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Apethorpe Hall and the Workshop of Thomas Thorpe, Mason of King's Cliffe: A Study in Masons' Marks

by JENNIFER S. ALEXANDER *and* KATHRYN A. MORRISON

INTRODUCTION

Apethorpe Hall (Fig. 1) in Northamptonshire, a Grade I listed country house, has been sorely neglected for the last twenty years. It is currently undergoing essential repairs in the hands of English Heritage,¹ a situation that is providing architectural historians with an opportunity to examine the fabric of the building in greater detail than ever before. As part of this project — which will eventually result in the publication of a monograph — the masonry has been subjected to close study, yielding unexpectedly far-reaching results.²

Apethorpe Hall originated as a double courtyard plan house, built by Sir Guy Wolston in the mid to late fifteenth century, but much extended and remodelled by successive owners between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. The most important of these building campaigns was carried out in 1622–24 by the rich and ambitious Sir Francis Fane, who had recently inherited the estate from his father-in-law, Sir Anthony Mildmay. This work was ordered in May 1622 by King James I, 'for the more comodious entertaynment of His Ma^{te} and his company, at his repaire into those partes for his princely recreaton there'.³ To advance the work, James granted Fane 100 oaks from Rockingham Forest, and sold him another 100 from the same source.⁴ James visited Apethorpe, where he enjoyed the hunting, on at least eleven different occasions, and was often accompanied by his queen, Anne of Denmark, or by Charles, Prince of Wales.⁵ Only one of his visits, however, took place after the completion of the new work, in 1624, shortly after Fane became first Earl of Westmorland.

To accommodate the royal party, Fane rebuilt and extended the state apartment of Apethorpe, which had been created by his wife's grandfather, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Walter Mildmay, in the early 1560s.⁶ On the first floor of the remodelled south range was a Great Chamber, a Withdrawing Chamber and a King's Chamber, the last bypassed by a short corridor that led to Fane's new east range (Fig. 2).⁷ Under the projecting south end of this east range was a vaulted cellar. Above this, the centre of the ground floor was filled by two loggias, arranged back-to-back with projecting porches,



Fig. 1. *Apethorpe Hall, general view showing east range built by Sir Francis Fane in 1622–24 (Photograph c. 1979)*

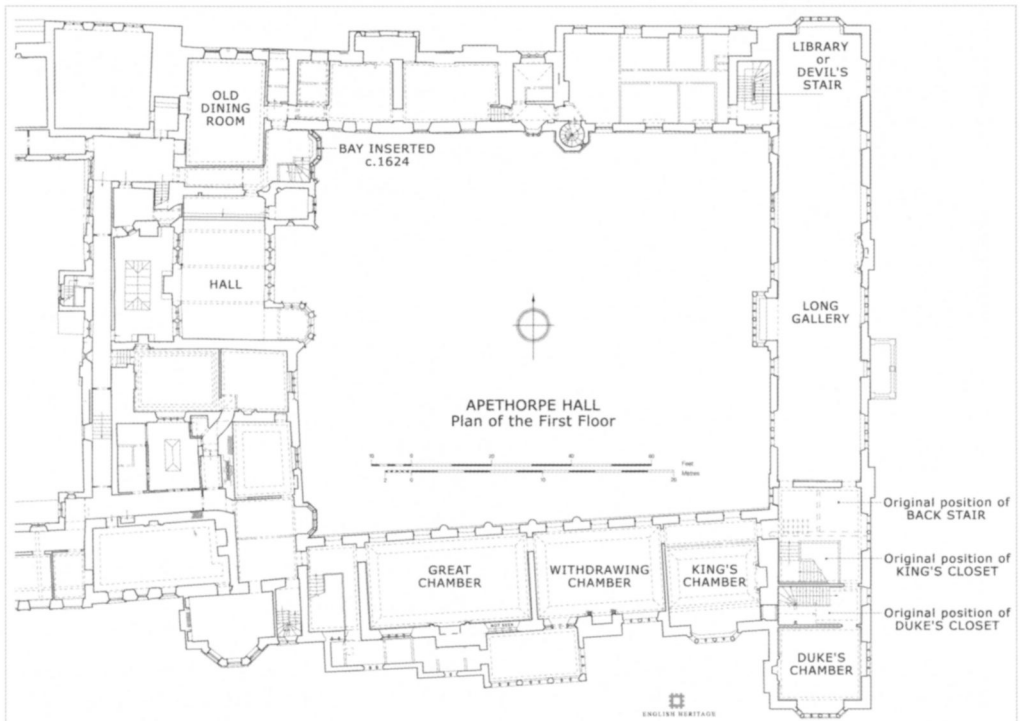


Fig. 2. *The first-floor plan of Apethorpe Hall, showing the state apartment and other rooms mentioned in the text (Drawn 2006)*



Fig. 3. Apethorpe Hall, Duke's Chamber fireplace (Photograph c. 1978)

while each end contained a chamber. On the first floor were the Long Gallery, the King's and Duke's Closets (with direct access from the King's Chamber in the adjoining south range) and the Duke's Chamber, a room created for use by either Prince Charles or the king's favourite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham.⁸ The roof of the east range had an unusual asymmetrical form, to allow for a walk on its east side, with lead flats to north and south and — just possibly — an attic gallery. The interiors of Fane's principal rooms survive in good condition, with high quality plaster ceilings, carved stone chimneypieces (Fig. 3) and, in the Long Gallery, full-height panelling.⁹ Unfortunately, no accounts or contracts are known to survive for Fane's work, and the identities of the architect or surveyor, the masons, the sculptors, the carpenters and the plasterers have never been established.

The work of 1622–24 is faced in pale oolitic Lincolnshire Limestone (despite its name, not just found in Lincolnshire), with the exception of the columns of the porches, which are of ironstone from the Northampton Sand.¹⁰ The bulk of the limestone came from a quarry at King's Cliffe, one mile north of Apethorpe Hall, which Fane must have inherited from the Mildmays.¹¹ In the early 1590s it was recorded that a 'quarrie at kings Cliffe afores belongeth to Mr milemaye Sonne & heire to Sir Walter mildmaye diseased'.¹² The quarry in question, at the south-east end of King's Cliffe village, next to the Willow Brook,¹³ has been closed for centuries and is now represented by an extensive area of grassy humps and bumps. From the late sixteenth century until the 1630s it was controlled by the Thorpe family, and around 1641 a field impinging on the quarried area was still called 'Thorpe Field'.¹⁴ Because this quarry lies so close to Apethorpe, it seems reasonable to suggest that the stone for the 1622–24 work on the Hall was provided and worked by the Thorpe family.

THE THORPE FAMILY AND THE ROLE OF THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MASON

The history of the Thorpes was traced in some detail by Sir John Summerson in 1949, but is worth reiterating and expanding.¹⁵ The family moved from Ashwellthorpe in Norfolk to Northamptonshire, where they became successful quarrymen, masons and land surveyors. By 1570, Thomas Thorpe (d. 1596), referred to as *pater* on the family memorial tablet in King's Cliffe church, had inherited his father's tools.¹⁶ He is known to have worked at Kirby Hall, probably as master mason, and many other works — including buildings, architectural set pieces and funerary monuments — have been attributed to him on the basis of stylistic resemblances to the stonework at Kirby.¹⁷ Thomas *pater* had several children, including three sons: Henry (c. 1560–1624/25) by his first wife, and John (c. 1563–1655) and Thomas (c. 1565–c. 1626/27) from his second marriage.¹⁸ The firstborn sons of Henry and Thomas erected the monument to their forebears in King's Cliffe church in 1623.

Architectural historians have concentrated their attention on the land surveyor (actually described by a contemporary as 'Geometrician and Surveiou'),¹⁹ John Thorpe, whose book of architectural drawings is in Sir John Soane's Museum.²⁰ While John Thorpe moved to London at the age of about twenty, and enjoyed a successful career on the periphery of court circles, his brothers Henry and Thomas remained in

King's Cliffe. Henry, the eldest brother, was born to the first wife of Thomas *pater*, Elizabeth Frisby, whose father William and uncle Humphrey were also masons in King's Cliffe.²¹ Henry would have inherited the bulk of the estate left by Thomas *pater*, including land, but the only hint that he continued in the family business is a reference to him serving as clerk of works at Collyweston Palace in 1606.²² On this occasion the mason was his brother-in-law, Thomas Boughton, or Broughton.²³ In the parish registers of 1610 and 1615 Henry was styled 'gent', and he may well have eschewed the family profession. His will of 1624 — which makes no mention of his brother Thomas — shows that his main business concern at that time was the local mill.²⁴

Rather than Henry, it was the youngest brother Thomas who became a highly successful quarryman and mason: there is documentary evidence that he provided worked stone for the following sites: Eltham Palace (1603–04),²⁵ the Banqueting House, Whitehall (1606–09, destroyed by fire in 1619),²⁶ London's Aldgate (1607),²⁷ Blickling Hall (1618–23) and Hunstanton Hall (1616–24).²⁸ At Eltham Palace and the Banqueting House he was contracted for the 'working and setting' of windows, and had responsibility for their transportation to London. He was clearly an educated and literate man who undertook several land surveys.²⁹ Thomas Thorpe and his wife, Wyburgh Hunt, had eleven children, and one of their sons took over the quarry and workshop following his death, which possibly took place in January 1626/27. In that year, 'younge Thorpe' (elsewhere referred to as 'Mr Thorpe') supplied the stone for a new market building, 'the Crosse', in Peterborough (rebuilt 1671).³⁰ As Thorpe's quarry is not identified on a map of c. 1641, production may have ceased.³¹ Indeed, it was around this time that several of Thomas Thorpe's descendants moved elsewhere, notably to Uppingham, where they continued to work as masons into the twentieth century.³²

It is useful to consider what role a master mason like Thomas Thorpe would have played in building projects of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Malcolm Airs has shown that some masons produced drawings and models, and even owned collections of plans;^{32a} they were certainly, on occasion, involved in designing buildings but, where large houses were concerned, this generally took place in consultation with the more erudite owner-builder. Many wealthy men had books on architecture in their libraries, and collected plans and drawings, but the extent to which these were studied rather than retained as parts of a scholarly collection remains enigmatic. In Mark Girouard's view, these Elizabethan and Jacobean patrons were likely to have been 'ambitious rather than knowledgeable', but some must have acted, effectively, as their own architects.³³ Many of the masons employed and consulted by these patrons were also literate, with access to books on architecture and opportunities to travel and study the latest buildings at first hand. Thomas Thorpe's brother John, for example, was evidently acquainted with works by du Cerceau and Palladio.³⁴ Despite this, master masons were rarely the principal architects of major country houses. They were generally employed on a piece-work basis, and answered to a site supervisor or surveyor. This could be the owner, a relative, the steward, or a surveyor who had started out as a craftsman, usually as a mason or a carpenter. Thus, at Blickling, Thorpe would have been directed by Robert Lyminge, a carpenter described as 'surveyor and architect' of the building. An example of a mason who achieved similar status to Lyminge is William Spicer: having worked as a freemason at Longleat in the middle of

the sixteenth century, he was later placed in charge of the works at Kenilworth Castle for the Earl of Leicester, and ended his career as Surveyor of the Royal Works. From the description of Spicer's duties at Kenilworth — ensuring the supply of building materials, hiring workmen and arranging contracts — he was carrying out duties which would have been the responsibility of the clerk of works on a medieval site. As this new role of surveyor emerged, direct contact with stone-working diminished for certain masons. In Malcolm Airs's opinion, for example, Robert Smythson carried out very little practical stone work and, although regarded by most scholars as the architect of Wollaton Hall (and indeed described on his tomb as such), was instead principally employed in an administrative capacity, directing the building works and preparing designs in consultation with the patron.³⁵ There is no documentary evidence to suggest that Thomas Thorpe ever assumed the role of 'surveyor',³⁶ and he is likely to have continued working to the end of his days as a craft-based mason, albeit one with considerable business acumen, who attracted a string of highly prestigious and lucrative projects, and had a large workforce at his command.

