of the development of the house.

The final part gives a more detailed account of the houses structure and its surroundings, as well as asking a few questions about various aspects of its construction.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

Earlier descriptions of Hempshill Hall have said that it was built around 1550 either at the end of the reign of King Henry VIII or during that of his son Edward VI, on the site of a former church or chantry chapel, (see appendix i). However, recent dendrochronological investigations carried out by Robert Howard of the Nottingham Tree Ring Dating Laboratory produced a felling date of 1497 for the timbers of the main part of the house putting the date of construction some 50 years earlier than previously thought into a period before the suppression of the chantry chapels. Further support for this earlier date is a document of 1535 stating that Mary Sacheverell, (a possible early owner of the Hall), received lands including “the mill and chapel site” supporting the tree-ring evidence in indicating that wherever the chapel had been, it was not on the site occupied by the Hall. However it could also suggest that as the mill is thought to have been located close to the Hall, (about 200 yards to the west), the chapel was also likely to be located nearby in what later became Upper Hempshill - rather than in Nether Hempshill, which was about two thirds of a mile to the east, (not far from the present Cinderhill roundabout).

The new dating evidence also casts doubt on previous suggestions about who was actually responsible for building the Hall and who its owners were during the first 100 or so years of its history, but attempts to find an answer to these questions are complicated by missing records, the difficulty of determining if it is Hempshill Hall that is being referred to in the documents that have been found, the fact that different parts of “Hempshill” lay at various times in the parishes of Bullwell, Greasley and Nuthall, and the complicated dealings between four families, the Strelleys, Willoughbys, Sacheverells, and the Ayscoughs, many of whose members, (with little regard for future historians), bore the same Christian names.

However, the key contenders appear to be as follows:

Sir John Strelley: (Born 1449? died 1501). Married Saunchia Willoughby, had two sons, John, (born 1494? died, according to various sources, before 1501, in 1525 or in 1535), George, (died in infancy), and four daughters, (Isabella, Margaret, Elizabeth and Anna).

Henry Willoughby: Brother-in-Law to Sir John Strelley above.

Isabella: Daughter of Sir John Strelley, married first, Clement Low, and in a will drawn up by Thomas Ayscough in 1535 was left property in Hempshill. She had a daughter, Mary Low, who married Sir William Sacheverell, (died 1558, and whose father had died in 1538). Mary and William Sacheverell had a son, variously referred to as Radulphus or Raffie or Ralph Sacheverell, and another, Sir Patrick Sacheverell, who had a daughter Ann who married a John Strelley of Hempshill about 1600.

(Note; there is some confusion as to whether Radulphus and Patrick were brothers or cousins, and if cousins, which one of them was actually Mary's son).

Sir Francis Willoughby: (who built Wollaton Hall between 1580 -1588), and had a son, Sir P Willoughby.

There are also two other records which may have a bearing on this issue.

First, a manuscript in the Middleton ms to the effect that in 1596 Sir Francis Willoughby took Ralph and William Sacheverell to court over a house in Hempshill that he, (Sir Francis), had obtained from Ralph? Sacheverell because of a loan he had made to the latter in connection with Ralph's son.

Secondly, there is, (allegedly), a note in Thoroton that land at Hempshill had been transferred by the original Sir John Strelley to Henry Willoughby in 1496, the significance of which, just one year before the Hall was built, would not have been evident to previous commentators on the Hall's history, unaware as they were of its actual date of construction.

From the above there seem to be three possibilities:

1. The house was built by Sir John Strelley in 1497. Passed to the Sacheverells, via Sir John Strelley's son, (John 2), and then on John 2's death in 1535, to John 2's sister Isabella (Low), then to her daughter Mary Sacheverell, (who received lands at Hempshill including the mill and chapel site), then to Mary's son Ralph (Sacheverell) and finally to Sir Francis Willoughby some time before 1596.
2. The house was built by Henry Willoughby in 1497. It passed to the Sacheverells, (possibly by reverting somehow to the first Sir John Strelley's son, (John 2), and then on the latter's death in 1535, to his sister Isabella (Low), who bequeathed it to her daughter Mary (Sacheverell), from whom it passed her son Ralph (Sacheverell) and then to Sir Francis, (as in 1 above).
3. The house was built by Henry Willoughby in 1497 and remained in the Willoughbys' possession until sold by Sir Patrick, (or Sir Percival), Willoughby, and his wife Bridget, to Francis Shepherd, (yeoman) on 17th July 1621.

The next item of interest appears in 1659 when a John Shepherd, (son of Francis Shepherd of Hempshill), confessed to "being in arms in support of the recent rebellion", (the English Civil War). Whether this had any bearing on the matter or not, the Shepherds sold the hall shortly afterwards, (in 1663), to a Richard Slater, who then leased it to his sister Jane Reyner, who inherited the title to the property on her brother's death. When in 1721 she in turn died, the estate was bought by a Godfrey Wentworth.

Nothing is known of the house or the estate from then until 1826 when the Holden family papers list the "Sale of the Manor of Bulwell and Hempshill Hall" with property in Hucknall Torkard for the sum of £19,293 12s???? The estate then seems to have been acquired in 1828 by the Rev. Padley, the Rector of Bulwell, for £19,258. At the time it totalled 895 acres, 2 roods and 26 perches being bounded on the south by the Alfreton Road and on the east by the Cinderhill to Bulwell Road. It isn't clear if Mr Padley ever lived in the Hall himself and the next mention is in 1837, when there is documentary evidence that refers to Selina Bolton of Hemsall Hall, widow.

Sometime between 1839 and 1844 Robert Holden of Nuthall Temple, (built in 1754 and demolished because of Death Duties in 1929), bought the Hall, and according to a history of Nuthall Temple written in 1916 by another R. Holden, at that time the library of the Temple contained 3 pollard

oak tables, (one possibly a Loo table), on heavily carved pedestals, and a carved walnut occasional table all brought from Hempshill Hall, and all of which according to Robert Holden, were of a later date than most of the other furniture in the Temple.

Hempshill was subsequently leased to Thomas Nixon, esquire, Samuel Bolton, esquire, and in 1851 to George Bacon, esquire, followed by the Grammers, Barbers, Wrights, (Houghtons ?), and finally the Roberts. The 1851 lease, (see appendix iii), refers to a Greenhouse, Potting house, Forcing house, Brew house, Garden frames, Entrance veranda, Garden house, Water closet, Larder, and a Hovel with manger at the back of the arbour, before going on to describe individual rooms within the house itself, some of which it is possible to link to some of the rooms in use today.

From 1941 to 1945 the house was occupied by women of the ATS, (the Auxiliary Territorial Service), who acted as drivers for officers stationed in the area, along with some members of the FANY, (the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry), with the officers having rooms in the house itself whilst the other ranks were billeted in two Nissen Huts erected on the lawn, with some of the cars being garaged in the "Haunted House", (formerly the stables and possibly the servants' quarters), which stood between the old driveway, (presently a public footpath), and the stream. When the ATS moved out in 1945, this house was in such a poor state that it had to be demolished. One surviving photograph of it shows a building with mullioned windows, a steep pitched roof and a large chimney. It has also been said that the bressamer over the fireplace in the breakfast room of the Hall came from this house. Interestingly this is the only large timber in the Hall that has clearly been reused from elsewhere and it also has a different dendrochronological date from any other dated timber in the Hall, being felled circa 1600 AD and leading one to suspect that this was a late tudor house demolished like so many old buildings in the area without any thought for their historic value.

At the end of the war A. F. Roberts, a local business man and conservative councillor bought the property. He had in fact taken a lease on the hall before the outbreak of the war and was responsible for the installation of electricity and various other modernisation and repair works carried out at that time, possibly including the covering in of the timber beams in the dining room ceiling, which, when the casing was removed during the recent restoration revealed steel channels bolted to each side of the central beam with "... July 11th 1932" helpfully chalked on them.

At that time the Roberts family had several business interests including Roberts & Glover, (a knitwear / hosiery company), and amongst the heaps, (literally), of papers found in the house when bought by the Hunts, was a letter dated 1936 addressed to Mr Roberts from a Mr Herman Knechtel, owner of a business in Cologne. In it Herr Knechtel complains about the political situation in Germany and asks if Mr Roberts might be able to find a job for Mr Knechtel's son in order to get him out of the country, even giving his permission for him to change his name to Whiteman, (his English mother's name), if his German one might cause any problems. Unfortunately no papers were found to show whether his bid to escape Germany was successful or not.

After the war the family seemed to prosper; documents left behind in the Hall in 2005 showing that they owned a Rolls Royce, a narrow boat and had a shoot on the Duke of Rutland's estate. There were

also several references to cruises and to parties at the hall with guests including the racing driver Stirling Moss, and, in 1967 Mr Roberts was elected Lord Mayor of Nottingham.

The estate however was already in decline. The first piece of land had been lost in 1951 when, under threat of compulsory purchase 33 acres adjoining Cinderhill Colliery were sold to the NCB as the site for a spoil heap. In 1969 more land was lost by compulsory purchase for the A610 dual carriageway which cut off the hall from its earlier entrance on what is now the old Nottingham road. The former entrance lodge, (now a bungalow), still exists and there is still a “footpath” leading from the lodge up the old carriage drive, past the site of the “haunted house” and on up to the gates of the Hall – the only drawback being that the drive / footpath is now cut by a 70 mph stretch of the A610. In 1980 there was yet another compulsory purchase of the Hall’s land for the construction of Low Wood Road.

From the 70’s onwards there were a further series of land sales from the estate for housing development. In the late 1960s, 30 acres were sold to Wimpey and a further area fronting the railway line near Stanton Tip to Nottingham Corporation. In 1973 26 acres south of the disused railway cutting were bought by Euroway; the former lodge was sold in 1980, whilst, in 1982 11 acres around Hempshill Lane were sold to Wilsons, and in 1986 a further 2.5 acres, (to Lowes?)

Meanwhile the Robert’s family businesses were not prospering and in 1989 Roberts and Glover went into receivership. Over the period 1987 – 1994 various schemes were proposed to remedy the financial problems including a 7 year long attempt to develop a 140 bed hotel and conference centre on the field between what is now Hempshill Barns and Low Wood Road. When this failed there was an attempt to develop the same area for housing, a proposal to construct a business park on the Nuthall side of Low Wood Road, a plan to build 2 or 3 houses in the grounds of the Hall itself and finally the sale of the Barns and the land to the east of them for housing development.

Mr Roberts died in 1994 but Mrs Roberts and her son lived on at the Hall until her death in 2002. However from 1989, with no income to carry out any maintenance work the house gradually fell into disrepair to such an extent that it was difficult to believe it was still inhabited.

By now there were several abandoned cars and a collection of animal cages in the courtyard, (Mr Nicholas Roberts had owned a Pet shop and kept several animals at the Hall including a sloth, a honey bear and various snakes, one of which, according to a letter received following an RSPCA inspection, “had depression”). Part of the garage roof had fallen in, and where it hadn’t vegetation was growing 6’ high on top of it, the sewage system had collapsed with effluent at times running down the drive, the central heating system had broken down, Virginia creeper and Wisteria concealed three sides of the house and had penetrated inside the roof space, whilst the terrace was completely invisible beneath undergrowth and the garden and orchard had turned into 3 acres of jungle with belts of brambles over 6’ tall and in places more than 30’ thick. Most of the windows were also broken; as one small boy later remarked to Mrs Hunt “Do you live here missis? my mates come into the house, but I don’t cos I think its ‘aunted: I just throw stones at the windows”.

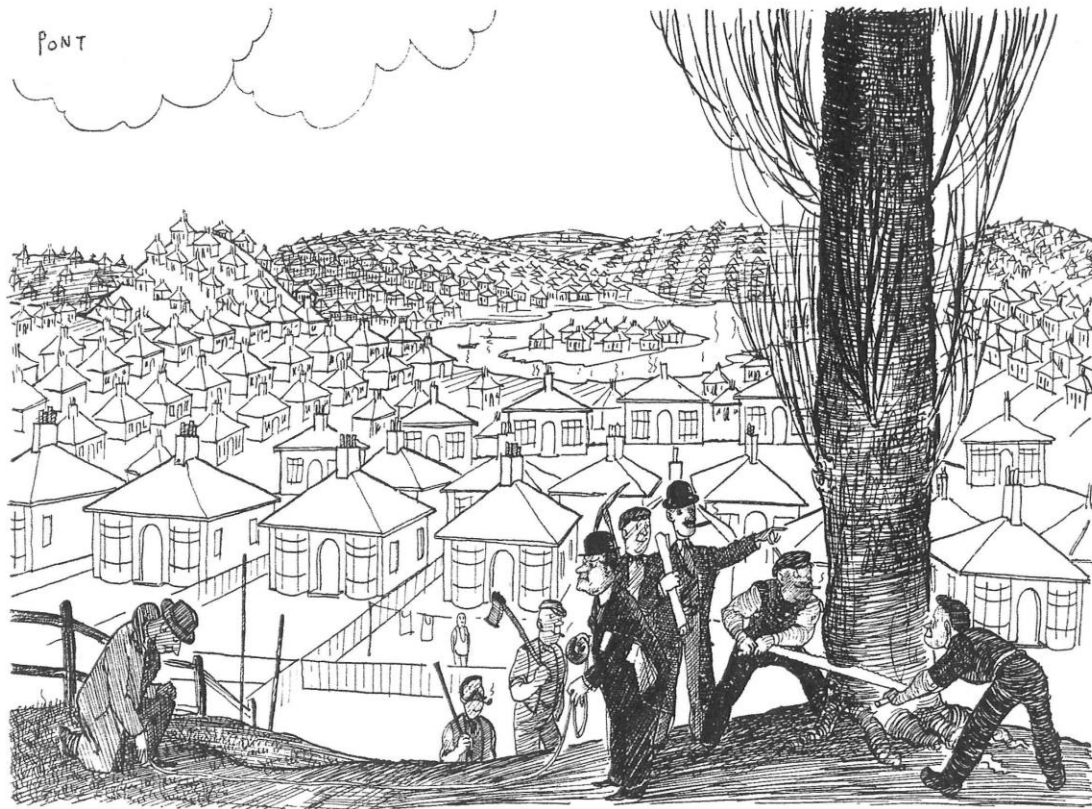
In 2003/4. Broxtowe Borough Council issued a repairs notice on the owners and when this proved ineffective the Council, in an attempt to try and secure the future of the Hall, started moves towards the serving of a compulsory purchase order.

In late 2004 the Hall featured on the front cover of the winter issue of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, (SPAB), "Catalogue of Buildings of Historical Interest in need of repair that are currently on the market", which noted that there was "an indescribably large amount of work to do" but that it would "provide someone with a monumental opportunity". Unfortunately for Mrs Hunt, Mr Hunt was a member of SPAB and in June 2005 Hempshill Hall was bought by the Hunts.

When the house was bought Broxtowe planning department gave an assurance that the three fields remaining on the east, south and west sides of the Hall would never be built on as the Council had designated them as a protected open area, but in late 2012 Langham Park Developments submitted an application to build 136 houses on these same fields, which would finally complete the destruction of the Hall's setting. When the application went before the planning committee for the first time it was rejected. However, the developer then reduced the number of houses to be built to 116, made some other minor amendments and resubmitted his application. This was again refused and the developer lodged an appeal to the Secretary of State. At the subsequent inquiry the inspector ruled that the government's policy of house building at almost any costs over-came any local decisions and gave approval for the development to go ahead, so allowing the developers, (one of whom had once told the Hunts that the development was his pension fund), to look forward to a happy retirement.

Given the current emphasis on tourism, heritage and the preservation of historic buildings, it is remarkable what the policies of politicians, both local and national, have managed to destroy in the area. Within a couple of miles of the Hall there is a Roman Fort buried under the Broxtowe housing estate; Nuthall Temple demolished and buried under the M1 slip road; Broxtowe Hall demolished for council housing, Bulwell Hall demolished and now under a car park, Bulwell Wood Hall abandoned, vandalised, burnt and demolished, Hempshill Mill lies buried under the Nuthall roundabout and Hempshill Hall's grounds have been carved up to make way for a coal tip, two major roads and a variety of housing estates. One can't help thinking that things might have been better planned.

But unfortunately some things never seem to change.



23 The British Character.
Determination not to preserve the rural amenities.

Punch, 22 April 1936
Print

It is perhaps also worth noting that at the enquiry the leader of Nuthall Parish council spoke in favour of the development on the grounds that if they let this bit of Nuthall be built on, developers would stay away from the rest of the parish – but he has presumably never read Rudyard Kipling's poem "Dane-Geld" and considered the saying "if once you have paid him the Dane-geld you never get rid of the Dane".

THE RESTORATION

When we eventually took possession of the Hall the first priority was to make the building safe and an electrical contractor was duly asked to come and check out the wiring, taking about 15 minutes to condemn the whole system as a fire risk and major safety hazard and leaving us to spend the next two years with the house lit by light-bulbs hanging from cables, (rather like Christmas decorations), that could be moved around to suit the work as it progressed, with temporary connections for various appliances as and when they were required.

MSA, (Architects), of West Bridgford were next appointed on the basis of their experience in renovating old buildings, the architect in charge of the project being Peter Rogan who co-incidentally happened to be the secretary for the East Midlands branch of SPAB, and Clarke and Wright of Nottingham, were chosen to carry out the work itself. At this stage the only thing preventing unwanted visitors walking right up-to and into the house was a low wall, (with gaps), that wouldn't have kept out an arthritic caterpillar, several local people having since mentioned entering the grounds and walking up to the house in the belief that it was empty, only to see an old lady, (Mrs Roberts), knitting in one of the rooms or to be ordered off in rather forceful terms by her son. Consequently the first major item of expenditure was the erection of 6' high railings around 3 sides of the house which went some-way towards making the site more secure and establishing a visible boundary to the house.



The North Front (winter)



The South Front (winter)



The South Front (spring)

As can be seen from the various pictures, the majority of the windows were broken and there were other holes in various places so temporary glazing and plastic sheets were put in place to keep the weather out and make the house look slightly less abandoned whilst plans were drawn up and listed building consent for the major repair works sought. As the Hall's listing, (apparently on account of an earlier Arts and Crafts Revival makeover), was Grade 2, approval was only required from the local council and their conservation officer Jason Morden of Nottinghamshire County Council, who, as the works progressed and more evidence of the Hall's history was revealed, did suggest that the building deserved upgrading. However, this would have been a mixed blessing as had it been listed 2* the process would have become more complex, taken longer and been even more expensive as at 2* every piece of work requires approval by English Heritage instead of just the local council.

Back inside the house a preliminary look into the attic / roof space had prompted the question "what are all these electricity cables doing draped all over the place?" but a closer inspection revealed them to be tendrils of the Wisteria which covered the south front and which had made its way under the eaves and into the roof space. Once this had been cut back and the cobwebs, (which appeared to be almost structural), were removed, the source of the unpleasant smell that permeated the area became apparent – a large area of sacking which had over a period of time soaked up a significant amount of bat guano. This last, and as a result of the architect and the conservation officer being narrowly missed by a bat whilst investigating the roof, necessitated a Bat survey before any further work could be undertaken, which when it was received, was found to have considered every room in the house for its suitability as a bat habitat and gave the distinct impression that the authors considered it a real pity that the rooms hadn't been built with the sole intention of providing living accommodation for bats.

A further survey for asbestos provided its own surprise. We had expected some asbestos to be discovered and to find it used as lagging to the old boiler in the garage, in some gutters and other small areas came as no surprise. However what was unexpected was the discovery of its presence in the floor tiles in the Breakfast room, part of the first floor landing and in what was known as Emily's bedroom. These floors were so dirty that on first glance it had been assumed that they were parquet in need of a serious clean, but when this was attempted and the tiles started to crumble, subsequent testing revealed them to be made of a mixture of brick-dust and asbestos so they all had to be removed and replaced with materials considered less hazardous to the occupants.

During these surveys and while schemes of work were being drawn up, the weekends were spent clearing out much of the rubbish that had accumulated over the years, one of the conditions of sale being that although he would remove the three abandoned cars in the front courtyard the vendor would not be responsible for house clearance. To give some idea of the scale of the operation, 29 black bags of rubbish were removed from one single room, (Emily's bedroom), which apparently hadn't been entered since a burglary some years before. In every bedroom a huge quantity of clothes including shirts, jackets, riding hats, evening suits, plus fours, socks, and literally dozens of ties and pairs of shoes were discovered. There were heaps of toys and books, dozens of, (live), shotgun cartridges, (and a few bullets), littering most of the downstairs floors, and a pistol was discovered on top of a cupboard in the attic.

Several rooms, (upstairs and down), also contained many balls of knitting wool and larger skeins of yarn, (presumably relics of the Roberts family's hosiery business), along with a large selection of broken furniture. In the kitchen and garage there were 5 disconnected fridges and freezers complete with their decomposing contents including several plastic bags of frozen mice, (these last presumably for feeding the snakes which had been kept in the house but which on at least one occasion had been found basking in the sun in a neighbour's garden), whilst in the kitchen and cellars were stockpiles of food including tins of foie gras and caviar decaying due to leakages from neighbouring vinegar bottles, packets of Angel Delight and Smash Instant Mashed potato dating from the well-known "laughing Martians" campaign of the 1970s, as well as eight demijohns of home-made wine in a variety of flavours ranging from onion to raspberry produced in 1972 and which no-one has yet had the courage to try.