Thorpe's workforce would have been based at the quarry in King's Cliffe. His masons are likely to have been paid for piece or task work, rather than by day rates, something which would explain the large number of masons' marks on his buildings. Howard Colvin has described the seventeenth century as a period in which medieval traditions of site organization prevailed, and Thorpe was undoubtedly a craft-trained mason and quarryman. He may have been apprenticed to his father, and would eventually have taught his own apprentices, as well as employing a wide range of labourers and freemasons, many of whom would have been itinerant workers. At the core of Thorpe's workshop was a group of skilled masons, perhaps half a dozen regular workers, who could be categorized as 'Thorpe's men'. Thorpe would have liaised closely with his patrons and their supervisors or surveyors before preparing templates for his masons to use as the basis of their work. For many of the projects Thorpe was engaged on, it seems likely that he would have had some say in the design of the doors, windows, friezes, porches, archways, fireplaces and other architectural elements produced by his workshop. Whether he was ever given *carte blanche* as a designer, however, is impossible to establish.

THE APETHORPE MASONS' MARKS

As mentioned above, it would be reasonable to surmise, from the geographical proximity of the King's Cliffe quarry, that the stone for the 1622–24 work at Apethorpe Hall was provided and worked by Thomas Thorpe. This assumption can be transformed into a certainty by a study of the masons' marks that pepper the east and south ranges of the Hall, as several key marks recur on other buildings which are documented as being Thorpe's work. These related sites are discussed below.

This study, undertaken for English Heritage in 2005–06, involved the systematic recording and analysis of the Apethorpe marks (see Table, Fig. 4), using a methodological approach developed to assist in the analysis of medieval ecclesiastical buildings, primarily as a tool to determine phasing.³⁸ Opportunities to examine the masonry of country houses at close quarters are rare, but with scaffolding covering the

east and south ranges of Apethorpe, it was possible to gain access to approximately 85% of the exposed ashlar of the 1622–24 campaign.³⁹ Over 850 instances of approximately 60 different marks (more, if one includes minor variations) were drawn and photographed; their precise location and orientation was recorded; the data was then encoded, using a format derived from the number of strokes used to cut the mark, and entered onto a database. The computerization of the data greatly facilitated the subsequent analysis. Each unique mark is thought to represent an individual mason's work, and to have been incised into finished blocks for reasons either of payment (especially when masons were employed on task or piece work), or quality control. This is necessarily an assumption, made in the absence of any contemporary documentation that might explain how masons' marks were used. For present purposes, this interpretation, derived from studies of medieval working practice, seems to work.⁴⁰

The masons cutting the walling stone for Apethorpe Hall worked to a high degree of precision, with the blocks accurately squared, tooling marks rubbed back, and mortar joints minimized. The presence of conspicuous, large-scale masons' marks on such highly finished surfaces seems surprising. The marks might be considered to detract from the appearance of the stonework, but this was evidently not the attitude taken at the time. This was part of a long tradition: visible masons' marks had been equally acceptable in medieval buildings, where they can often be seen on stone given a final finish by a claw-chisel, or by some other tool that left clear marks across the surface. Many buildings of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century date, such as Hardwick New Hall, display conspicuous marks on smoothed stone, and so Apethorpe is far from unique. This practice rapidly diminished later in the seventeenth century, and by the 1700s marks were placed only on joint beds and hidden faces of stone blocks. Clearly a change of taste had occurred.

As well as constructing a profile of the Apethorpe workshop, ultimately leading to the identification of the master mason as Thomas Thorpe, the study of the masons' marks has had several outcomes: it has provided a means of attributing other undocumented pieces of work, at Apethorpe Hall and elsewhere, to the large workshop controlled by Thorpe; it has offered insights into the phasing and ordering of the 1622–24 campaign at Apethorpe Hall; it has revealed information about the organization and hierarchy of an early seventeenth-century mason's workshop; and it has opened up the possibility that the Thorpe workshop included competent sculptors as well as masons. This supports the notion that Thorpe's workshop was still organized within the medieval tradition, with 'banker' and 'carver' masons, capable of producing anything from plain, squared blocks to accomplished architectural sculpture, working alongside one another.⁴¹

While some of the late fifteenth-century elements of Apethorpe Hall bear masons' marks, these are too few to be statistically significant. In contrast, the work of 1622–24 displays an unusually large number of marks, some of them highly distinctive in the context of contemporary masons' marks, making it especially fruitful to study.

First of all, the recording of the masons' marks on the 1622–24 work has enabled an addition to the hall range (Fig. 5), hitherto consistently dated by historians to the mid-sixteenth century, to be re-dated to 1622–24 or thereabouts. This is an addition

1c2	2c2	2t7	2v1	3a50	3b10	3ca1
3c4	3fl	3h1	3k1	3tl5	3x3	4c10
4ca1	4ca3	4ca4	4ca5	4h3	4m1	4t5
4t50	4v20	4w2	4x11	4y1	5a1	5ca1
5f5	5ht1	5mc1	5n1	5s1	5tl1	5t20
5t30	5t40	5t5	5t6	5w3	5wa1	5x20
6a20	6a30	6a40	6ca1	6ca2	6ca3	6ca4
6ca5	6ca6	6n7	6r1	6t2	6t20	6t3
6w10	6w3	7a40	7ca1	7f1	7ht1	7ht2
7mc1	7t1	7w3	7wa1	8a1	8ca1	8ca2
8f1	8ht1	8ht2	8w3	8w4	8w5	9w3
10fa2	10ht1	10t1	10w3	11h1	12fa1	12fa2
12fs1	13h1	14fa1	14fa2	18fa1		

Fig. 4. Table of Apethorpe Hall Masons' Marks, recorded 2005–06

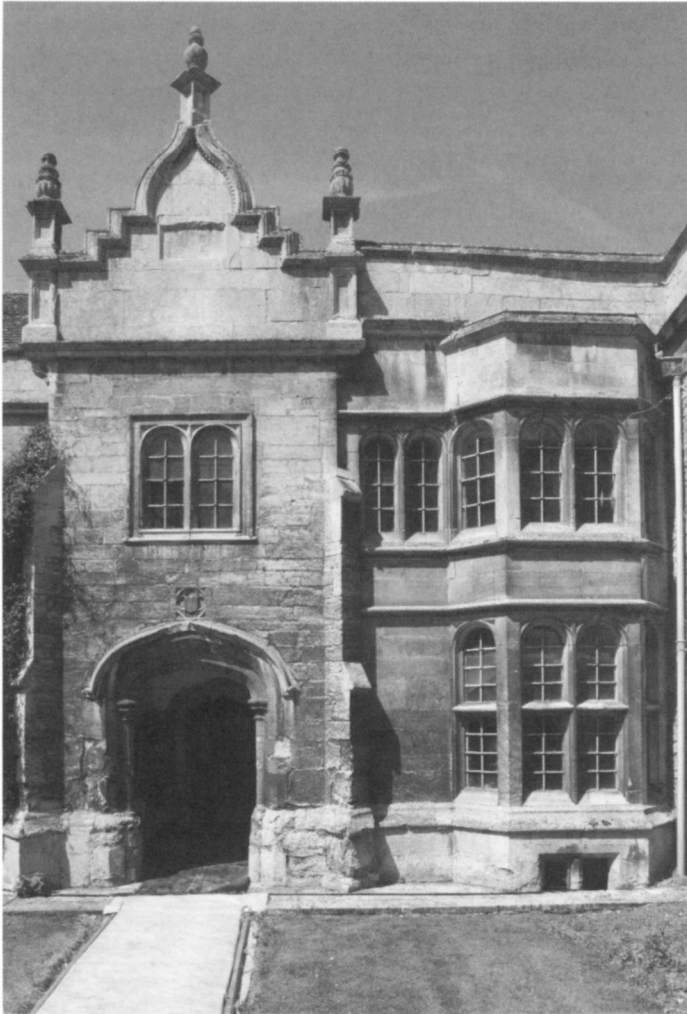


Fig. 5. *Apethorpe Hall, bay added to north of hall around 1624 (Photograph 2005, by Patricia Payne)*

with a two-storey bay window at the north (service) end of the hall. Knowing its date allows us to suggest that it was built to accommodate a staircase leading to the newly created (or, perhaps more correctly, enlarged and re-orientated) 'Old Dining Room' (see Fig. 2),⁴² which has a plaster overmantel decorated with Fane's arms, and was thus created after he inherited in 1617, but before his death in 1628.⁴³ The stonework of the bay window displays three different marks (2t7, 11h1 and 14fa2), all of which recur, sometimes grouped together, throughout the 1622–24 campaign. Despite this, the bay is stylistically quite different from Fane's east range. The only explanation for this aesthetic discrepancy is that it was designed to counterbalance an earlier two-storey bay window, of sixteenth-century date, lighting the 'Old Parlour' at the opposite end of the same elevation, which has no masons' marks. This introduction

of elevational symmetry betrays a new approach to design, more characteristic of the Jacobean than the Elizabethan era,⁴⁴ but the treatment reveals a deliberate antiquarianism: an intention to harmonize with the late medieval architecture of the hall range. The lights have round rather than flat heads, and the mouldings of the mullions and transoms are neither cavettos nor ovolos but, as a compromise between old and new forms, ogees with flat fillet-like fronts. This respect for the existing character of the house is something of a leitmotif at Apethorpe, reflected in the tremendous effort made to retain the interiors of the state rooms during the eighteenth-century remodelling by Roger Morris, as well as in the work carried out in the nineteenth century by the Brownings, and in the early twentieth century by Reginald Blomfield.

The study of the masons' marks has also confirmed that a reset doorway in the hall range, three arches fronting a garden building erected in 1909, and a gateway in the eighteenth-century garden wall, are authentic features dating from the same period, by the same group of masons; other techniques of investigation, however, must be brought to bear to deduce the original locations of these various elements. One feature which survives *in situ*, a doorway leading from the top of the library or devil's stair in the north range to the attic and roof walk over the east range, could not have been dated by any other means, if it had not borne masons' marks. It is architecturally plain, without diagnostic features, yet establishing its date is vital to understanding the circulation within the house in the seventeenth century.

Analysis of the data has produced evidence of phasing within the 1622–24 work. For example, by plotting the distribution of marked stones throughout the building, and examining variations in the form and position of individual marks, it can now be suggested that the campaign began with the south and east walls of the projecting south end of the east range, including the cellar in this position. Certainly, this would have proved less disruptive to the existing building than commencing with any other part of the new work. Stone for the south range displays greater variation in marks than that of the east range, and was cut over a longer period: work may have been less continuous here, where an existing structure complicated the building process.