"Emily's Bedroom"



One of the Kitchens



The Utility Room (after removal of rubbish)

As the necessary repair work was assessed it became apparent that the timber frame had weathered the last 500 years remarkably well with very few of the structural timbers needing any sort of repair, the one exception being a post in the corner of the Breakfast Room which had been exposed to water penetration courtesy of a broken rain water pipe on the wall outside; this post had rotted completely through at mid-height and a hand inserted into it would pull out handfuls of something resembling garden peat, and, as the plaster had also fallen away it left us with a hole in the breakfast room wall looking straight through into the garden.

However, whilst the five hundred year old roof beams proved to be in excellent condition the same could not be said of the roof covering itself. It had always been clear that the tiles on the front half of the roof were showing more than usual signs of wear and tear and would have to be replaced, but it had been hoped to remove, clean and reuse those at the rear. Unfortunately closer inspection showed that these had at some stage been cemented together, which meant that the entire roof had to be stripped and 25,000 new tiles, (half of them hand-made), had to be bought and fixed. This was clearly going to take some time and in order to allow work to continue in all weathers and also to make access to the chimneys somewhat easier it was decided to enclose the entire building with what to all intents and purposes was a scaffold hat.



Somewhat surprisingly the inspection of the chimneys revealed that the chimney which was supported by a steel framework was structurally sound , (it appeared that the chimney was actually supporting the steel and not the other way round), but to compensate for this good news another of the chimneys proved to have a complete row of bricks missing along one side at the point where it met the roof. This gap had been carefully filled with paper, given a coat of plaster and a bit of paint and had somehow managed not to fall through into the drawing room. But in the end three of the seven chimneys had to be taken down and completely rebuilt.



View from the West with the tiles removed and showing 5 of the 7 chimneys

Meanwhile on the north face of the house, the fire-escape, (which came to an abrupt end half-way to the ground), was removed and the garage, (basically a collapsing flat-roofed plywood shed with vegetation growing 6' high on top of it), was taken down and in time replaced by something more in keeping with this aspect of the house, and attention was turned to the drains and sewers.



Part of the North face of the Hall from the courtyard, (Spring) – note the termination of the fire-escape!



The Garage with “roof garden” and remains of some of the animal cages.

Despite the insistence of Severn Trent Water that the house was connected to the mains, yet another survey had revealed this not to be the case. Instead the house appeared to be connected to a malfunctioning and overflowing septic tank located in the trees at the top of the drive. The Environment Agency wouldn't allow a new septic tank due to the proximity of the nearby stream and so a Biotech Sewage Treatment system, (basically based on bugs eating the effluent and rendering it inert, thus making the water fit to drain into the stream itself), was buried some yards from the earlier tank.



At the same time, a grey-water storage tank the size of a small submarine was installed under the courtyard in order to enable rainwater collected from the roofs of the house to be used for the toilets, the washing machine and for watering the garden. This, co-incidentally, was positioned close to an apparently Victorian brick built cistern discovered just outside of the kitchen door whilst putting in the foundations for the new garage.

Brick Water Cistern found
outside Kitchen Door
(With Foreman Jed Morris
and Architect Peter Rogan)



Still in environmental mode and whilst the scaffolding allowed easy access to the roof it was decided to install a new type of roof insulation manufactured from recycled denim; this did an excellent job and feels much nicer than the usual glass-fibre type and although more expensive than glass fibre was less expensive than using the other alternative based on sheep's wool - the only difficulty being that it defied all efforts to cut it with normal implements, the builders finally resorting to saws with diamond tipped blades.

With the roof complete, attention turned to the windows. As can be seen from many of the photographs, the glass in most of these had been broken and a lot of the frames were also in need of repair. Repairing what was left would have been complicated as well as costly and so with the exception of one 16th Century window in the breakfast room, they were replaced with like for like replacements with the original fittings being reused wherever possible. As usual this didn't proceed quite according to plan and rather than replacing the bay window in the drawing room in sections the sub-contractor decided to make it in one piece. Unfortunately, (for him), when it arrived on site it quickly became apparent that some-one had made a mistake when measuring the angles, and rather than get a crane to lift it out for reworking it was cut-up for waste and second new one made, (with rather more care being taken when measuring the angles).

By this stage, although a lot of progress had been made the house was looking at its most dismal. Almost all the windows were boarded up letting no natural light inside, there were no inside toilets, the kitchen, (which consisted of a sink unit from B & Q to which water came via a plastic pipe from the yard through the nearest convenient window or hole in the wall), was being moved from room to room as work progressed, hot water being provided by a temporary geyser fitted to a nearby wall, whilst cooking was done on a camping stove with food, plastic cutlery and dishes etc being kept in a couple of tin trunks that had been found in one of the bedrooms.



There was also no heating, no proper lighting and bed was a sleeping bag on a mattress or camp-bed on the concrete, (sorry – Nottingham lime-ash), floor, but with a thoughtfully placed carpet tile to stand on when one got up. Living like this over a weekend whilst we cleared-out and investigated the house or attacked the brambles that covered most of the garden and orchard was fine whilst the fine weather lasted but eventually with temperatures dropping and when a night-time visit to the toilet involved torches, concrete floors, climbing through / over the scaffolding to visit an unlit porta-loo in the courtyard it was decided to decamp to the Premier Travel Inn at the nearby Phoenix Park tram stop.



The toilet

Meanwhile, back inside the house, once the “parquet” flooring in Emily’s bedroom and the decaying fitted carpets in the other upstairs rooms had been removed it became apparent that, (as noted above), the house was in proud possession of a collection of lime-ash plaster floors. These are a distinguishing feature of houses built up to the 18th Century in the East Midlands and whilst being much admired by conservation officers and building historians, to the uninitiated they appear to be simply dirty cracked concrete. Also at some time and for reasons unknown, the upstairs floor in the third bay of the house had been given an extra 6” of this plaster flooring which probably goes some way to explaining the significant bowing effect in the ceiling beams in the breakfast room beneath.

Down in this breakfast room the asbestos floor tiling was removed and work started on the inglenook fireplace. This was of a design that could best be described as an acquired taste with a large tile hood from the 1920s or 1930s that had allegedly been installed as part of an Arts and Crafts revival makeover. During the process of removing this and knocking out a concrete TV stand at one side of it the remains of a bread oven complete with stoke-hole were discovered at one end whilst at the other, opposite the door to the cellar an unexplained low level brick arch was revealed - possibly for clearing out ash from another, larger oven?



The breakfast-room fireplace before



(and after)

And at the same time, as we continued to remove old plaster and modern paint from the walls the frame to the original 1497 was discovered, surrounding a later door into the room and with a small original window to its right.



Breakfast Room showing, (on the right), the 1497 door-frame, studding and window, and, (on the left), 21st century replacement studding

In the dining-room, (which was decorated in a pseudo-Georgian style), an investigation of the north wall revealed a large Tudor fireplace in situ behind a still decently sized but rather smaller Edwardian replacement.

This was not entirely unexpected as a look at the plans of the house had indicated that something was not quite right in regard to the location of the later fire-place with respect to the chimney breast behind it, and a little judicious wall tapping followed by the removal of a couple of bricks revealed the corner of an early 16th century stone fire-place almost 10' wide and 7' high.



Dining Room fireplace, (before)



During

However, in common with most of the rest of the house, this was in dire need of repair. The lintel, weighing around a ton, had at some point broken in two about two thirds of the way along, its collapse, (which would have brought down the wall and the chimney above), having been prevented by the insertion of two brick piers. The repair required the propping of the wall above the fire-place, the jacking up of one side of the lintel and the insertion of epoxy bonded steel pins to hold the two parts together, (but just to be on the safe side), we also left the two brick piers in place as well.



Needle and propping to support the wall over the fireplace, (the break in the lintel can be seen just to the left of the left hand brick pier).



And after

The work on the fire-place also required the taking down of part of the plaster ceiling which in its turn exposed the main tie beam with two rather (un)attractive steel channels bolted to it, with the date they were erected, (July 11th 1932), helpfully chalked on them. Having fortunately taken the precaution of propping the central beam before removing these two channels it soon became apparent why they had been inserted. Not only had the building “spread” by about 4” and hence the tie beam had lost most of its bearing at both ends and appearing to be in some danger of dropping completely out of the post at its north end, the beam itself had cracked across the middle as well.



The first of these problems was rectified by the insertion of a new oak post in front of the original one at the point of danger, and the second by taking up part of the plaster floor in the main bedroom above where the beam had failed, cutting a slot cut in the beam from above and inserting a steel plate held in place with no less than twenty-seven 1" diameter bolts, (see below).



In the process of all this another timber framed window was revealed to the left hand side of the fire-place and the underside of the cross beams at each end of the room became visible, each of which showed a series of mortises or slots for the stud walls that had once divided the rooms. As it was now apparent that the room retained a wealth of original features it was decided to return it to as near its early 16th century appearance as possible by inserting new studs in the positions indicated by the slots – the only point of debate was that it was not possible to determine if these studs would have extended all the way to the floor or finished at the same level as the outer wall studding, (the option we chose to install). The lack of mortises at the south end of each of the tie beams was taken to indicate the location of former doors and these were also replaced, even though this meant that one of the “new” doorways now opens onto a blank wall, since to make it a functioning door would have required cutting out part of the 19th century panelling in the drawing room.



Dining Room showing new wall and door between it and the breakfast room, studs positioned to fit original mortises in top beam.

Meanwhile, in the main bedroom upstairs, (directly above the dining room), removal of plaster on the north wall revealed another Tudor fireplace



The Main Bedroom Fireplace, (before)



The Main Bedroom Fireplace, (during)

And the removal of a 1930sa built-in wardrobe to the left of this fire-place in its turn revealed the location of another of the original windows, (since reinstated), mirroring the arrangement in the dining room below.



The Main Bedroom Fireplace, (after), with window to the left.

The discovery of the two Tudor fireplaces, (which for reasons explained later were probably inserted in 1500), led to a game of “musical fireplaces”. The later, (possibly Edwardian), model from the dining room together with its surround was moved to the large bedroom half way up the main staircase, (known as Kanga’s bedroom during the Roberts family’s occupancy of the house). At the same time the attractive smaller fireplace and surround in the main bedroom, decorated with 19th century painted bird tiles was repositioned in the second bedroom, (known as Emily’s bedroom), necessitating the widening of the chimney breast therebefore it could be installed. In both rooms the

fireplaces that were replaced had been small and rather uninteresting late 19th Century examples, several of which remain in other rooms.

One of the reasons why so much of the original studding remains is that at various dates the house had been extended in a northerly direction and the original exterior north wall thus became an internal one. It also seems that at some point the back of both of the Tudor fireplaces was cut off, giving more room in the new extension but reducing the depth of the chimney and fireplaces to the point that the one upstairs was no-longer capable of functioning - hence the insertion of the smaller fireplace. Fortunately the lower one, (with the aid of a new canopy over the fire opening), retains enough depth to still function very satisfactorily whenever called upon to do.

The ongoing repair works also revealed a further “ghost” fireplace on the upstairs landing, backing onto the fireplace in the main bedroom. This ghost fireplace probably served the “North Dressing-room referred to in a description from of 1851, (see appendix iii).



As work progressed more and more of the original timber frame and studding were revealed, as although all of the studding on the south face had at some point been replaced with brickwork, most of the original north wall had been preserved by being hidden inside the later rooms added along this face. In addition an early door-frame on the first floor, (which appears to have provided access into the original NW wing), two windows and the door-frame to the original cross-passage also survived.



Studding between bay 2 and bay 3 in the Main Bedroom

However, the room with the most extensive and visible original timber framing is undoubtedly the East Bedroom, erected in 1500. Before restoration work commenced, the only way to see the roof and the upper part of the wall framing in this area was by climbing through the roof space of the main part of the house; this involved negotiating an 18" gap in the 1497 gable, dropping down onto a plank in the smoke bay, crawling around the chimney and squeezing through a 9" gap between two studs and thence into the roof space over the bedroom. In order to reveal the 16th century roof and the studding in the frame between the fire-bay and this room without any of the aggravation noted above, it was decided to remove the later ceiling in this room, the only downside being a much lower amount of roof insulation here than in any of the other upstairs rooms.



Timber Framing in the 1500 East Bedroom

While the structural works were now largely complete there remained the problem of how the house was to be heated. When we bought the Hall in 2005 heating was provided by coal fires in the main downstairs rooms and by electric heaters scattered about elsewhere. There was also a defunct oil fired boiler with asbestos lagging in a pit inside the garage along with two rusting oil storage tanks.



Wanting to be as green as we reasonably could we originally looked into the possibility of installing a bio-mass boiler, (at a cost of some £50,000), but for which we were told that grants covering the cost were available. The new garage was therefore designed to accommodate both the boiler and a wood store but after several months of correspondence it became apparent that the person who had suggested this solution was unaware of the difference between the terms “grant” and “loan” and a gas fired boiler proved to be the more immediately cost effective solution. This decision in turn led to its own problems, namely how to connect to the gas supply. The simplest solution would have been to connect to the gas main in the neighbouring Barn Close development, an easement having been granted at the time of this development that provided the owners of the Hall with the right to cross all the land that had originally formed part of the estate to enable them to connect to any necessary services. Unfortunately the interpretation of this document was disputed by lawyers acting for the owners of a strip of land that would have had to be crossed to get to the gas main. They claimed, (amongst other things), that even if the easement did grant that right, the lawyers that had drawn it up had worded it in such a way that it only allowed one to connect to the services at the point the services had reached when the easement was granted. This would have meant that instead of crossing a few yards of grass to connect to the end of the present gas main, one would have had to dig up the whole length of Barn Close and into Hayes Court, to connect to the gas main in the area of Apollo Drive. In the end, having spent a significant amount of time, (and the insurance companies

having put a significant amount of money into the pockets of the respective lawyers), the issue was finally resolved by a phone call and a short note to a more amenable person who immediately agreed that a connection could be made over his land, which entailed rather more manual labour than the original shorter solution, (and a case of wine as a thank you), but a lot less general aggravation.

However, even when the pipe was laid to connect to the mains the problems were not over. The first attempt to fit the gas meter failed because the trench diggers had been delayed, the second because the engineer was unable to find the house, the third because the engineer had the wrong size of meter, while the fourth attempt had to be abandoned when it was found that his pipe work was too short to go through the rear wall of the garage, (which is two to three feet thick in places). Even with heating finally installed, the pipework in the house continued to cause problems for the next four years with three different types of expansion joints having to be installed in order to prevent the radiator feeds snapping due to problems caused by thermal expansion and other problems, (which included the junking of a new oak floor in the dining room due to leaks in the pipe work underneath). It was also unfortunate that the cost of all this remedial work couldn't be recouped due to the fact that the plumber had been a sub-contractor of the main contractor who by the time that these problems became apparent had ceased trading.

With heating, (albeit problematic), installed, the house could be decorated and furnished and the serviceable furniture which had been put into storage whilst the work was on-going was now returned. A team of decorators recommended by Jed Morris, (the site foreman), brought their own beds and lived on site for around four months whilst they painted and papered the house from top to bottom.

Decorating a house with a long history and many facets to its development will always offer challenges, a balance having to be struck between the requirements of 21st century living and the 16th century surroundings, Too much emphasis on modern comfort and there is the risk of creating the ambience of a third rate hotel, while an exaggerated attention to period detail can turn a home into a mini theme park. In this case the compromise was as follows: as far as possible original fittings were retained. The cast iron bath in the larger bathroom was re-enamelled, (it took six men to remove and reinstall it some three weeks later), and new fittings in a matching style installed around it, along with linoleum flooring in both the bathrooms and kitchen.. The fittings in the second bathroom were one of the things that were not reused being late 1960s in style and a psychedelic yellow in colour, (some purists might argue that they should have been kept as they were historical items in their own right and may be back in fashion in another 50 years or so – but they wouldn't be having to live with them), and they were replaced with a slipper bath and separate shower.

Two of the toilets, (one on the north side of the upstairs landing and one downstairs at the north west end of the house), possibly of late Victorian date were retained whilst in the East bedroom and the bedroom halfway up the main stairs, (known as Kanga's room), there had been washbasins which were removed and reused in the toilets. A third toilet was installed off the new hall equipped with a reproduction Victorian suite in a blue floral pattern.

While the larger of the two former kitchens became part of the new entrance hall, (and a toilet), the other kitchen with its built in larder has been retained with the former scullery now forming a utility room. Both use linoleum floor tiles and while modern fittings have been used the kitchen units reflect a traditional style, being made with wood panels and crackle glazed door fittings. It had been hoped that a large Victorian kitchen cupboard could be reused but unfortunately its condition was such that the cost of repair was around half the cost of all of the new kitchen fittings and we eventually moved it into the garage for storing tools, whilst a new dresser style unit, reflecting something of the original, was installed in the kitchen.

The reception rooms retain a traditional style of decoration, Farrow and Ball paint being used throughout. In the hall, breakfast room and dining room it had been hoped that some of the original flooring would have been preserved but it appears that at some stage most of the floors had been dug out, (probably to increase the room height), so in the end we had to lay new stone flags in these rooms. In the Dining room wooden shutters, (possibly 18th Century), were repaired and retained as were the rather later shutters in the drawing room. Such of the arm chairs abandoned by the previous occupant that could be saved were re-upholstered and, in a nod to the earlier arts and crafts revival theme in parts of the house, covered in William Morris fabric. The drawing room, in by far the best overall condition when we bought the house, was blessed with attractive if not particularly ancient wooden panelling, a fine set of shutters to all principal windows and a small but attractively blue delft tiled fireplace. These features were all retained, and a traditionally patterned gold coloured wall paper was used on the unpanelled parts of the walls with Turkish carpets on the floors.

While some people might criticise the use of fitted carpets in an historic house, it was felt that the condition of the upstairs plaster floors, (which had been repaired in places with concrete), and the need to retain warmth, left little choice and they have been used on the upstairs landings and all but one of the bedrooms. The back stairs- dating from around the 17th or 18th century and which lead from the breakfast room to a rear upstairs passage have been left painted whilst in the large room half way up the main stairs the 18th century floor boards have been stained and retained.

Where the 15th century studding remains a light coloured paint has been used in between to bring out the colour of the wood and in the upstairs rooms a variety of traditional wallpapers have been hung. Kanga's bedroom retains one studded wall, while the rest is decorated in a heavily festooned duck egg paper harking back to the 18th century, (when this room was built), which may sound unattractive but with the very large size of the room actually seems to work.

Many of the rooms retain their early 20th Century fitted wardrobes and in the second bedroom, (known as Emily's), a decent set of Edwardian bedroom furniture consisting of a large wardrobe with drawers and a cupboard in the central panel and a dressing table reflecting the Georgian revival of the early 20th Century were acquired from the Roberts family at relatively moderate cost. The room itself has been decorated in a large floral wallpaper by Sanderson, again chosen to reflect that period.

Decorating and furnishing of the house was also made more problematic given the difficulties some people have locating the house. Officially in the village of Nuthall in the borough of Broxtowe, the house is cut off from the village proper by a large round-about and several arterial roads. It is

situated down a private drive shared only by the former farmhouse, (itself officially in the city of Nottingham), with which it shares a postcode. The entrance to the drive is concealed by a hedge and attempts to use satellite navigation take people to the nearby Apollo Drive housing estate from where the house can be seen but is impossible to reach. However, not everyone has even got that close: a supplier attempting to deliver a bed, (from Cambridgeshire), asked “Nottingham - is that near anywhere big?”

The Garden.



View into the Orchard, (after some considerable work).

As everything in the house is bigger than normal, so it is with the garden. Normal gardening equipment is simply inadequate – cables on power tools are not long enough to reach to all parts of the garden, neither are hoses. To keep the trees in hand requires two types of axe, a chain saw, a selection of ordinary saws, a log splitting machine, wedges and a branch lopper.

At first it was simply impossible to see the garden. Hedges which appear in early photographs to be about six feet high were now belts of trees twenty to thirty feet tall. Brambles were everywhere, in masses thirty feet thick in places. On one occasion the previous owner was describing over the phone where a stone trough was to be found, and although it turned out that I was standing within six feet of it, it was completely invisible. Clearing the vegetation did have some compensations though, five bottles of wine were found in various locations beneath the brambles, (how they got there is best left to the reader's imagination). Brambles, nettles and ground elder all made determined bids for world domination and after some three years of weekends spent in ineffective guerrilla warfare with secateurs and hand saws it was decided to adopt the "final solution", take down part of the perimeter wall and get a bulldozer in. Although not apparent from the photographs, this process also involved the removal of over 70 trees. Meanwhile apart from some clearance of the stream abutting the public footpath, work on the area outside the lawned area is yet to commence in earnest.