These findings have implications for the relative dating of certain architectural features, for example, hinting that the first of the four stone chimneypieces to be installed (although not necessarily carved) was that of the Duke's Chamber (see Fig. 3). This happens to be the room with the most old-fashioned plaster ceiling, having a design of enriched ribs, current from the 1590s, leading experts to believe that it could predate other surviving seventeenth-century ceilings in the house.⁴⁵ This is independently corroborated by the masons' marks study. The remodelling of existing parts of the house — including the south range and the Old Dining Room, mentioned above — seems to have followed the construction of the new east range.

Analysis of the distribution of marks according to the shape and relative complexity of the blocks they adorn (and there is always just one mark per block, although occasionally marks assume a double form, e.g., 6ca2) has revealed considerable specialization amongst the masons, showing that a fairly rigid hierarchy existed within the workshop. This doubtless reflects the presence of masons of varying skill levels, due either to experience or ability.

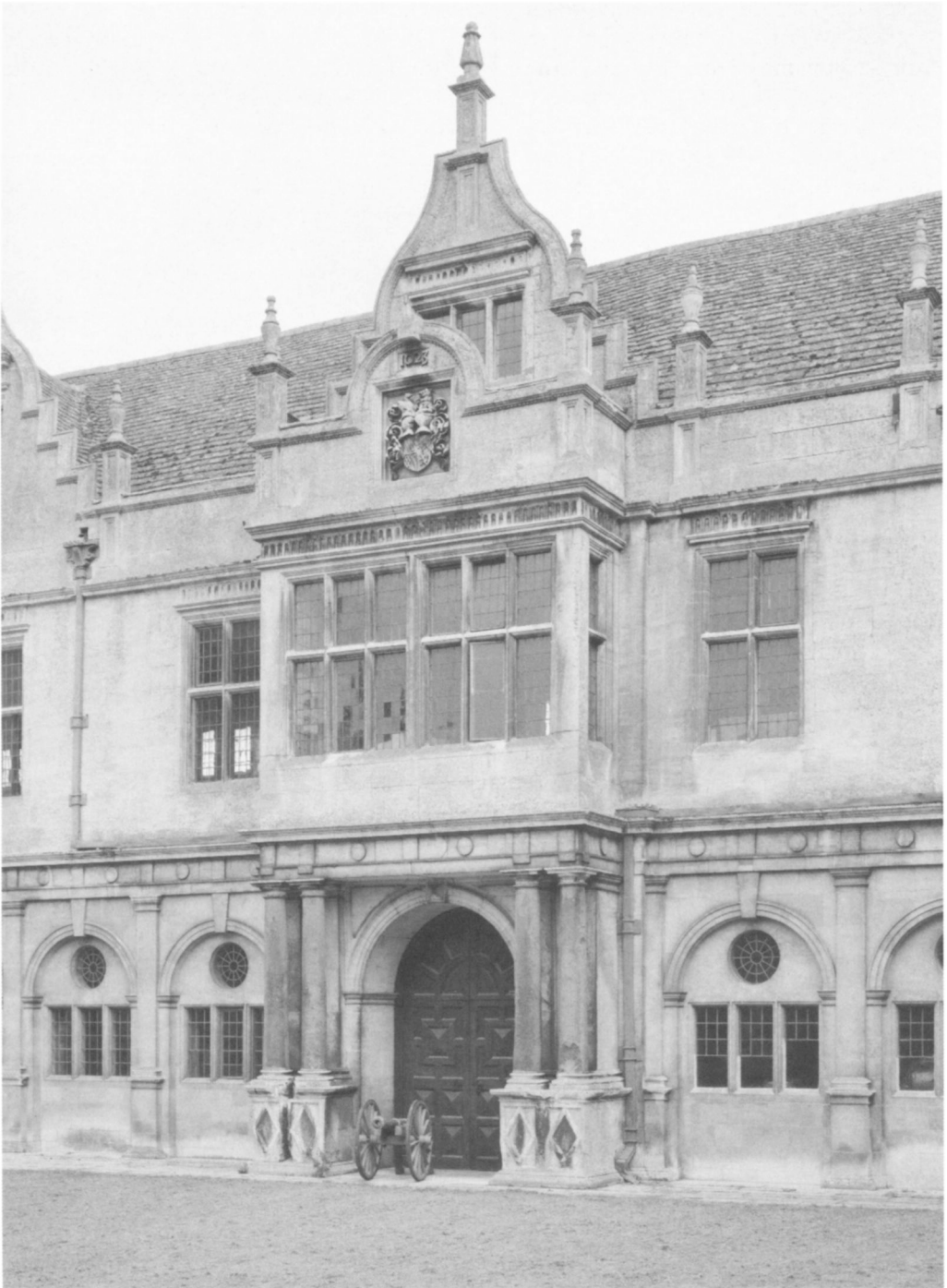


Fig. 6. Apethorpe Hall, porch on west side of east range (Photograph c. 1978)



Fig. 7. Apethorpe Hall, mark 2t7 on the undersides of impost blocks, east range, west porch (Photograph 2006, by Patricia Payne)

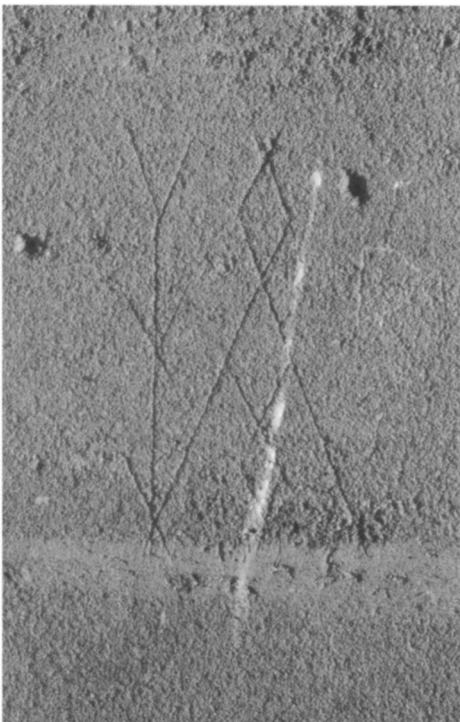


Fig. 8. Apethorpe Hall, mark 12fa2 on the jamb of the Spencer Room doorway in the south range (Photograph 2006, by Patricia Payne)

While some masons worked exclusively on simple squared blocks, others worked mainly on splayed blocks for window jambs, and a small 'élite group' of masons (including those responsible for the 'antiquarian' bay mentioned above) produced friezes, porches (Figs 6 and 7), doorways (Fig. 8) and even the stone for the fireplaces, which are decorated with both bas-reliefs and free-standing figural sculpture. This 'élite group' probably represents Thorpe's 'men', or permanent workforce.⁴⁶ In the case of the fireplaces, it is not possible to be certain if these masons were responsible for the sculpture, as their marks never appear on the actual carving. However, many of the marks occurring on the architectural elements of the fireplaces are carefully sited in the centres of blocks. This goes beyond any system needed for a paymaster, raising the possibility that these marks had a different purpose. One possible explanation is that they were intended to demonstrate the authorship of the work. At this time, the desire to advertise authorship was becoming increasingly important. This is manifest in tomb sculptors' signatures, which make their first appearance in Herefordshire in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. These crude inscriptions, however, seem to be quite distinct from the elegant cursive script, and Latin, found on metropolitan work from the early seventeenth century, by such sculptors as Epiphanius Evesham.

THOMAS THORPE'S WORK AT HUNSTANTON HALL AND BLICKLING HALL

Perhaps most excitingly, the recording and analysis of the masons' marks of Apethorpe Hall has created a body of data that can be compared with other buildings of the same date (see Map, Fig. 9), starting with the two surviving structures where Thomas Thorpe is documented to have worked, Hunstanton Hall and Blickling Hall.⁴⁷

At each of these sites, Apethorpe masons' marks (generally those of the élite group) recur, alongside a number of new marks. In the absence of scaffolding, no thorough examination of the masonry has been possible at either site, merely observation from the ground. While this has been sufficient to secure the existence of the relationship with Apethorpe, a methodical programme of recording and analysis at each site, similar to that carried out at Apethorpe itself, would doubtless provide a much deeper insight into the profile of the workforce and the extent of its involvement. Nevertheless, even this basic level of examination has provided vital information about Thorpe's team.

It has been known for some time that Thorpe created an archway at Hunstanton Hall in 1623, but it is now clear that his involvement there began some years earlier, predating his work at either Blickling or Apethorpe. In 1616–17 he produced a porch, a set-piece addition to the sixteenth-century hall range, which survived a devastating fire in 1853, and now stands in isolation (Fig. 10). The porch consists of a round-headed arch with a prominent jewelled keystone, framed by Tuscan columns with an entablature that supports a pair of obelisks. The attic storey has a centrally placed heraldic panel with the arms of le Strange — *gules, two lions passant guardant argent* — set in flushwork.⁴⁸ The date '1618' is displayed beneath a shell, and the cresting is finished with three ball-finials. This was not an expensive project, and costs were kept down by using thin blocks of freestone for the façade of the porch, with locally available flint for the flushwork, and soft Carstone for the sides.



Fig. 9. Map: this shows rivers navigable in the early seventeenth century, and sites associated with Thomas Thorpe (in capitals) (Drawn 2006, by Nigel Fradgley)

Thorpe's involvement is revealed in a series of intriguing entries in the Account Book of Lady Alice le Strange,⁴⁹ as follows:

20 July 1616 paid to John Scott which hee paid to the Workman in part of payment for freestone for the Porch: £5

28 September 1616 to the Keele men [50] for bringing of 11 Tunn of free stone from Gumbard fery [51] to Hunstanton at 5s 9d the Tunne: £3 3s. 4d.

28 December 1616 to John Skott to the use of the Workmen for the stone for the Porch in part of £14: £10

26 November 1617 paid to Hanse the Duch man to the use of Thorpe in full payment of £19: £4

2 December 1617 to Hanse the Duch man in parte of Payment of 30s for making of 2 Piramydes and to send them to Linne: 5s

7 October 1618 paid to Mr Francis Gurney to pay to Hanse the Duchman in full payment



Fig. 10. *Hunstanton Hall, porch, dated 1618 (Photograph 2006, by Steve Cole)*

for 2 Piramedis besid 5s which I payed to him selfe: £1-5s
 29 October 1618 payd for bringing of the Pyramides of free stone to Linn: 2s

The entries for 20 July 1616, 28 December 1616 and 26 November 1617 represent Thorpe's payment of £19 for the porch, with an additional 30s. for the obelisks ('pyramides'), being paid slightly later, suggesting that they were not part of the original contract. From the wording, Scott and Gurney were clearly agents arranging payments for the le Strange family, rather than being affiliated to Thorpe's workshop.⁵² Hanse the Duchman, however, may have been Thorpe's man on site, in charge of erecting the porch, having authority to accept the commission for the two obelisks, and later despatching them — presumably from Gunwade Ferry, the shipping point for King's Cliffe stone — to Hunstanton via King's Lynn. This man could have been one of Thorpe's most trusted and experienced masons/sculptors, his name suggesting that he

may have belonged to the large group of Netherlandish sculptors who emigrated to England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The wording of the accounts leaves open the possibility that Hanse was a subcontractor or agent unconnected with Thorpe's workshop, but stylistic parallels for the masks on the obelisks can be found in the fleshy-faced grotesques which occupy the pediments of the courtyard doorways at Blickling (see below).