The Greenhouse

(There is actually a vine still flourishing somewhere in there – later unfortunately lost to some over-enthusiastic helpers!)



View past the Cedar



Late Phase Gardening at Hempshill

The clearing of the main lawn area seemed to be taken as an invitation to the local mole population to extend their activities. Having tried underground noise devices and poison gas, (which might not hurt the moles but we were told meant that you needed to keep small children off the lawn for two days), we found that the only effective method of removing the problem was traps. I don't recommend the scissor type as although it is easy to see if they have been sprung, it is also easy to badly damage the blades on your lawn-mower when you drive over them. We eventually settled on special hair-trigger devices sold by an ex-army officer living in Norfolk, (chris.boone@virgin.net), and have since succeeded in seriously reducing the life expectancy of any moles seeking to move into our lawns.

Work is still continuing in the gardens and on various features, most notably a 19th? century decorative wall which is an almost total ruin, (remains can just be seen in the "View past the Cedar" picture), and which is presently being worked on by Richard Mynett and his team from Space Inclusive, (a social enterprise company working with young people with learning difficulties).

From beginning the restoration to the decorator moving out was three years and nine months of almost continuous work and expense. Broxtowe Council planners and their Tree Officer, the Nottinghamshire Conservation Officer, (Jason Mordan), and other public departments couldn't have been more helpful,

A lot of work, and a lot of money, (I don't believe the figures they give you on Grand Designs), has gone into restoring the hall so that, (dv), it may survive for a few more years yet.



The South Front, (after)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSE

As originally built, Hempsill Hall was a 3 bay house, (with north-west wing), following the usual medieval pattern of solar, open hall, cross-passage and service bay. However it was built at a time when the idea of communal living represented by the open hall was giving way to a desire for greater privacy and comfort and appears to have been, (possibly due to financial constraints?), built in the earlier style but with the intention of converting to the more modern form as soon as funds allowed, an intention evidenced by the fact that although built as an open hall, the windows were placed as if a first floor existed, (put in 3 years later), and also that the cross passage appears to have been incorporated into the service bay rather than the hall bay.

Again, in early buildings it was the usual case for the service bay to be divided into two, a pantry and a buttery, with the actual kitchen, (as a fire precaution), being located in a separate building nearby. However in this case it appears that all three aspects were combined in one room / bay, with the fire-place up against the gable end, the bottom half of that wall being built in stone and the smoke being removed via a large smoke hood / smoke bay incorporated within the room. When this service bay was floored in in 1500 a proper smoke bay was created on the end of the original building as part of the eastern extension added at the same time, a large brick chimney being constructed within this smoke bay at a later date.

The hall bay would originally have had a central hearth with the smoke exiting via louvers in the roof, or as suggested by Graham Beaumont, (building historian and former Nottingham County Council conservation officer), via a louver in the East gable end), but, along with the service bay, in 1500 the hall bay was also floored in and two massive stone fire-places were inserted on the north wall in both the ground and first floor rooms thus created.

The solar bay was floored in from the start.

At ground level an analyses of the position of mortises for the studding dividing the bays shows that access between the rooms was via a "corridor" inside the south face of the house, and doors have been reinstated to reflect this scheme, (although the one between the hall and solar does not actually allow access to what is now the drawing room as to do this would have necessitated cutting out a section of the 19th century panelling in the drawing room).

As already noted elsewhere, there was originally a wing at the north side of the solar but this has since been replaced by a later block, (dated to 1702), one of the attic rooms of which was later converted to form a nursery, complete with barred windows.

In the 19th century various other additions were made, mainly to the north side of the original house, and the solar / drawing room was extended to the west to fill-in the gap caused by the overlap of the 1702 block and the west end of the original building.

It is also worth noting that with a bit of thought, (based chiefly around matching the number of shutters / blinds noted in the lease to the number of windows to be seen in the rooms), most of the rooms described on the 1851 lease, (see appendix iii), can be matched with the rooms as they exist today.

1851**2012**

Kitchen

Breakfast Room or Kitchen

House-keeper's room

Kitchen or Breakfast room

Scullery

Kitchen and New Entrance Hall w.c.

Butler's Pantry

New Entrance Hall

Dining room

Dining room

Chintz Bedroom

Emily's Bedroom, (opposite bathrooms)

Green Bedroom

Main Bedroom

Dressing room

Dressing room

Myrtle Bedroom

Louise's Bedroom

Mrs. Bolton's room

Drawing room, (the old part)

North Dressing room

1st Floor Landing

White room

Kanga's Bedroom, (off main staircase)

Green Baize Door

Green Baize Door

Servant's room

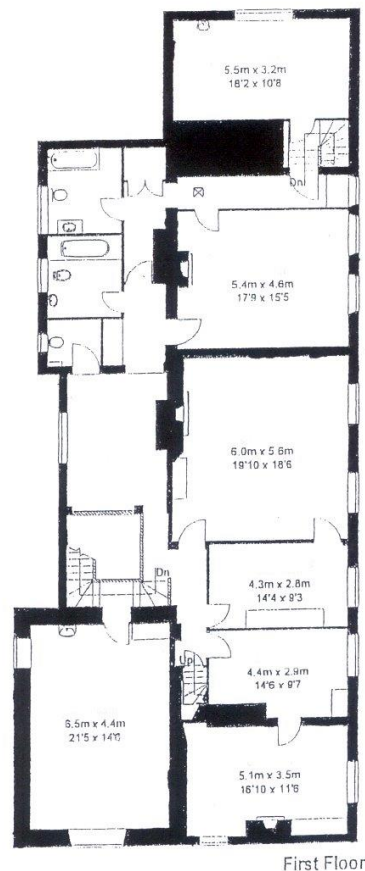
Bathrooms

DETAILED DESCRIPTION and QUESTIONS

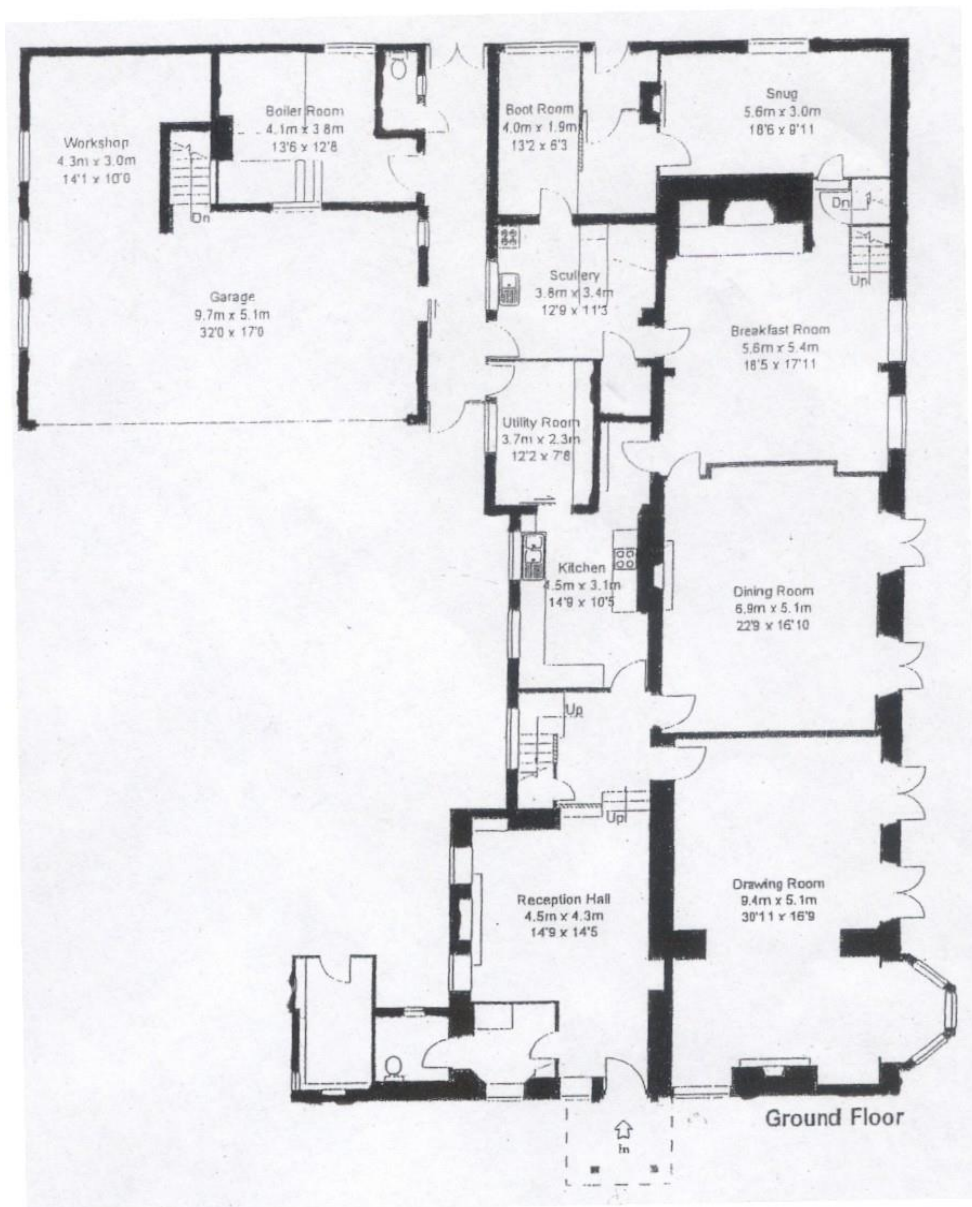
Hempshill Hall is a 3 bay, (each 20' long with an 18' span between wall-plates), 2 storey, close studded timber framed building aligned in an east – west direction, with a slightly lower 17' long extension attached to the east end of bay 3, (5' deep smoke bay plus 12' long 2 storey bay). Robert Howard of the Nottingham Tree-Ring Dating Laboratory has dated the three bay part of the house to 1497, the ceilings to bays 2 and 3 to 1500 and the smoke bay and 12' extension to 1500.

There is evidence to indicate that there was originally a 2 storey wing extending northward from bay 1, (the western bay), which has since been replaced by a stone walled 2 storey + attic block, (roof dendro dated to 1702), which extends some 12' further west than the original building, the overlap being in-filled in the second half of the 19th century. The rest of the north face of the original building has been masked by a series of 18/19/20th century additions.

The main features can be seen by referring to the plans on the following pages, (which show the building as it was before the 2005 renovation work commenced).



First Floor plan before alterations, (no structural alterations on this level).