The attribution of this porch to Thorpe's workshop does not rest merely on the entries in the accounts. Two Apethorpe elite group marks (2t7 and 6a30) can be found, one in a spandrel and the other on the archivolt. Despite the fact that the only other mark that can be found on the porch does not occur at Apethorpe, formal similarities with other arches by Thorpe's team (i.e. the jewelled keystone; the treatment of the frieze with rosettes, triglyphs and guttae; the triple-stepped face of the archivolt; the chamfered jambs) make it possible to attribute the porch to his workshop with some confidence.

Major extensions to Hunstanton Hall were planned in 1620 and — although local masons undertook much of the new work using Carstone — the le Stranges turned once again to Thorpe, who was paid for freestone in 1621, 1622, 1623 and 1624.⁵³ It is difficult to know exactly how much stone was purchased from Thorpe at this time, as some of the entries in the accounts are ambiguous, but the total came to at least £120. Most, if not all, of this sum was spent on the solid ashlar archway that led into the forecourt or Green Court. In the nineteenth century this feature was ascribed by the family to Inigo Jones.⁵⁴ Regardless of this unlikely attribution, the gateway was certainly built by Thorpe. In 1622 he sent his own men to 'sett up the gates',⁵⁵ and occasional payments were made by the le Stranges to 'Thorpe's stone cutters' or 'his men' rather than to Thorpe personally.⁵⁶

The arch (Fig. 11) is surmounted by strapwork cresting, with the arms of le Strange impaling Stubbe — *sable, on a bend between three pheons argent, as many round buckles of the first* — for Sir Hamon le Strange (c. 1583–1654), who had married Alice, daughter of Richard Stubbe of Sedgford, in 1601. Two supporters frame the cresting, and the arch is in turn supported by two scrolled brackets with guilloche bands.⁵⁷ Further shields with the arms and crests of le Strange and Stubbe ornament the arch spandrels. The date '1623' is inscribed on the architrave, beneath the cresting. On the courtyard face are two round-headed niches which bear a remarkable resemblance to those on the roof walk of Apethorpe Hall. Two distinctive masons' marks (11h1 and 6t2) can be found on the stonework of the arch, identical to marks used by the masons at Apethorpe for more complex work.⁵⁸ One is on the soffit of a vousoir and the other on the walling stone of the arch spandrel.

At Blickling (Fig. 12), the shells of Sir Henry Hobart's new wings were erected in 1618–23, with interior fittings still being installed in the late 1620s. Surviving accounts reveal that the work was entrusted chiefly to three men: Robert Lyminge (surveyor and carpenter), Thomas Thorpe and Thomas Style.⁵⁹ Style, like Thorpe, was a mason, and unfortunately the accounts do not specify what work was carried out by which man. While some accounts list payments to the three chief contractors, others list work done by the 'masons', 'carpenters' and other groups of craftsmen, but nowhere is the work by the chief contractors itemized. The few clues to the division of labour between



Fig. 11. *Hunstanton Hall, archway, dated 1623 (Photograph 1990)*



Fig. 12. *Blickling Hall, general view from south (Photograph 1970s)*

Thorpe and Style include a note of 26 February 1619, recording a payment of £20 to Style for 'the hardstone pavers',⁶⁰ and another reference in the same year to him 'cutting 320 coynestones' and 'working 8 lights of old stone' for £8 and £2 respectively.⁶¹ A more comprehensive recording and analysis of the masons' marks at Blickling has potential to differentiate the work of these two masons. For the moment it can be suggested, very tentatively, that Thorpe was responsible for the finer stonework and sculptural elements. It can also be suggested that while Thorpe worked from a distance (no doubt with some of his men attending on site from time to time, as at Hunstanton), Style may have been at Blickling on a more or less permanent basis.

Interestingly, several of the architectural elements of Blickling on which Apethorpe/Thorpe marks (predominantly 7wa1, 8a1, 11h1, 13h1 and 14fa2) have been found are itemized in the notes of 'the Masons worke'.⁶² The descriptions of these elements make it clear that the masons were responsible for sculptural embellishment; they did not simply rough out blocks ready for a sculptor to take over. As well as the 'latters roses and treclifes' on the friezes, this included work of considerable quality, such as the masks in the pediments (or 'frontispieces') of four turret doorways within the inner courtyard (Fig. 13), and the 'carving very costly over the hall window and the window over the inward arch in the aforesaid court' (Figs 13 and 14). While the doorways and friezes, which have been examined from the ground, bear Apethorpe marks, the carvings above, which are too high for marks to be visible from ground level, are clearly itemized with them and must have been produced by the same — i.e. Thorpe's — workshop.

The masons' accounts itemize other sculptural work which either does not bear marks associated with Apethorpe, or cannot be examined at present, yet is likely to have been carved by Thorpe's workshop. This includes the decoration of the main entrance bay, including the door surround and statues of Justice and Prudence at the upper level, and the two doorways on the landing of the great stair (now repositioned), 'with tearmes and inriched with carving'. Closer examination may reveal why the heraldic achievement over the main doorway has a verve and quality lacking in other works associated with Thorpe; it may have been sub-contracted.

Most of the architectural stonework for Blickling was not carved on site. Some of the 'window lights' (i.e. jambs, lintels, sills, mullions and transoms), many of which bear Apethorpe marks, were at the quarry or water side 'ready wrought' in 1619, showing that they were prepared at King's Cliffe then shipped to the coast near Blickling, probably to Cley-next-the-Sea. Rather more opaquely, the accounts mention that 'the stone is provided for the chimney peeces at the Quarry but not yet sent in to Blickling', but it is not clear whether this was also 'ready wrought'. As the workshop was clearly capable of carving high quality sculpture, the possibility that it produced elaborate chimneypieces which no longer survive at Blickling must be considered. The 'chimney peeces', however, may have been simple fire surrounds, perhaps with timber or plaster overmantels added by the carpenter Robert Lyminge or the plasterer Edward Stanyon.

Although the picture is not entirely clear, social and family connexions between the Fanes of Apethorpe, the Hobarts of Blickling, and the le Stranges of Hunstanton suggest how Thorpe ended up working on those particular houses in Norfolk.⁶³ The Fanes probably maintained a long-standing relationship with the Thorpe family who, as local



Fig. 13. Blickling Hall, inner courtyard, looking south (Photograph 1952)

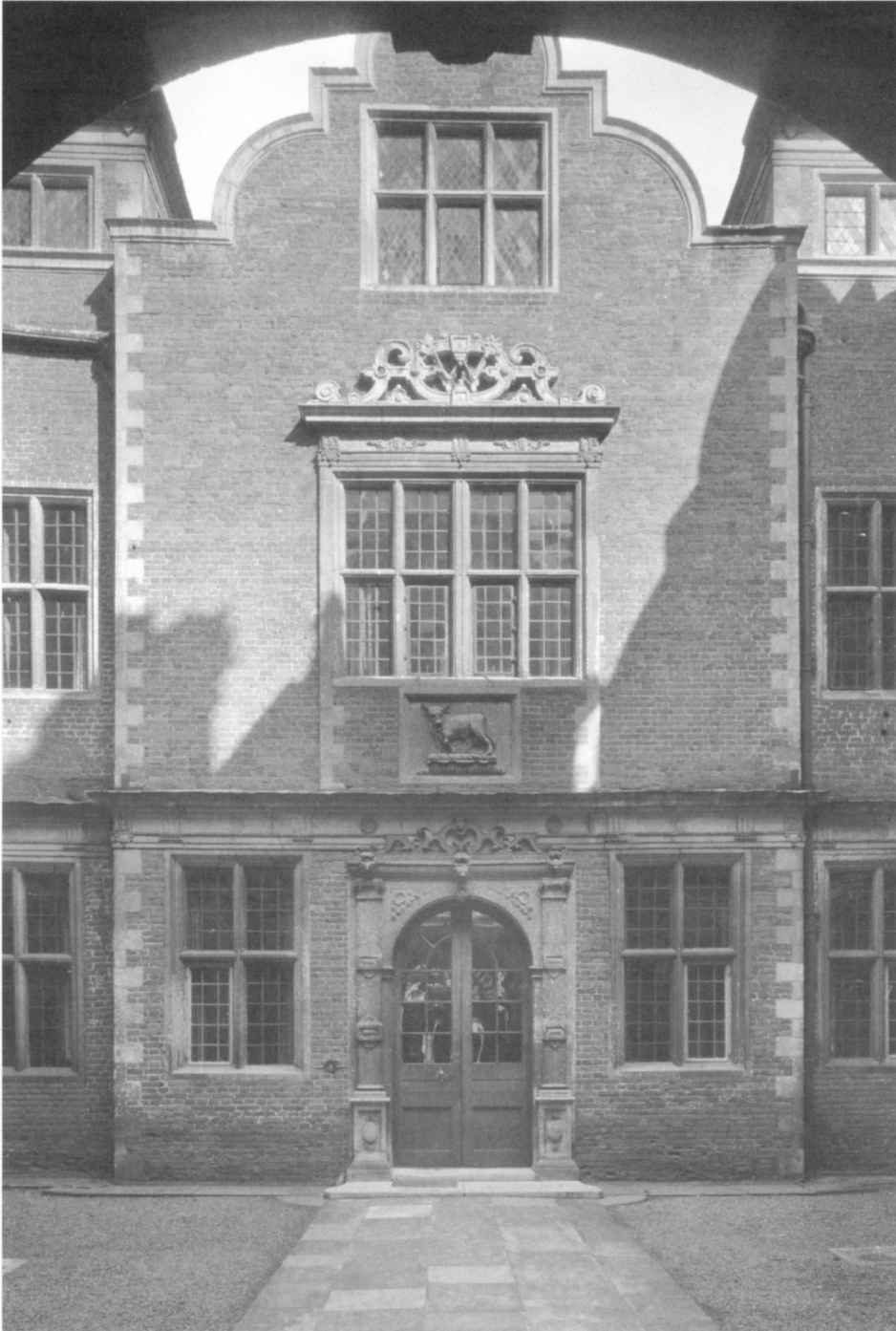


Fig. 14. Blickling Hall, inner courtyard, looking north towards hall (Photograph 1952)

masons operating from a quarry owned by the Mildmay/Fane family, may have undertaken work at Apethorpe Hall before the 1620s, although this can be substantiated neither by documents nor masons' marks.⁶⁴ Hobart rented his London house, in St Bartholomew, Smithfield, from Fane,⁶⁵ but Thorpe may have been recommended to him by the le Stranges, who had been patrons of Thorpe's since at least 1616. Sir Henry Hobart was Sir Hamon le Strange's uncle by marriage, and the families were close.⁶⁶ Lady Alice's Account Book reveals, for example, that 'Mr Strange' (probably Sir Hamon) incurred costs when he travelled to Blickling — where work was in the planning stages — in 1618;⁶⁷ in 1620 he met with Hobart at Sprowston, on the outskirts of Norwich,⁶⁸ and shortly afterwards the family bought 'Lord Hoberts Pickture'.⁶⁹ Significantly, le Strange and Hobart contracted with two of the same workmen: as well as employing Thomas Thorpe,⁷⁰ both engaged the services of the plasterer Edward Stanyon, who made an expensive chimney piece for Hunstanton Hall.⁷¹ Thorpe may have further endeared himself to these patrons as he, himself, hailed ultimately from Norfolk stock.

Evidently, around 1622, Thomas Thorpe was deeply involved in executing three large and potentially lucrative projects: Blickling Hall, Hunstanton Hall and Apethorpe Hall. The size of his workforce at this time must have been enormous. Over sixty different marks have been found at Apethorpe, and at least ten others, some of a similar and clearly related type, occur at Blickling and Hunstanton; no doubt additional marks would be found if these sites were submitted to a methodical examination. Even allowing for itinerant masons coming and going on a regular basis, this is impressive. It is probably because these three sites are roughly contemporaneous that a significant overlap in marks occurs; there were clearly few changes amongst the members of the élite group within the narrow period 1618 to 1624. The greatest turnover, as one might have expected, was amongst the least trained or least skilled stonemasons, who were responsible for the simplest ashlar blocks.⁷² The élite group seem to have been employed on a more or less permanent basis, and formed the core of the workshop.

OTHER WORK ATTRIBUTABLE TO THOMAS THORPE'S MASONS

To validate the assumption that the recurrence of the same marks at Apethorpe, Blickling and Hunstanton is highly significant and indicative of a single workshop, a 'control' was established. This involved examining (briefly, from ground level) many other buildings of similar date for masons' marks. Located in Northamptonshire and further afield, these included Aston Hall (West Midlands), Audley End (Essex), Bolsover Castle (Derbyshire), Brockhall Hall (Northamptonshire), Charterhouse (Greater London), Felbrigg (Norfolk), Hardwick Old and New Halls (Derbyshire), Hatfield House (Hertfordshire), Holdenby House (Northamptonshire), Kenilworth Castle (Warwickshire), Lyveden New Bield (Northamptonshire), Rushton Triangular Lodge (Northamptonshire), and Southwick Hall (Northamptonshire). Many of these buildings have large numbers of masons' marks, but none that can be associated with Thomas Thorpe's workshop. At Felbrigg, where the masonry has been attributed convincingly to Thomas Thorpe on the basis of a stylistic relationship with Blickling, there are no visible masons' marks whatsoever, suggesting that different working

practices were in place.⁷³ Another building with stonework that has been attributed to Thorpe due to architectural parallels with Blickling is the Clock House, or Gatehouse, at Merton Hall, Norfolk, built for Sir William de Grey in 1620.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, in this case the stonework cannot be properly examined as it is coated in paint. However, details such as the jewelled spandrels and foliate brackets find no equivalents in other work attributed to Thorpe's team.

This comparative exercise reinforces the distinctiveness of the marks that are found at Apethorpe Hall, Blickling Hall and Hunstanton Hall, leaving little doubt that the Apethorpe masonry of 1622–24 can be securely attributed to Thomas Thorpe's workshop.

One other house visited as part of the 'control' process was Kirby Hall in Northamptonshire, which is built of Weldon rather than King's Cliffe stone. The stonework of the first phase of Kirby was executed by Thomas Thorpe *pater*, beginning in 1570, for Sir Humphrey Stafford. It would seem that Thorpe was not, at that time, attached exclusively (if at all) to Mildmay's King's Cliffe quarry. In 1575–78, following Stafford's death, Sir Christopher Hatton acquired Kirby, and continued the building work. Significantly, Summerson believed that 'we lose sight of Thomas Thorpe and his style' in the southward extension of Kirby, which has always been assigned to Hatton rather than Stafford. This later work (Fig. 15), Summerson suggested, might have been carried out by the sons of Thomas Thorpe *pater*, Henry or Thomas. His intuition may have been correct, for one of the élite group marks from Apethorpe, Blickling and Hunstanton, mark 11h1, can be found on the moulded handrails of both state apartment staircases, and on several doorcases, within that campaign.⁷⁵

Several other stray occurrences of this mark, 11h1, cannot be ignored. It turns up, for example, on the vousoirs of the ground-floor arches of Rothwell Market House, contracted for in 1578 by William Grumbold of Weldon.⁷⁶ An explanation for this may lie in the close connexions that are known to have existed between three Northamptonshire masonic families: the Thorpes, the Frisbys and the Grumbolds. In 1593/94, for example, the 'quarry man' Thomas Thorpe — presumably Thomas Thorpe *pater* — supplied one ton of 'Cliffe' stone for the spire of Great St Mary's in Cambridge, where his father-in-law William Frisby was working under Robert Grumbold.⁷⁷ This stone may have been used for the plain doorway at the top of the tower, which opens onto the lead flat. It certainly seems to be of King's Cliffe stone, while the remainder of the tower is of Weldon. As for the projected spire, it was never erected.

The distinctive mark 11h1 can also be seen close to the top of the Roman stair at Burghley House near Stamford. This stone staircase was probably created towards the end of William Cecil's second building campaign of c. 1573–87. Although the stonework displays a wide range of marks, the only one related to Kirby Hall is 11h1, and as this mark appears just twice, it cannot be accorded much significance.⁷⁸ This can be contrasted with the situation at Drayton House (Northamptonshire), where 11h1 is just one of seven or eight marks on the north-east wing of the 1580s that can be matched on the south range of Kirby Hall.⁷⁹ In this case there is little doubt that the same team of masons was active at each site.

The exact significance of mark 11h1 is not clear. It was certainly used on buildings falling within the broad orbit of the workshop of Thorpe Thorpe *pater* in the 1570s and



Fig. 15. Kirby Hall, staircase and doorways in state apartment (Photograph 2007, by Patricia Payne)

1580s, and more specifically by a member of his son's workshop in the 1620s. This opens up the possibility that marks such as this were passed down through the generations within masonic families, and indicates that their attribution to individuals must be treated with great care. Indeed, this makes it plain that more significance must be credited to recurrent groupings of marks than to single instances.

Moving forward to the 1620s, four structures have been identified which display marks from the same group as Apethorpe, Blickling and Hunstanton.⁸⁰ These are a window and fireplace at Deene Park (Northamptonshire), extensions to Rushton Hall (Northamptonshire), the façade and porch of Stibbington Hall (Huntingdonshire), and the Mildmay Chapel and west tower of Apethorpe church.

The relevant features at Deene Park probably date from c. 1622–35, when the house was substantially remodelled by Thomas Brudenell, who had married Thomas Tresham's daughter.⁸¹ The surround of the window of the Yellow Room (south of the Tapestry Room, on the first floor),⁸² displays two marks which are found at Apethorpe Hall (6t2 and 6w10), one of which (6t2) can also be found on the arch at Hunstanton. In the late 1970s, one of these marks (6t2) was observed by Robert Taylor on the first-floor Tower Bedroom fireplace, alongside yet another Apethorpe mark (5t5), which recurs at Kirby Hall.⁸³



Fig. 16. *Stibbington Hall, general view (Photograph 1914)*

Deene Park is built of Weldon stone, as were the extensions and alterations carried out at Rushton Hall for Charles Cockayne between 1626 and 1633, after Thomas Thorpe's death. At Rushton, at least six Apethorpe marks can be found on this work: 3k1, 5a1, 5ht1, 5t11, 6w10 and 6w3, plus a variant on 4c10. As at Deene, none of these belongs to the élite group identified at Apethorpe. At both sites we may be dealing with masons more closely affiliated with the Weldon quarries, who joined forces with Thorpe from time to time, when work was available. If the opportunity ever arises to carry out a comparative study of marks at Kirby Hall, Deene Park and Rushton Hall, this could prove extremely informative. All three sites display assembly marks in the form of Roman numerals, as well as masons' marks, and they clearly belong to the same workshop tradition.

The main part of Stibbington Hall was built in 1625, and appears to be of King's Cliffe stone.⁸⁴ The forecourt is entered through a stone arch reminiscent of those at Hunstanton and Apethorpe, but encrusted with lichen and, apparently, free of marks. The soffit, jewelled keystone, a pilaster and a jamb of the two-storey central porch (Fig. 16), which displays the date '1625', bear a mark of a complex type, 12fa1 (see Fig. 8 for a similar mark), which is matched at Apethorpe Hall, with close variants at Blickling Hall and Apethorpe church. Fragments of this mark are visible elsewhere on the façade, suggesting that this mason did not simply carve the porch as a set piece but as part of a larger project.⁸⁵ A second mark, 7wa1, matched at the same three sites, can be found on the ashlar facings to left and right of the porch. This suggests the presence of two of Thorpe's masons who habitually worked alongside one another. Finally, one single instance of a third Apethorpe Hall mark, 2t7, survives behind a drainpipe. This key mark is paralleled on the Hunstanton porch (see above) and Apethorpe church, but does not occur at Blickling, where its absence is notable.



Fig. 17. *Apethorpe church, arcade between chancel and Mildmay Chapel (Photograph 2006 by Patricia Payne)*



Fig. 18. *Apethorpe church, Mildmay Chapel with monument of 1621 attributed to Maximilian Colt (Photograph 2006 by Patricia Payne)*

The Mildmay Chapel in Apethorpe church was built in a late Gothic style in 1621.⁸⁶ It was commissioned by Sir Francis Fane and was clearly erected by Thorpe's workshop, as the arches of the chancel arcade and south aisle arch (Fig. 17) bear the marks of five (or more) members of the élite group active at Apethorpe Hall (7wa1, 2t7, 11h1, 13h1, 9a2, plus two variants on 11h1). The chapel was built to house the tomb of Anthony and Grace Mildmay (who died in 1617 and 1620 respectively): a magnificent canopied monument of marble (Fig. 18), which has been attributed to Maximilian Colt and is comparable in terms of quality with Colt's Cecil tomb in the Salisbury Chapel at Hatfield.⁸⁷ The tomb itself was probably carved in London and sent to Apethorpe, where it may have been installed by Thorpe's workshop. The freestone plinth bears two masons' marks: one is truncated by the tomb, but the other is an elongated 'B', of which many instances may be seen at Blickling.

The coursed ashlar of the upper parts of the chapel walls (Fig. 19) is decorated with bas-reliefs depicting winged cherub heads, knotted drapery, garlands of laurel leaves, and rectangular panels surrounded by bands of guilloche. The panels would have been



Fig. 19. *Apethorpe church, bas reliefs on walls of Mildmay Chapel (Photograph 2006, by Patricia Payne)*

painted with text, faint traces of which survive. In the north-west corner, a mason's mark (5a2) is cut perpendicularly into the narrow border of a block, which is carved with a garland. This, again, is a mark recognizable from Blickling Hall, where it is cut perpendicularly on mullions and transoms in exactly the same manner. This mark, once more, confirms that members of Thorpe's workshop were capable of producing competent sculpture, at least in bas-relief.

Apethorpe church has one more feature connected with Thorpe's workshop: the Gothic west tower. The lowest stage bears the date 1633, around six years after Thorpe's death, and so work must have been initiated after his son had taken over the workshop. The family was still employing at least one of the same masons, as the tall arch separating the tower from the nave displays (on the soffit of every voussoir, on the imposts of the capitals, and on the intrados of every jamb block) a complex mark, 9wa1, a variant of 7wa1, which had appeared at Blickling, Apethorpe Hall, the Mildmay Chapel and Stibbington some years before. This mark is also displayed at the apex of the west window, on the exterior of the tower.⁸⁸

It is highly likely that future fieldwork will identify other buildings which can be attributed to Thorpe's team, either to the permanent core of the workshop, or to more peripheral members of the group whose association with Thorpe was sporadic, depending on what other work was available throughout the region.

THE THORPE WORKSHOP: SCULPTORS AND MASONS?