Ground Floor plan before alterations

The main alterations made to the ground floor were as noted below;

Garage, workshop and boiler room replaced with new garage, (back and part side walls of original retained)

Boot room became Utility room

Scullery and Utility Room became new Kitchen, (part of Utility Room became hall w.c.)

Kitchen and stair area became new Entrance hall

Partition in Reception hall removed, (Reception hall now Sitting room)

Wall between Breakfast room and Dining room taken down and rebuilt in original position, (about 2' further west).

As previously described in the section on the development of the house, the usual layout for a house of this size during the medieval period would have been a hall, (probably with a central hearth and open to the roof), with private rooms, (solar), at the upper end, a screens passage at its lower end separating it from the service rooms, (pantry and buttery), and a detached kitchen.

Hempshill Hall, coming right at the end of this period, appears to have been a little different in that the kitchen seems to have been an integral part of the house from the beginning and also that the screens passage was effectively in the service area, not the hall. It also seems that although the house was originally built as an open hall but that the frame was designed with the expectation that the hall and service bays would be floored in at some time in the near future, and to this end, the “open hall” was built with windows that were suitable for a later “floored-in” arrangement.

It is suggested that the development of the building was as noted below.

1. 1497. Three bays; bay 1 with a first floor, bay 2 a hall open to the rafters, bay 3, (service rooms/kitchen), which was also open to the rafters, this bay containing within it at its western end a cross passage and at its eastern end a smoke bay / smoke hood, and a 2 storey extension, (with a first floor), to the north of bay 1.
2. 1500. First floor inserted into bays 2 and 3. Also large stone fireplaces inserted in the eastern half of the north wall of bay 2 at both ground and first floor levels, smoke bay / hood removed from bay 3 and extra bay built onto end of bay 3, forming a new smoke bay on end of original building with a short extra bay.
3. Brick smoke hood inserted in new smoke bay.
4. 1702 block built to north of bay 1 replacing original wing, (date of removal unknown) – some alteration would also have been required at the same time in the current main stair area for access to the new block – possibly serving bays 1 and 2 of the 1497 main building at the same time.
5. (or 6).Studding on south face of house replaced with brickwork.
6. (or 5).Various extensions built along north face of bays 2, 3 and eastern extension.
7. After 1851, 12’ “Infill” block built onto west end of bay 1.
8. Attic stairs inserted and attic rooms “added”.

The surviving early structure can be briefly described as follows:

North Wing

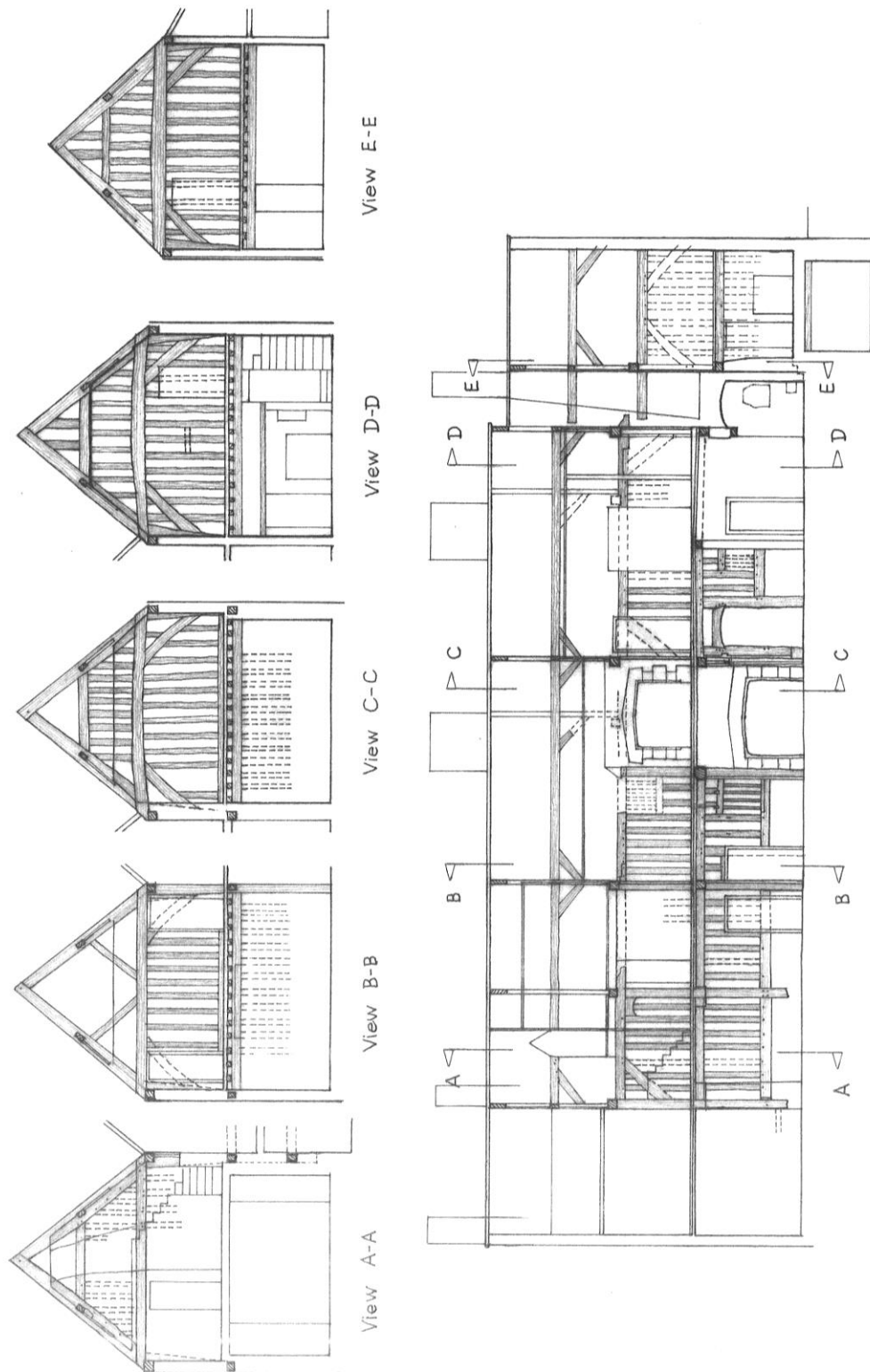
nothing, (only traces in north wall of bay 1).

Main Block

Roof – almost complete
S. Face – all main posts and intermediate posts
wall plate, (possibly the mid height beam as well)
N. Face – all main posts and intermediate posts
90% wall plate, mid-height beam and sill beam
60% studding
3 door frames, (1 at first floor, 2 at ground floor)
3 windows, (1 at first floor, 2 at ground floor)
2 Tudor fireplaces, (1500)
Ceilings, (between ground and first floor) – all 3 bays
Cross walls – studding, (1st floor to roof), between bays 1 and 2, & 2 and 3.
West Gable (truss 1) – no studding, some main truss members.
East Gable (truss 4) – 90% studding

1500 East Bay

Roof and wall plates– almost complete
Truss 5 + main posts
Studding – from first floor to roof between smoke bay and 1500 bay



Sections (long section internal view of original north wall)
Graham Beaumont 2013

Detailed Comments / Questions.

1. Although it is clear that the original building extended to the north of bay 1, (see mortises for sill beam and girding beam in north face of main post at north -west end of bay 1, also slot for plaster in same post at both ground and first floor levels, and the existence of a door frame, (later blocked), at first floor level between bay 1 of the main building and the northern wing), there appears to be no trace on the north face of the next main post, (east end of bay 1), or on any other remaining timber, of the other, (eastern), wall of the northern extension. (There is what is perhaps a slot for tiles in the upper section of the northern "outside" face of the 2nd stud into bay 2 of the main block, which may suggest that a stud and plaster wall extended northward from this point).
2. There is a mortise with peg on the west face of the main, (north-west), corner post of bay 1 just above the base of the post, suggesting some structure extending further to the west.
3. There are two large horizontal slots of unknown purpose in the north face of the northern sill beam in bay 1.
4. Apart from the fact that the ceiling joists in bay 2 were felled 2 > 3 years later than the timbers of the main frame, the grounds for suggesting that bay 2 was originally a hall open to the rafters, are as follows. Firstly there is no obvious way that access could be obtained to a first floor room in this bay, (once the open hall was floored in access was provided by forming two doors between bay 1 and 2, cutting out the transverse wind braces in the process, and at a later date, by removing an original window on the north wall and turning it into a doorway). There would also have been no heating, (fireplace or central hearth), in the ground floor room. Extra support for the floor in bay 2 being later than that in bay 1 may be gained from the fact that the joists supporting the floors in bay 1 and bay 2 are of different sizes, (bay 1, 6 ¾" x 3 ¼" deep, bay 2, 7" x 4 ½" deep). Moreover, the positioning of the ends of the floor joists between bays 2 and 3 coupled with the position of the studs from first floor level to roof at that end and the existence and location of an "extra" tie beam at wall plate level, (see note 8), point to at least the possibility of some sort of gallery being suspended from the roof at the east end of bay 2, also the larger window evidenced in the western half of the upper part of the south wall would fit quite well with an open hall with western dais).
An early flooring-in is supported by the fact there is minimal smoke blackening to the roof timbers above bay 2, and the two original windows which can be evidenced on the north wall look more suited to the idea that although built as an open hall the owners intended to insert a floor at some early date and included windows to suit.
5. Although trusses 1, 3, 4 and 5 are fully framed, truss 2 is an open truss, (this is odd whether or not there was an open hall).
6. Which end of the "hall" was the upper / dais end? (Given that they intended to floor it in as soon as they could did it have to have a dais anyway?) At first floor level the upper face of truss 2 is the eastern face, which under received wisdom would put a dais at the east end of bay 2, backing onto bay 3, (the service rooms?). However, looking at the slots for the ground floor studding, although it appears that on truss 2 these would also have formed an upper face towards, (but not flush with), the eastern side of this frame, in frame 3 at ground and first floor level the studs would have been somewhat off centre, (towards bay

3). However on closer inspection it looks as if there was no proper “upper face” at any level on the line of truss 3. In addition, there appears to have been a screens passage on the kitchen side of frame 3, which is usually considered to be at the opposite end of the hall bay from the dais - (this would put the dais at the west end of the hall bay).

Also to consider as having a possible bearing on this point are the external door in the north wall at the western end of the hall bay, the two windows in the western half of north wall, the possible gallery at the eastern end of the bay, (would this face a dais or be above a dais?), the fireplace in the eastern half of the north wall, and the probable large window in, (at least), the upper half of the western half of the south wall adjacent to the mid post.