Except for the work on Apethorpe church and the 'antiquarian' bay at Apethorpe Hall, the repertoire of architectural elements and motifs deployed by Thomas Thorpe's team from site to site is very much typical of its day: fashionable, if not innovative. It shows a desire to adopt classical forms without worrying too much about proportion, and happily juxtaposing non-classical features (such as strapwork, jewellery, four-centred arches and hollow spandrels) with classical (such as pediments, Ionic and Tuscan capitals, and round-headed niches). The rather different work at the church demonstrates an ability to work in a Gothic style, albeit in a freer form than that used in the medieval period. As discussed above, it is difficult to determine the extent to which patrons and architects may have intervened in the design of the stonework, but the recurrence of certain motifs from site to site (such as bold jewelled keystones and strapwork cresting) strongly suggests that Thorpe often designed the details of the stonework, even if he was not in overarching control of the building projects to which he contributed.

This poses the question of the extent to which Thorpe's workshop could produce sculpture without sub-contracting to a master craftsman in that field. Setting aside the fine heraldic achievement over the main entrance of Blickling, the most ambitious sculptural ensembles surviving in any of Thorpe's buildings are the four chimneypieces in Apethorpe Hall itself, all carved from the finest possible locally sourced limestone. These are in the Duke's Chamber (see Fig. 3), Long Gallery (Fig. 20), King's Chamber (Fig. 21) and Withdrawing Chamber (Fig. 22).⁸⁹ The Duke's Chamber chimneypiece can be distinguished from the others by a complete lack of masons' marks,⁹⁰ but has an undeniable stylistic relationship with the other fireplaces, and must be considered a product of the same workshop, if not the same small grouping of masons (i.e. 11h1, 13h1 and 2t7). All four have fire openings with classical surrounds, and elaborate overmantels carved with biblical and allegorical scenes. Although ambitious and complex works, both in terms of subject matter and technical skill, their quality must not be overstated. In comparison with figural work by Colt, for example, the anatomy of Peace on the King's Chamber overmantel (Fig. 21) is awkward.

Despite this reservation about the quality of the large-scale figural sculpture, the up-to-date range of motifs (for example, the parted curtains and open pediments), the execution of the drapery (with rippling folds clearly inspired by Colt), and the overall compositional skill (with classical architectural frameworks echoed in contemporary wall monuments) reveals the influence of metropolitan sculpture by the most eminent sculptors of the day, perhaps partly absorbed through a study of the Mildmay tomb, which the workshop had recently set up in the local church. Thomas Thorpe, however, had strong London connexions; not only was his brother John based in London, but Thomas had worked on royal projects in and around London as a young man,⁹¹ and may have travelled there on subsequent occasions. It is not known at present which projects he was engaged on between 1609 and 1616,⁹² but he would certainly have had opportunities to cultivate an acquaintance with the best sculptors of the day, men such as Maximilian Colt, Cornelius, Edward and William Cure, Garrat Johnson or Gerard Christmas, and to see the latest monuments in London churches. It is quite possible that

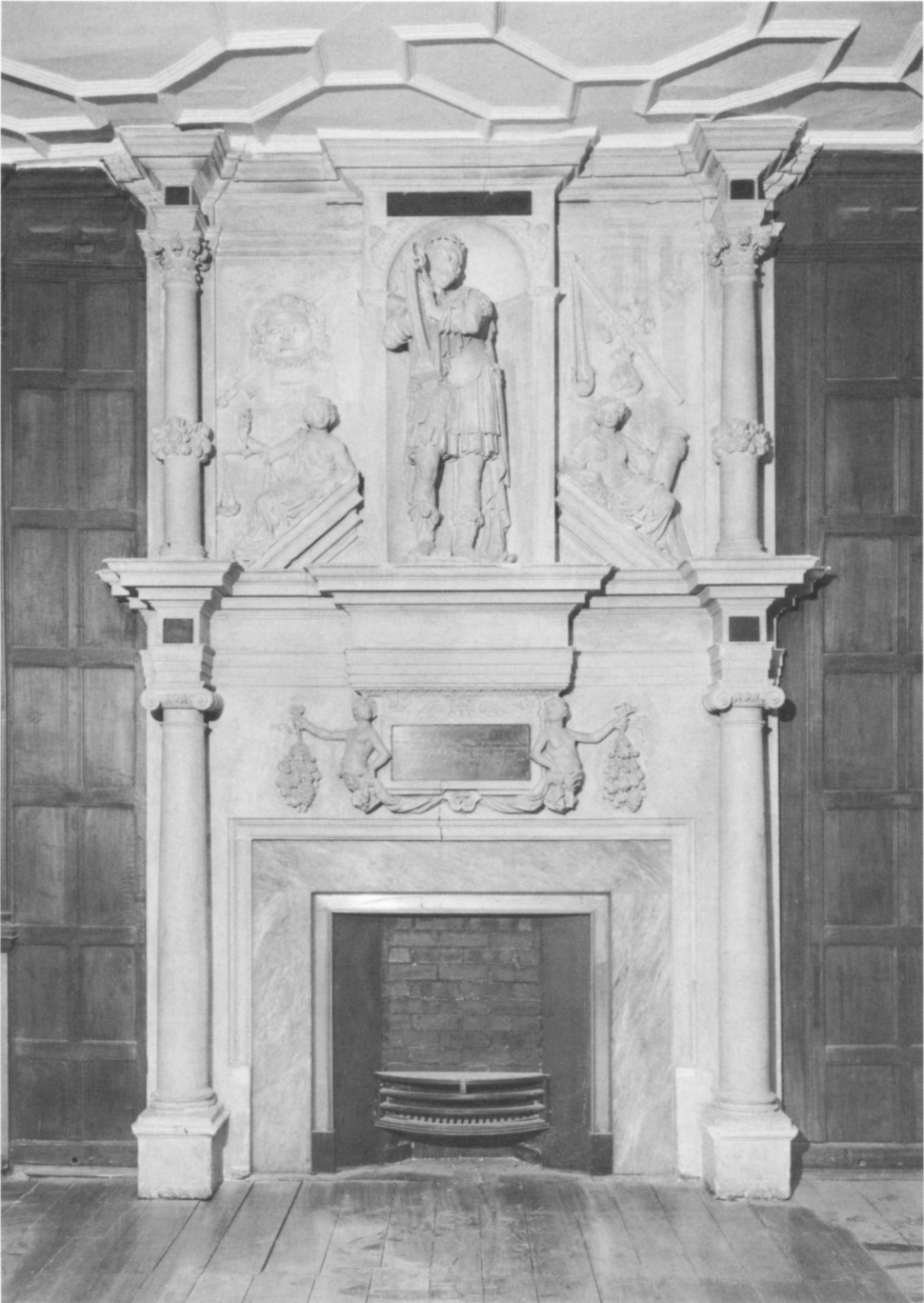


Fig. 20. Apethorpe Hall, Long Gallery chimneypiece, with statue of King David in centre (Photograph c. 1978)



Fig. 21. Apethorpe Hall, King's Chamber overmantel, with Justice (or War) and Peace in the centre (Photograph c. 1978)



Fig. 22. Apethorpe Hall, Withdrawing Chamber overmantel, with the Sacrifice of Isaac (Photograph c. 1978)

Thorpe employed (directly or indirectly, by subcontracting) one or more Netherlandish carvers, perhaps including Hanse the Duchman, who was documented at Hunstanton. However, it has been pointed out that many English craftsmen, including Nicholas Stone, served at least part of their apprenticeships in the workshops of the Netherlandish emigrés who clustered in Southwark.⁹³ It is conceivable that Thorpe himself, or one or more of the masons who ended up in his workshop, had received similar training. Certainly, in 1628, the year following Thorpe's death, his nephew and former ward Henry Boughton was apprenticed to the London-based mason and tomb sculptor Edward Marshall.⁹⁴ This may not have been unprecedented for a mason's son from King's Cliffe.

The presence of prominently, even deliberately, displayed masons' marks on the Apethorpe fireplaces, as on the bas-reliefs in Apethorpe church and carved elements of Blickling Hall, demonstrates that Thorpe's men were closely involved in the production of these works. This is reinforced by the use of carefully sourced fine-grain limestone from local quarries.⁹⁵ The possibility that a master carver was brought in to help with more ambitious sculptural elements cannot be dismissed out of hand, but this seems unnecessary and, given the relatively awkward execution of the large-scale figural work, unlikely. A tentative attribution of these fireplaces to Thomas Thorpe's workshop (not, it must be stressed, to Thomas Thorpe the individual) can, therefore, be made. In addition, a statue of King James I which originally stood in a niche over the entrance to the south range of Apethorpe Hall can, by extension, be attributed to the Thorpe team.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this paper will stimulate the analytical study of masons' marks on early modern buildings and monuments, whenever the opportunity is presented. Masons' marks have been unjustly neglected by modern architectural historians, who are perhaps fearful of the highly speculative claims which have been made for them in the past. By focusing exclusively on their practical application, however, marks can provide extremely useful evidence about masons and sculptors, as well as buildings and monuments. The systematic recording of the Apethorpe Hall marks has not merely illuminated aspects of the architectural development of that particular building. Through the unexpected discovery of matching sets of marks at other sites, this study has helped to place Apethorpe within its broader architectural and artistic context, exposing links with major buildings such as Blickling Hall. This study also raises the possibility that provincial masons played a greater role in the creation of architectural sculpture than has hitherto been appreciated.

There is clearly great scope to explore the potential of masons' marks as a tool for the architectural historian working on late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century buildings. This is new methodology for those working in the field, and the only way to refine and develop it is to undertake further case studies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The recurrence of 'Apethorpe' masons' marks on other buildings was first noticed by Robert Taylor, of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. We are extremely grateful to him for his preliminary work on this subject.

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NOTES

1 Apethorpe Hall was acquired through a Compulsory Purchase Order in 2004 and transferred to English Heritage in September 2006. The findings of the Research Team currently studying the house and its landscape context will be produced initially as an internal English Heritage report ('Apethorpe Hall', English Heritage Research Department Report Series, 86/2006 (2007)), to be followed by a series of published articles and a monograph.

2 Jennifer S. Alexander, 'Apethorpe Hall: The Evidence of the Masons' Marks', Report for English Heritage (2006).

3 Northamptonshire Record Office, Montague Papers, vol. 9, p. 35. Confirming the evidence of this letter, the stonework bears the date 1623, and the rainwater heads are dated 1624.

4 The National Archives (hereafter TNA) PSO 5/4; Northamptonshire Record Office, Montague Papers, vol. 3, p. 197 and vol. 9, p. 35.

5 Royal visits were made in 1603, 1604, 1605, 1610, 1612, 1614 (on which occasion James met George Villiers, later Duke of Buckingham), 1616, 1617, 1619 and 1624 (Emily Cole, 'Apethorpe Hall, Northamptonshire: The development of the state suite, with reference to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Historic Buildings and Areas Research Department Reports and Papers*, 79 (English Heritage, 2003), pp. 26–29).

6 'Apethorpe Hall', English Heritage Research Department Report Series, forthcoming, 86/2006 (2007).

7 The state apartment of Apethorpe is currently being studied by Emily Cole, as part of her doctoral thesis on Jacobean state apartments.

8 The imagery of the chimneypiece refers to both Buckingham (a ship and an anchor alluding to his position as Lord High Admiral) and Charles, Prince of Wales (three ostrich plumes). The Duke of Buckingham is unlikely to have stayed at Apethorpe on many occasions as he lived at Burley-on-the-Hill, only twelve miles away.

9 John Heward and Robert Taylor, *The Country Houses of Northamptonshire* (Swindon, 1996), pp. 58–69.

10 In addition, the fireplaces incorporate insets of 'touch', from Derbyshire, and the fire opening in the King's Chamber is flanked by grey polished limestone columns from an unknown source, possibly Raunds: Diana Sutherland, 'Apethorpe Hall: Geological Report On the Stonework', *Report for English Heritage* (2006), p. 10.

11 The stone type was established by Dr Diana Sutherland (Sutherland, 'Geological Report', p. 6).

12 This was for the spire of Great St Mary's, Cambridge, which was built by the Weldon masons William, Robert and John Grumbold in 1593–94 (BL Cotton MS Faustina C.III, fols 512–13; Howard Colvin, *A*

Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1830, 3rd edn (New Haven and London, 1995), p. 434). We are grateful to Dr Mark Girouard for bringing this manuscript to our attention. See also n. 77 below.

13 National Grid Reference, TL 015972. See D. S. Sutherland, *Northamptonshire Stone* (Wimborne Minster, 2003), pp. 89–90. In the sixteenth century there was another quarry nearby, located to the north-east of King's Cliffe (in Cliffe Park, known locally as the Royal Stones), which belonged to the Cecils of Burghley House: Michael Lee, *The Thorpes of Kings Cliffe, London, Uppingham, Leicester* (Wansford, n.d.), p. 6.

14 Rockingham Forest Map of c. 1641: TNA MR 1/314.

15 John Summerson, 'John Thorpe and the Thorpes of Kingscliffe', *Architectural Review*, 106 (1949), pp. 291–300. This was partially redrafted (and some illustrations replaced or added) for inclusion in the collection of essays entitled *The Unromantic Castle* (London, 1990), pp. 19–40. Further research on the Thorpe family has been carried out by Michael Lee: Lee, *The Thorpes*.

16 His father, Thomas *avus*, died in 1558 (Summerson, 'The Thorpes of Kingscliffe', p. 292).

17 Summerson, 'The Thorpes of Kingscliffe', pp. 293–94, attributed the following to the Thorpes, specifically Thomas *pater*: porch, Dingley Hall (1558); the Griffin monument, Braybrooke (c. 1568); a porch and chimneystacks, Holdenby (late 1570s/80s); monument to Humphrey Stafford (d. 1575) in Blatherwycke church. He also cited parallels with the following, without going so far as to make outright attributions: chimneypiece, Apethorpe Hall (1562); chimneypiece, Boughton; porch and chimneypiece, Deene Park. Other attributions have subsequently been made, including the Holbein Porch, Wilton House (c. 1560–70; Nikolaus Pevsner (revised by Bridget Cherry), *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (New Haven and London, 2002 edn; first published Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 35); monuments to Edward, Duke of York, and Richard, Duke of York, Fotheringhay (1573; notes in church from unknown source; Lee, *The Thorpes*, p. 32); windows, kneelers and finials, Southwick Hall (Heward and Taylor, *Houses of Northamptonshire*, pp. 308–09). No Kirby Hall masons' marks have yet been found on any of these works, which are of various stone types.

18 For the Thorpe family tree, see three versions of the Visitation of Northamptonshire 1618–19: BL Harley 1184, fol. 217b; Harley 1094, fol. 222b; Harley 1553, fols 191b and 88b.

19 Summerson, 'The Thorpes of Kingscliffe', p. 299.

20 John Summerson, 'The Book of Architecture of John Thorpe in Sir John Soane's Museum', *The Walpole Society*, 40 (1966). A number of drawings have been identified as designs by John Thorpe himself.

21 H. M. Colvin, 'Haunt Hill House, Weldon', *Studies in Building History. Essays in Recognition of the Work of B. H. St. J. O'Neil* (London, 1961), pp. 223–28. The Thorpe family maintained further family and business connexions with other Midland masonic families in the early seventeenth century (see below, note 77).

22 TNA E351/3241.

23 Thomas Boughton/Boughton married Ellen, one of the daughters of Thomas Thorpe *pater*. Boughton is described as being 'of King's Cliffe' in the Visitations of Northamptonshire (see above, note 18). In his will of 1615, Boughton asked his brother-in-law Thomas Thorpe to act on behalf of his children, and the Boughton family memorial is located next to that of the Thorpes in King's Cliffe church. Like Thomas Thorpe, Boughton was a surveyor as well as a mason. He signed an undated map of part of Rockingham Forest, including Apethorpe, and a Thomas Boughton (probably his eldest son, who died in 1658), is said to have made a survey of Fotheringhay in 1624, and of Thornhaugh in 1635 (Lee, *The Thorpes*, pp. 4, 13, 24 and 48).

24 Northamptonshire Record Office, Peterborough will vol. 10, p. 261, probate 15 March 1624.

25 TNA E351/3239.

26 TNA E351/3242.

27 The original reference for this appears to be lost (Summerson, 'The Thorpes of Kingscliffe', p. 293). It concerned three warrants issued to assist Thomas Thorpe in transporting stone from Rutland, Lincoln and Northampton for the building of Aldgate.

28 For Blickling and Hunstanton, see below. There is no evidence that Thomas Thorpe was the 'Thorpe' who, with Wyatt, carved nine beasts on the Trinity College Fountain, Cambridge, in 1602. This was partly made of King's Cliffe stone. It was presumably the same 'Thorpe' who, in 1614–15, carved embellishments for the Great Gate of Trinity, probably in clunch, and set the lions' faces on the fountain (Robert Willis and John Willis Clarke, *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1886), II, pp. 488 and 628–29).

29 Four surveys dating from the early seventeenth century are signed 'Thomas Thorpe', but are not all by the same person. Two bear a confident italic signature with flourishes: an undated survey of Geddington (TNA MPBB 1/2/1) and a survey of Wothorpe dated 1615 (Burghley Archives). The dividers and scale bar are depicted in a similar, but not identical, manner on each map. On the Wothorpe survey this man signs

himself 'Tho: Thorpe Junior'. On the face of it, this seems unlikely to be our man, as his father died in 1596, but since his son was only aged around fourteen in 1610, the possibility must be seriously considered. The same man may have signed the King's Cliffe parish register as churchwarden in 1610 (Northamptonshire Record Office, King's Cliffe Parish Register, 187P/1), but a different Thomas Thorpe, with a plainer italic signature, signed the registers for 1611 and 1627. A third Thomas Thorpe can be identified by yet another signature, closer to secretary hand, found on a survey of Burghley dated 1623 (Burghley Archives 1623 4/7). This is very close (but not identical) to a signature on an undated survey of fields by the River Welland (TNA MPA 1/77). As there is no scale bar or dividers on the Burghley survey, these cannot be compared. Perhaps they were by the son of either Thomas Thorpe (Thomas Thorpe, c. 1596–1642) or Henry Thorpe (Thomas Thorpe, born c. 1588).

30 *Peterborough Local Administration. Parochial Government from the Reformation to the Revolution 1541–1689*, ed. W. T. Mellows, Northampton Record Society, x (Kettering, 1937), pp. 40–44; Lee, *The Thorpes*, p. 47. It is clear from the Peterborough Feoffees' Minutes and Accounts that Thorpe was based in 'Cliffe'. Thorpe was paid £8 2s. 2d. for this job.

31 Rockingham Forest Map of c. 1641: TNA MR 1/314.

32 Lee, *The Thorpes*.

32a Malcolm Airs, *The Tudor and Jacobean Country House, a building history* (Stroud, 1995), p. 41.

33 Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (New Haven and London, 1983), p. 5.

34 Airs, *Tudor and Jacobean*, p. 38.

35 Airs, *Tudor and Jacobean*, pp. 70–71.

36 However, a Mr Thorpe is identified as the 'surveir of the contractinge' for a new gallery at Belvoir Castle, Leicestershire, in 1625–27 (Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 979). This has been identified as John, rather than Thomas, but it could have been either man, or even a son of one of the three Thorpe brothers, most of whom would have been adults by this time.

37 Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, pp. 28–30.

38 See Alexander, 'The Evidence of the Masons' Marks'. The authors intend to produce a second article, setting out this methodology in greater depth, and explaining how masons' marks on late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century buildings may be recorded and interpreted.

39 Access to stonework of this period on other ranges of the house, for example the parapets and gables of the hall and north ranges, was limited. The opportunity to study this stonework may arise in the future, if these ranges are covered in scaffolding for restoration work.

40 See, for example, Jennifer S. Alexander, 'The Construction of the Gothic Choir of Carlisle Cathedral, and the Evidence of the Masons' Marks', in *Carlisle and Cumbria Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology*, ed. M. McCarthy and D. Weston, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions, 27 (Leeds, 2004), pp. 106–26. Study of the marks at Apethorpe suggests that early seventeenth-century workshop methods differed in certain respects from those of the medieval period. This is to be explored by the authors' forthcoming study on the use of masons' marks in the early modern period.

41 This is documented in the fourteenth century at Exeter Cathedral, where masons moved freely between the two types of work (see Jean Givens, 'The Fabric Accounts of Exeter Cathedral as a record of medieval sculptural practice', *Gesta*, 30:2 (1991), pp. 112–18). A contemporary example can be found at Hardwick Old Hall, where the mason Abraham Smith turned his hand to figurative plasterwork.

42 As the room is identified by this name in an inventory of 1629, it may have existed as the 'Dining Room' before the remodelling of the 1620s.

43 The roof of the Old Dining Room has been dated 1620–62 by dendrochronology (A. J. Arnold, R. E. Howard and C. D. Litton, 'Tree-ring analysis of timbers from Apethorpe Hall, Apethorpe, Northamptonshire', EH Research Department Report Series (forthcoming)).

44 The addition of a canted bay to attain symmetry is paralleled in the extension of the north range of Rushton Hall, Northamptonshire, in the late 1620s.

45 Claire Gapper, 'The Plasterwork at Apethorpe Hall, Northamptonshire, in Context', Report for English Heritage (2006), and pers. comm.

46 The 'élite group' included approximately six or seven men. This compares with Robert Smythson arriving at Longleat with five masons; Thomas Collins of Bristol having a workshop of six men when he died in 1595, and William Arnold arriving at Wadham College, Oxford, in 1610 with twenty-six masons, of whom three were his 'men' (we are grateful to Dr Mark Girouard for making these useful comparisons).

47 For Hunstanton, see Norfolk Record Office (henceforth Norf. RO), LEST P7 and Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 331. For Blickling, see Norfolk Record Office, MC 3/43–53 and NRS 14649. Conveniently, some of the Blickling accounts are transcribed in Caroline Stanley-Millson and John Newman, 'Blickling Hall: The Building of a Jacobean Mansion', *Architectural History*, 29 (1986), pp. 1–42.

48 The supporters are a lion and a collared stag with the forepaws and tail of a lion. Although the le Strange arms are not listed with supporters in Burke's *General Armory*, these supporters are to be found on the tomb of Henry le Strange (d. 1485) in Hunstanton church, and were used again in the nineteenth century.

49 Norf. RO, LEST P7, fol. 28 (20 July 1616); fol. 31 (28 September 1616); fol. 35 (28 December 1616); fol. 44 (26 November 1617); fol. 44v (2 December 1617); fol. 54v (7 and 29 October 1618). Other entries of May and June 1618 relate to the paving the floor and boarding and leading the roof of the porch, work undertaken by local workmen (fols 48v, 49 and 50).

50 This is a type of boat with a flat bottom, particularly suitable for transporting stone, which was still used on the Humber in the nineteenth century: Donovan Purcell, *Cambridge Stone* (London, 1967), p. 99 and fig. 46b.