7. The joists from bay 2 sit onto the cross beam between bays 2 and 3 to a depth of over 6”, whilst the joists in bay 3 (which butt against them), only manage to get a bearing of less than 3”. However this may have something to do with the possible gallery in bay 2 or the method of supporting the studding between bays 2 and 3 above first floor level.
8. It is also worth noting that the studding at first floor level between bays 1 and 2, and between bays 2 and 3, sits in a small beam, (5” x 5”), which sits on top of the lime ash floor which sits on top of the floor joists. This means that, presuming that there was studding in these locations from the outset, it must have been removed when the floors were inserted, shortened by a couple of inches and then put back on top of the new floors.
9. Is there any significance in the “extra” wind braces in the roof in bays 2 and 3? All three original bays are 20’ long, but bay 1 has an additional open truss at its mid-point. All three roof bays have arched wind braces at each end of the bay, but bays 2 and 3 also have additional braces towards their eastern end, trenched and pegged to the main purlin but now cut off at their lower ends. Although there is no obvious existing timber that their lower end could have been connected to, there is a large dovetail mortise cut into the top of the wall plate in both bays 2 and 3 some 6’ from trusses 3 and 4 respectively, and we actually have about 1’ (found in the garden under a mass of brambles!), of the end of one of these tie beams, (approx. 9” x 9” in section, complete with dovetail), which clearly spanned the bays at these points. If this supported some form of intermediate rafter, these rafters would have been in exactly the right position for the lower ends of the extra braces to connect to, (the northern purlin in bay 2 is also stopped at the point where such an “extra” rafter would have been). The question is what were these ties / extra braces for? Just to help reduce the effects of the large 20’ span bays? Or to support something else? In the case of the tie in bay 3 it would be in the right position to support the top of a smoke bay / smoke hood, and in bay 2 to support the top of something, (a gallery?), at the eastern end of the bay, (facing a dais at its western end?).
10. Transverse vertical arched wind bracings exist between bays 1 and 2, 2 and 3 and in the original east end, (beneath trusses 2, 3 and 4) – (there are also a pair beneath truss 5 in the 1500 bay), but there is no trace of any transverse brace under truss 1, (the original western end of the building); (possibly omitted as not required with a northward extension providing additional stability in this plane? – but then why bother with them under truss 2, as presumably this is where the other face of the northern extension would have been – but see point 1).

11. Longitudinal vertical arched wind braces exist or can be demonstrated as follows:- in bay 1, braces at the west end only, in bay 2, none, in bay 3, braces at both ends of the bay – there were also braces at both ends of the 1500 bay. These, (longitudinal), braces all appear to have been on the inside of the studding and so would not have been visible from the outside of the building.
12. Doors. At first floor level a door to the immediate left of the intermediate post in bay 1 provided access between bay 1 and the northern extension, (there are also hints – at least the next two studs are “missing of another door at first floor level to the immediate right of the same post, again leading into the northern extension). There was no access at ground floor level between bay 1 and the northern extension. Original door frames to the ground floor exist at the north-west corner of bay 2 and at the north-west corner of bay 3 – this latter has what appear to be very faint traces of red paint to the inside upper left hand part of the frame and also a plaster slot on the inner face of the right hand post, possibly indicating the existence of a screen (or screen passage?), extending into bay 3. There are also three slots in the adjoining main post which might be vestiges of some sort of locking / barring arrangement, but there are no clues as to how the other end fitted, (there are also no indications as to how any of the doors hinged onto the doorposts).

Internal connecting doors also existed between bays 1, 2 and 3, positioned at the south west and south east corners of bay 2, forming a “corridor” along the south side of the building.

13. Internal studding does not show pegs at either top or bottom of studs. External studding shows one peg at top and bottom, except for the studs on the original west end between first floor and bottom of truss 1 which had 2 pegs each. Why did the west gable merit 2 pegs whilst the east gable merited only 1?
14. Windows. On the north wall at ground floor level there were no windows in bay 1, (none expected as they would have been masked by the northern wing). In bay 2, one window, (size of opening 40”x 40”), remains in the first half of the bay seated on the sill beam and up against the intermediate post. The second half of the bay is taken up by a later fireplace. In bay 3 a window, (24” wide x 30” high), remains in a similar position to bay 2. No comment can be made on the last half of this bay as it has been completely rebuilt. The south side of the house has been completely rebuilt / masked at ground floor level, so that no direct evidence for windows can be seen. However, it might be worthy of note that the two French windows in bay 2, instead of being central in each half of the bay are offset some 6” towards the east. Also, in the second half of bay 3 but tight up against the intermediate post, there is one window larger than any other remaining in the house, (62” wide x 74” high) - part of the window at least dating, (from fittings etc), to the 17th?? Century, which might bear some relation to an earlier window. However this window in itself raises another question, as it is too tall to fit between the top of the perimeter dwarf wall and the underside of the mid-height beam, (which has been removed to allow the window’s insertion). There is also no trace of any connections for shutters on any of the windows.
15. At first floor level, on the northern face of the original building there were no windows in bay 1, (again, none expected due to northern wing), but in the first half of bay 2 there was a window, (40” wide x 30” high), (later converted into a door), against the intermediate

post and up against the underside of the wall plate. No comment can be made about the second half of this bay as all previous structures have been replaced by a later fireplace. In bay 3 there was no window in the first half; in the second half a window is unlikely, but there could have been room for one in a small area just past the intermediate post now occupied by another fireplace. On the south face of the building, in the first half of bay 1, although a later window has cut into the bottom of the wall plate, removing any peg / lack of peg evidence, the fact that the modern window is hard up against the intermediate post suggests that it occupies the site of an original window; there was no window in the second half of the bay. In bay 2, lack of pegs or mortises in the wall plate to the west of the mid post show that four studs were omitted in this area, giving a (window) opening of 64", (as opposed to the 40" wide one in the north wall), bay 3 cannot be seen. There were no windows in the east gable, (fire bay on inside?). The west gable cannot be seen.

16. Original East End. From first floor to apex of truss 4 all the studding, (with wind braces), survive except at first floor level where cut through to form a door leading to the back stairs, and at truss level to form access to site of former water tanks. There is also a short horizontal member on the former external face which appears to have no useful purpose apart from connecting the middle three studs about 2'6" below the bottom tie of the truss. Lack of peg holes and mortises in the mid height girding beam on this face indicates that there was never any studding from ground to first floor – presumably this could have been due to a stone wall being required in this area to act as the back of a smoke bay in bay 3 ?
17. Decoration, (lack of). Apart from most of the main beams being chamfered and stopped there appears to have been no attempt at decoration, (whether to the structure or to the walls). Is this significant? (or did they simply use a lot of hangings?). Note: - there may just possibly be some traces of red paint on the internal faces of some main members, (main door into bay 3 area).
18. Floors. Almost all of the original floors on the ground floor have been replaced or dug out at some time. However, there is some sort of concrete / lime-ash? looking floor under the present floor in the sitting room, and a still exposed lime-ash floor, (apparently a Nottinghamshire speciality but looks like badly cracked concrete), in the gun room at the east end of the house. Upstairs there are lime-ash floors, (now concealed by carpet), over the whole of the 1497 / 1500 part of the house. These are generally several inches thick, but another question is posed by the step-up from bay 2 to bay 3 at 1st floor level. It appears that at some point an extra 4" of lime-ash has been added to bay 3 for no reason that is apparent – the only effect has been to increase the amount of bowing in the ceiling timbers of the breakfast room below.
19. Internal Fittings etc. In the three, (almost adjoining), doors leading into the snug, the cellar and the cupboard under the stairs, there are, (respectively), a pair of H hinges, (reused), a pair of Strap hinges and a pair of Butterfly hinges. (Dates?). The main window in bay 3 has 2 early? iron window latches, (date?), and the internal shutters in bay 2 have push-button security catches to lock the bar in position, (18th – early 19th century?). In the north wall of the fireplace in bay 3 is the remains of a bread oven??, (with downward leading flue and stoke hole?) whilst in the southern end of same fireplace is a vestigial brick arch of unknown purpose. In the present hall is located an (electric) bell system to summon servants to the drawing room, front door, dining room, breakfast room, back door, bedrooms 1 > 4, dressing room, nursery, and bathroom.

20. Carpenters Marks. These can be seen on the east faces of trusses 2 and 3, cut straight across the principal rafter and strut on truss 2, and across the principal rafter and collar on truss 3, (marks are II and III respectively, with an added spur to the last stroke on each of the northern marks). There are also a series of marks on the truss studs in T4, (unfortunately on the side that is extremely difficult to access), each are about 5 or 6 inches in size and consist of a large horizontal < shape with an added spur and then a series of separate horizontal lines inside the < denoting the number of the stud, (I II III IIII etc.).
21. Apotropaic Marks. There are what appear to be small, faint, apotropaic marks, (of the saltair cross between 2 vertical lines variety), near the apex of the mid-bay rafters in bay 1 and near the apex of T2 and T4, and possibly on the high level tie beam on T3, with a well defined one near the centre of the main tie beam of T4, (also on the outer face of the wall-plate in bay 2). There are also well defined marks of similar design but much larger in size on the main tie beam of T5 and on the southern eaves beam of bay 5, (the 1500 bay). (Graham Beaumont believes that the smaller marks on the principal rafters may be carpenter's plumb marks). A further 10, (large type), marks can be seen in the dining room, 1 above the door to the present hall, 1 above the original window, 4 on the bottom of the central tie beam, 3 on the east face of this beam, (lining up with 3 of those on the bottom of it), and 1 on the tie beam at the east end of the room. There are another 2 marks on the same beam when viewed from the breakfast room.
22. Cellars. There is a small stone-walled cellar at the east end of the house underneath the 1500 bay, and the remains of a stone-walled cellar with a, (later), arched brick roof underneath the garage. The width of this cellar has been reduced by about half when the original boiler house, (since demolished), was built.
23. External Features.
- A shallow, (18" deep) x 5' wide, ditch running roughly east-west was seen in a soak-away dug at south-east corner of the lawn.
 - A large well, (6' in diameter but currently only about 4' deep), cut into the solid "rock" is located some 20' south east of the ditch and 75' from the house.
 - Relative soil depths – to the north, west and south of the house there seems to be only a few inches of soil before you get to the natural "rock", but to the east there appears to be at least 3' of topsoil.
 - Most of the pottery found in the immediate vicinity of the house dates, as might be expected, from the 16th century onwards, (Tudor Green, Cistercian ware, 17th century Yellow-ware and Slipware, Black-ware etc), the few pieces of, (late), medieval date all being found close to the south-east corner of the Hall. However, several dozen pieces of medieval pottery have been found in the orchard, approx 150' to the east of the house and some 20' from the large field that once formed part of the park belonging to the hall, one or two pieces of which, (according to Dr David Walker of Trent Peak Archaeology), "might" be 12th century, and a few 15th century, (midland purple), but the majority of which, (shelly-wares, splashed ware, and green glazed pieces), date to the 13th / 14th centuries. Some of the pieces were surface finds, but more came from two small trenches, one of which contained a feature that appeared to be a collapsed wall.
 - A large brick built water cistern, (19th century?), was found in the courtyard just outside the present kitchen door.