51 'Gumbard fery' refers to Gunwade Ferry, a wharf on the river Nene in Castor parish. It lies a few miles from Peterborough and was used for the transport of stone from the Lincolnshire Limestone fields from at least the fourteenth century. In the 1580s, stone from King's Cliffe was loaded onto barges here for transport to Cambridge. The site at TL 139984 is still marked by two standing stones, close to the main road. See Jennifer S. Alexander, 'Building Stone from the East Midlands Quarries: Sources, Transportation and Usage', *Medieval Archaeology*, 39 (1995), pp. 126–27; Purcell, *Cambridge Stone*, p. 41.

52 Mr Gurney was frequently given similar commissions by the le Stranges, although he was not salaried. A couple of references to a 'Mr Scott' in the Accounts for 1614 and 1615 imply that he was a gentleman neighbour, but he does not seem to have undertaken such commissions habitually for the family.

53 The first mention is 26 June 1621 (Norf. RO, LEST P7, fol. 89). He is named Thomas Thorpe once only (fol. 124v), usually being referred to simply as Thorpe, or Mr Thorpe.

54 Christopher Hussey, 'Hunstanton Hall II', *Country Life* (17 April 1926), p. 586, citing a mid-nineteenth-century account of Hunstanton. Confusingly, other sources suggest that it was the earlier porch rather than this archway that was known as the 'Inigo Jones gateway' (e.g. *Country Life* (18 April 1900), p. 212, and *Madame* (28 September 1901), p. 613).

55 Norf. RO, LEST P7, fol. 109v.

56 Norf. RO, LEST P7, fols 90, 124v. Some of the stone was apparently cut on site, rather than shipped ready cut. In 1623, 'Old frizbey', probably a relation of Thorpe's, was paid for cutting freestone at Hunstanton (Norfolk Record Office, LEST P7, fol. 115v).

57 The supporters are a stag and a lion, both *sejant* and holding a cartouche. The stag is probably from the arms of Stubbe, rather than le Strange, since it is collared and has the tail, forelegs and hooves of a stag.

58 Other marks on the archway are degraded.

59 Thomas Style worked regularly in partnership with Edmund Kinsman, another master mason. He repaired a bridge at St James's (1615–16), and worked at Greenwich (Queen's Lodgings, 1615–16) and Newmarket (Brewhouse, 1616–17) (pers. comm. John Newman; H. M. Colvin (ed.), *The History of the King's Works*, 3 (London, 1975), p. 151; and 4 (London, 1982), p. 113, n. 8 and p. 214).

60 Norfolk Record Office, MC 3/48.

61 Norfolk Record Office, MC 3/43, fols 13v and 14. We are grateful to John Newman for drawing our attention to this reference.

62 Apethorpe marks may be seen on the garden bridge (east front), the first-floor frieze of the south and east fronts, the window surrounds of the south and east fronts (inside and out), the main entrance arch in the Little Court, and the doorways, frieze and quoins in the Little Court. The presence of additional marks alongside Apethorpe marks, and complex variations on some of the Apethorpe elite group marks, enlarge the known profile of the workshop.

63 As Norfolk has little good building stone, builders inevitably had to import ashlar from elsewhere. Nevertheless, they had the choice of a great many Midland quarries and it is worth questioning why they settled on Thorpe.

64 Extensive alterations were made in the early 1560s by Sir Walter Mildmay, who created the first state apartment at Apethorpe, but none of this work bears masons' marks. Presumably working practices at that time were different from the 1620s. For example, if the masons were paid weekly wages, they may not have marked their work.

65 We are grateful to John Newman for this information, which comes from Hobart's will (TNA PROB 11/148, dated 20 July 1625, proved 7 March 1625/6). This house, later known as Westmorland House, was inherited by Sir Francis Fane from the Mildmays. Sir Walter Mildmay is buried in the church of St Bartholomew Smithfield.

66 Sir Hamon le Strange's father, Nicholas, and Sir Henry Hobart had both married daughters of the former Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Robert Bell. Thus Sir Hamon le Strange was a first cousin of Hobart's heir, Miles Hobart.

67 Norf. RO, LEST P7, fol. 51v.

68 Norf. RO, LEST P7, fol. 73v.

69 Norf. RO, LEST P7, fol. 78. There is also a passing mention of the family being in St Bartholomew's, and giving money to Hobart's coachman when sojourning in London. Furthermore, in January 1618 the le Strange's steward left to work for Hobart.

70 The *Buildings of England* makes an error in stating that Thorpe was 'a bricklayer working at the time at Blickling' (Nikolaus Pevsner and Bill Wilson, *Norfolk 2: North-West and South*, 2nd edn (London, 1999; first published, 1962), p. 439). Although some stonemasons were also bricklayers in this period, there is no evidence that Thorpe was ever involved with brickwork.

71 Norf. RO, LEST P7, fol. 124, etc. In this respect it is interesting to note that Stanyon came from Nassington, near King's Cliffe. He was ten to fifteen years younger than Thomas Thorpe. Unfortunately, no record of his chimneypiece at Hunstanton Hall survives.

72 Having said this, the cutting of ashlar is highly skilled work, and the mortar joints achieved at Apethorpe are of the order of $\frac{3}{32}$ of an inch.

73 Stanley-Millson and Newman, 'Blickling Hall', p. 15. Thorpe would have worked alongside the plasterer Edward Stanyon at Felbrigg, as he did at Hunstanton and Blickling (pers. comm. Dr Claire Gapper).

74 Richard Garnier, 'Merton Hall, Norfolk', *The Georgian Group Journal*, 14 (2004), pp. 136–39.

75 One other Apethorpe mark which occurs at Kirby Hall, 516, is on the courtyard gateway of c. 1590 (pers. comm. Robert Taylor).

76 Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 434.

77 The stone cost 6s., and the carriage from Gunward Ferry 8s. 4d. (J. E. Foster, *Churchwardens' Accounts of St Mary the Great, Cambridge, from 1504 to 1635*, Cambridge Antiquarian Society (1905), p. 263). The connexion between the Thorpes, Frisbys and Grumbolds continued into the next generation. In 1623, 'Old frizbey' (possibly William or Humphrey Frisby) was paid for cutting freestone at Hunstanton (Norfolk Record Office, LEST P7, fol. 115v). 'Old frizbey' was probably the father or uncle of Humphrey Frisby who built Haunt Hill House in Weldon in 1643, and who had married Elizabeth Grumbold in 1619 (Colvin, 'Haunt Hill House', p. 224).

78 Like much of Burghley, this staircase may be built of stone from Cecil's quarry at King's Cliffe. In her thesis on Burghley House, Jill Hussenby suggested 'there must be a strong possibility that he [i.e. Thomas Thorpe *pater*] would have been amongst the circle of masons producing work there in the late 1550s' (Jill Hussenby, 'Architecture at Burghley House: The Patronage of William Cecil 1553–1598' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 1996), p. 89). This is not supported by a (cursory) study of the masons' marks at Burghley, where the occurrence of mark 11h1 at the top of the Roman stair appears to be the sole indication of a connexion with the Thorpe workshop. Cecil's quarry was in a different location to Mildmay's, at the other end of the village, and seems to have been operated by different masons.

79 We are grateful to Bruce Bailey for showing us these marks.

80 A fifth example is Lilford Hall, generally dated to 1635, where a distinctive Apethorpe mason's mark (13h1) was recorded by Robert Taylor of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (hereafter RCHME) in the late 1970s (and confirmed by Bruce Bailey in 2007). This mark was seen on an upstairs fireplace. The authors have not yet had the opportunity to revisit the building.

81 Thomas Brudenell inherited in 1606 and died in 1663. His work on the house probably began around 1622, when he sought 500 tons of Weldon stone, although it could have started earlier. A relatively late phase of his remodelling involved the chapel, which had a reredos dated 1635. See Heward and Taylor, *Houses of Northamptonshire*, pp. 159–63.

82 The plan published in Heward and Taylor, *Houses of Northamptonshire*, fig. 193B, shows that this window is thought to date from the eighteenth century, but it clearly incorporates older stonework. This room was probably remodelled when the Oak Stair was inserted, probably between 1622 and 1635.

83 Pers. comm. Robert Taylor. The tower may have been built as the first phase of Brudenell's remodelling campaign, and was probably erected shortly after 1622 (Heward and Taylor, *Houses of Northamptonshire*, p. 159).

84 RCHME, *Huntingdonshire* (London, 1926), p. 232. We are indebted to Robert Taylor for pointing out the relationship between the masons' marks of Apethorpe and Stibbington.

85 The use of oval (or *œuil de bœuf*) windows in the gables of Stibbington recalls the treatment of the north gable of the Old Dining Room at Apethorpe, raising the possibility that the latter was created towards the end of Thorpe's career. In this case, the 'antiquarian' bay described in the main text, above, probably immediately post-dates the completion of the south and east ranges of Apethorpe. The main Stibbington mark is displayed prominently on this 'antiquarian' bay.

86 The stained glass in the east window and the tomb both bear the date 1621. Stylistically, the Mildmay Chapel was typical of family chapels of this period: Howard Colvin, *Architecture and the After-Life* (New Haven and London, 1991), pp. 258–68.

87 Colt was responsible for architectural sculpture as well as tombs, including several chimneypieces: three at Somerset House (1610–11, now lost) and three for Hatfield House (c. 1609–10; all in marble). He was also responsible for the 'greate newe wyndow' at Greenwich Palace: Adam White, 'A Biographical Dictionary of London Tomb Sculptors', *The Walpole Society*, 61 (1999), p. 29.

88 In both positions this mark is associated with a second mark, a cross with punched ends, which has not been recorded at any of the sites hitherto associated with Thomas Thorpe.

89 An older fireplace, dated 1562 and made of clunch or 'white stone' (possibly from Cambridgeshire or Bedfordshire), was retained in the Great Chamber.

90 This is also the only fireplace to have lining-up marks inscribed on the upper surfaces of its stone blocks.

91 It might be suspected that Thomas Thorpe simply shipped worked stone to London, but in 1606 he was there in person, staking out land for an extension to the burial ground of St Martin's in the Fields, together with his brother John (Summerson, 'The Book of Architecture', p. 6, citing vestry minutes).

92 Thorpe was undoubtedly based in King's Cliffe at this time, as his offspring were either baptized or buried on an almost annual basis up to 1615 (King's Cliffe Parish Register 187P/1). He seems to have steadily built up the business inherited from his father, culminating in numerous high status contracts in the early 1620s.

93 Brian Kemp, *English Church Monuments* (London, 1980), p. 70. For Southwark, see also Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 186.

94 Adam White, 'Biographical Dictionary', p. 12. Another nephew may have been John Ashley of Ketton, who later worked with Samson Frisbey on Thorpe Hall near Wittering. Many years earlier, a mason named Ashley was mentioned in the Hunstanton Accounts, next to the settlement of Thorpe's bill in 1624 (Norf. RO, LEST P7, fol. 125v). This mason, who was paid for 'setting the Crest of the wall' may have been Thorpe's brother-in-law, Robert Ashley of King's Cliffe, who was married to his sister Jane. One is left with the overwhelming impression that Thorpe's business was very much a family affair.

95 Sutherland, 'Geological Report', pp. 9–12. In particular, the stone of the King's Chamber fireplace was identified as 'Lower Lincolnshire Limestone, specifically the Greetwell Member'.