- The rear wall of the garage is of “multiphase construction”, part brick and part stone, (the stone part is between 2’ and 3’ thick). There are several brick foundations, to the east of the garage, most apparently running north-south, with a particularly large one, (more like a part buried wall,) about 3’ from the rear wall of the garage, almost as wide as the present garage extending some 2’ – 3’ in depth and appearing to return at both ends in the direction of the garage.
- A blocked “Carriage”? entrance can be seen in the perimeter garden wall alongside the pedestrian gate / door, (visible from the “inside” at the west end of the house).
- The Farmhouse to the north of the house appears to be Georgian, but incorporates some stone walling within it.
- A small area of cobblestones exists outside and to the left of the gates into the courtyard, (possibly remnants of a path leading to the farmhouse).
- A stone with ELH 1709 carved into it is set into the perimeter wall of the garden to the left of the former pedestrian gate about half way along the old carriage drive. Unfortunately both the letters and the date have now been completely eroded, but can be seen on a photograph taken some years earlier. (ELH possibly for Elizabeth Hallam, the Hallams said to be tenant farmers to Jane Reynor)

Appendix i

“There was a Chapel in this town of Hindeshall, for on the 29th of January 1240, Walter de Gray, Archbishop of York, confirmed the grant which Hugh Fitz Ralph, patron, and Hugh de Cressy, Rector of the church of Greselang made to Robert de Vavasour and his heirs, touching the having a chantry in this chappell.” – Torre Manuscripts

Appendix ii

Will of Jane Reynor (Notts Archives)

In the name of God Amen. I Jane Reynor of Hempshill in the county of Nottingham widow being of sound mind and memory blessed be God for the same do this one and twenty day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and twenty make and ordain this my last Will and Testament in manner and form following. First I will that my executors hereafter named shall reseive all the rents of my land att Hempshill in the county of Nottingham which be in arrears att the time of my death with all () till my debts and funeral charges are paid. I give and bequeath to my nephew and godson Mr Anthony Moye **four score? pounds** in good and lawful money of England, I give and bequeath to my nephew Mr Lascelles? **ffifty pounds**, I give and bequeath to my () Mrs Leavis? **eighteen pounds** and I bequeath to her two daughters Mary Leavis? and Anne Leavis? **ten pounds a peece** and I bequeath to my neece Mrs Bowne? **twelve? pounds** and to her son John **fforty shillings** and to my neece Mrs Caulton? I bequeath **twenty three pounds** to be put into some of her friends hands to be improved to the best advantage for her as my executor shall approve of and to her son Thomas I bequeath **fforty shillings** and my nephew Samuel Bryan being deceased I bequeath to his children? **twenty three pounds** and my nephew William Bryan being deceased I bequeath to his children **twenty one pounds** and to my nephew rwell's eldest daughter Jane I bequeath **eight pounds** and to her brother and her sisters **five pounds a peece** and what I have bequeath to my nephews Samuel and William Bryans children I would have it equally divided amongst them As to my tenant John Hallam I knowing the considerable loss he sustained in his cariages about my buildings which I have never reckoned? with him for it and any other charges of his holy upon my () therefore I give and bequeath to the abovesaid John Hallam my tenant my whole interest in that close called by the name of **Wilsons? Close** for his life and after his death all those his children he has by his wife Elizabeth shall all have equall shares in that close till they can and are willing to purchase one anothers parts out of it and to his wife Elizabeth Hallam that hath () very servisable? to me almost forty years I give and bequeath to the said Elizabeth **fifteen pounds** in good money and **all my household goods that I do not otherways dispose of** and too her eldest daughter Jane Hallam my goddaughter I give and bequeath to her in good mony **threescore pounds and the bed we used to lay together in and all belonging to it** and when her mother dies she shall have **all the rest of the furniture belonging to that roome** and to her two brothers and sister John Hallam Joseph Hallam and Elizabeth I give and bequeath to every one of them **twenty pounds a peece** and to Elizabeth when her mother dies I bequeath **my bed in my new? chamber and all that belongs to it**. And the hundred pound in my Son Smiths hand which is all the estate I have left that was my husbands he having paid me good interest?? above seventeen years therefore I give and bequeath to my said Son Smith out of that hundred, **thirty pounds and ten pound a peece to his son and daughter** and the other ffifty of that hundred I bequeath to his sister Triggs?? son and daughter shee?? hath left? behind her? **ten pounds a peece** and to his sister Harriats??? son Job? and two daughters I bequeath **ten pounds a**

peece out of that money. And to my daughter Hariat??? I bequeath **twenty pound** out of my estate when it is sold. All those legacies I leave shall be paid in good and lawful money of England. **The trees before my house** is most of them my tenants he having paid money for them to prevent their cutting? down. To my neece Mrs Chaworth I bequeath **my dimon, (diamond), ring** and **my two silver shakers of sugar and pepper and gloves** and to her son George Chaworth I bequeath **eight pounds** and to my neece Mrs Howwell?? I bequeath **my ring with Rhubies** and **my father and mothers picture and gloves** and to my nephew Mr Richard Moye I bequeath **my silver candlestick** and to Mr () I bequeath **my brother Slater? burial? ring** that was given me. And to Mr Craven minister of this parish of Greasly I bequeath **scarf and gloves** and if he preaches my funerall sermon **twenty shillings** beside and to Joseph Hallam a smith in Nottingham and his wife I bequeath **twenty shillings a peece**. And to Gorg Tailer? and () I bequeath **twenty shillings a peece** if alive and I bequeath to thire? familys in the () the two (C.....) and (W.....) **ten shillings a peece** and I bequeath to nine of the poorest familys at Nuthall **half crownes a peece** and **thirty shillings in dole** besides And to greasly parish **twenty shillings** and toell **ten shillings** and to S.....ly and together **ten shillings** and not distributed till after my burial and **gloves** I would have given to all this family and **six shillings a peece** to my tenants servants And to my maid I bequeath **forty shillings** and **half my wearing? close** and **the other half** to the children? in this family and to some women neighbours I was best acquainted with **white gloves** And if any dies before this estate of mine can be sold to pay them their part shall goe to their nearest relations and if there shall be **any surplus** when my estate is sold I would have it given to relations and this family of my tennanta as my executor will () it. I would have my estate sold as soone as debts and funeral charges is over. I would have a decent funeral not very chargible ? and of this my will and testament I make the above said Mr Anthony Moye my execintor and all he pays legacies too shall give him a full discharge when he pays them out of this estate of mine. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seals the day and year first above written. Jane Reyner. Signed sealed and published the words () before signed in the presence of Tho, smith, Sam Grammer, Thomas Grammer, Robert Roobotham.

Whereas I Jane Reyner of Hempshill in the County of Nottingham widow have by my last will and testament in writing bearing date the one and twenty day of November last bequeathed divers legacys I have now in this codicil bequeath to my executot Mr Anthony Moye **a silver tumbler with R W on the bottom of it** and () **relations pickture? in my chamber** that is not disposed of in my will. And that close? I have given to my tenant and his for ever I doe desire him that he would improve his? yearly income of it while he lives for the advantage of all those his children? I () and what I have bequeathed to them I would have improved for those whose advantage taking the advice of their mother? () relations till they are of age to manage for themselves. And this fifteen pounds I have left in my will to their mother if she dies before its paid her it shall be divided equally amongst her children. And the ten pound I am bound for my neecs Leavis? shall be paid besides what I have left her? in my will. And those small bits of () I have that is not given in my will I dispose of in my life time. January 1721. Jane Reyner, signed and published in the presence of Luke Jackson, Robert Ireland? his mark, Robert Roobotham.

Appendix iii

1851 Lease Description

Robert Holden of Spondon and George Bacon of Hemshill or Hemphill Hall, Merchant.

... Hemphill Hall with the Coach-house, stables, out offices, green-house and other buildings Yard, coaching gardens and roads there toHockley Hill, (with the Porter's Lodge standing thereon.....close called the Dry Dam Close adjoining the coaching and pleasure grounds of the mansion house.....free enjoyment of the stream of water running through the said premises. Robert Holden to retain rights to hunt, course and shoot but not to fish – solely for George Bacon Insure against fire through Norwich Union Fire Assurance.

Schedule of fixtures:

In Garden

Green-House with Potting House adjoining, iron shelves, stoves et cetera complete
Forcing House and shelving
in Brew house – coppers
Iron Fleaks, bottom of garden and towards Houghton's home close with posts and chains by side of stream in the meadow or Lodge Close
three Garden Frames with lights complete outside Trelassing to entrance Veranda
in Garden House – benches and cupboard
in Yard two pumps and cistern, water tub – lead cistern for water closet – sink stones and shelves
in larder

In The House

in Kitchen – fire range complete - cupboard in recess – a fall table
in Housekeeper's room – pair of inner shutters – ironing fall table – china closets – step ladder – and nine shelves and drawer in store closet
in Scullery – plate racks and shelves – sink stone
in Butler's Pantry – dresser – two glass cupboards – corner cupboard – shelves in china closet
Water Closet complete
chimney pieces and fire grates throughout the premises
in Dining Room two pair of inner shutters – steel grate – gilt cornice of moulding round the room
in Chintz bed room – two inside shutters
in Green bed room – pair of inner shutters – blind roller and rack
in Dressing room adjoining, blind roller and smoke tin
in Myrtle room – blind roller
in Mrs Bolton's room – two pair inner shutters two blind rollers shelves and pegs
in the North Dressing room – blind roller
in White room, two blind rollers - pair of inner shutters – deal cupboard
Green baize door
in Servant's room – two blind rollers – deal cupboard
an Alarm bell on the roof of the house with iron apparatus and pulls into four rooms
a Hovel at the back of the harbour with manger therein.

Appendix iv

Samuel Collinson's visit to Hempshill, 1855

"Hempshill is a very pretty place. The hall is a long, low building (which) has been improved by plate glass in the lower story; the upper windows are leaded, and creeping plants and roses cover the greater part of the front. The land around it is undulating, and at the foot of the hill on which the house stands a babbling brook was descending in a series of miniature cascades till it reaches a pond in the bottom of the valley. The interior of the house has been fitted up with much taste and elegance, and has a very comfortable appearance"

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