

Information Sheet

Archaeology Series No. 23

THE NORMAN MANOR HOUSE AT BOOTHBY PAGNELL

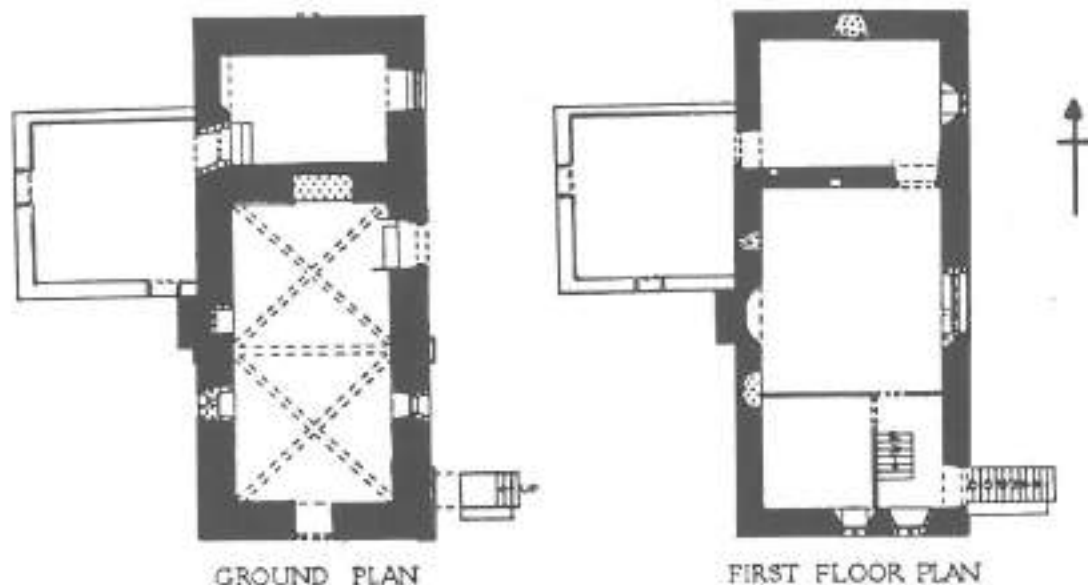


Eastern front of the Norman building at Boothby Pagnell.

Boothby Pagnell lies some 5 miles (8 km) south-east of Grantham. The village is small and was evidently at one time much larger, judging by the earthworks of former streets and houses. At the south end of the village is the Hall, built in 1824, and facing it across a smooth lawn is the late Norman Manor House, built round about 1200 AD. Despite its age it is astonishingly complete and well-preserved and has been described as 'the most important small Norman manor-house in England'. Apart from its architectural importance as a rare survival of what must once have been a commonplace it has a rare charm, and empty and deserted as it is it has a human scale and a comfortable feeling of correct proportions.

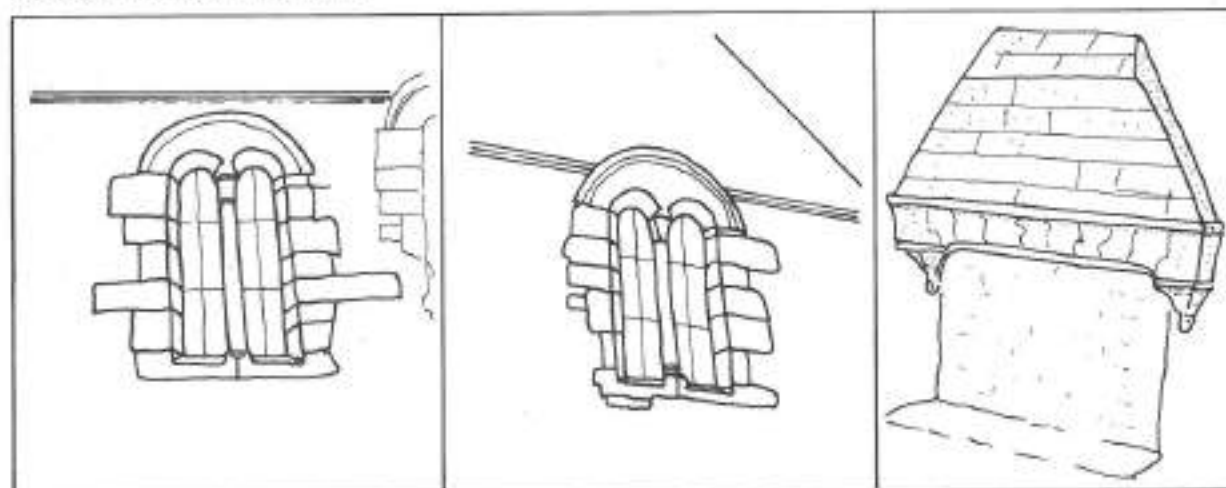
THE BUILDING TODAY

The Manor House is built of Lincolnshire Limestone in coursed rubble, with dressings around windows and doors of ashlar. It is relatively small, being 56 feet (17.1 m) north-south by 25 feet (7.7 m) east-west overall. It consists of four principal rooms; on the ground floor are two cellars or basements, the larger having two quadripartite roof-vaults and the smaller a plain barrel-vault running east-west. On the upper floor, reached by an external flight of steps which is not original, but probably of similar design, is a hall, positioned above the larger basement, and a small private room, above the smaller basement.



Plan, after M.E. Wood, 1934, with corrections. (By courtesy of the Royal Archaeological Institute)

In the original design access to the two basements was via doors in the east front, but now the larger basement has two doors, one original, one being contrived from a window in the south side, while a later extension to the west has roughly cut doors leading into smaller basement and upper room, and the former eastern door has been partially blocked to convert it into a window.



Original south window, added south window (moved from east side), and fireplace.

In the hall is a large fireplace on the west wall. This has a stone hood, the lower edge of which is constructed from interlocking stones to provide the necessary support. It is served by an external chimney which is in the form of a buttress running the whole height of the wall. Above the edge of the roof it changes to a circular section and discharges at a point just above the level of the present ridge. At the southern end of the hall a number of alterations were made in the late Middle Ages. A timber-framed partition was inserted to cut off the lower end of the hall and a flight of stairs was constructed just inside the main door to lead to an upper floor above hall and smaller chamber, in the original roof-space. At the same time one of the Norman windows which lit the hall was moved round to the south gable to light the new staircase and a straight-headed four-light window was inserted in its place. Whether all this work was carried out in the 15th century — the date of the window — is doubtful. The attic stage with its slit windows in the end gables and dormer to the west may in its present form go with the small westward extension which is probably of late 17th or 18th century date.



Timber studding screening off the south end of the hall, possibly 15th century.



Head of timber stairs giving access to the attic storey.

EXTERNAL FEATURES

The eastern side of the building must always have been its main frontage. At ground-floor level are three openings, two of them doors — the northernmost now partially blocked — and one window. All of them have lintels supported on corbels and a relieving arch above. Above are the main door with a semi-circular hood-mould, one four-light window and one Norman two-light window which lights the smaller upper room. A small buttress at ground-floor level supports the lower wall against the thrust of the vaulting inside. The south side has a door into the basement, converted from a small square window with a

lintel and relieving arch over, and above it are two Norman two-light windows, one placed centrally, the other to the right and slightly higher, to light the upper staircase, not in its original place.



South elevation showing original (left) and added (right) south windows, and relieving arch of original window, replaced by modern door.



South west view showing chimney, blocked windows in west wall, and later westward extension.

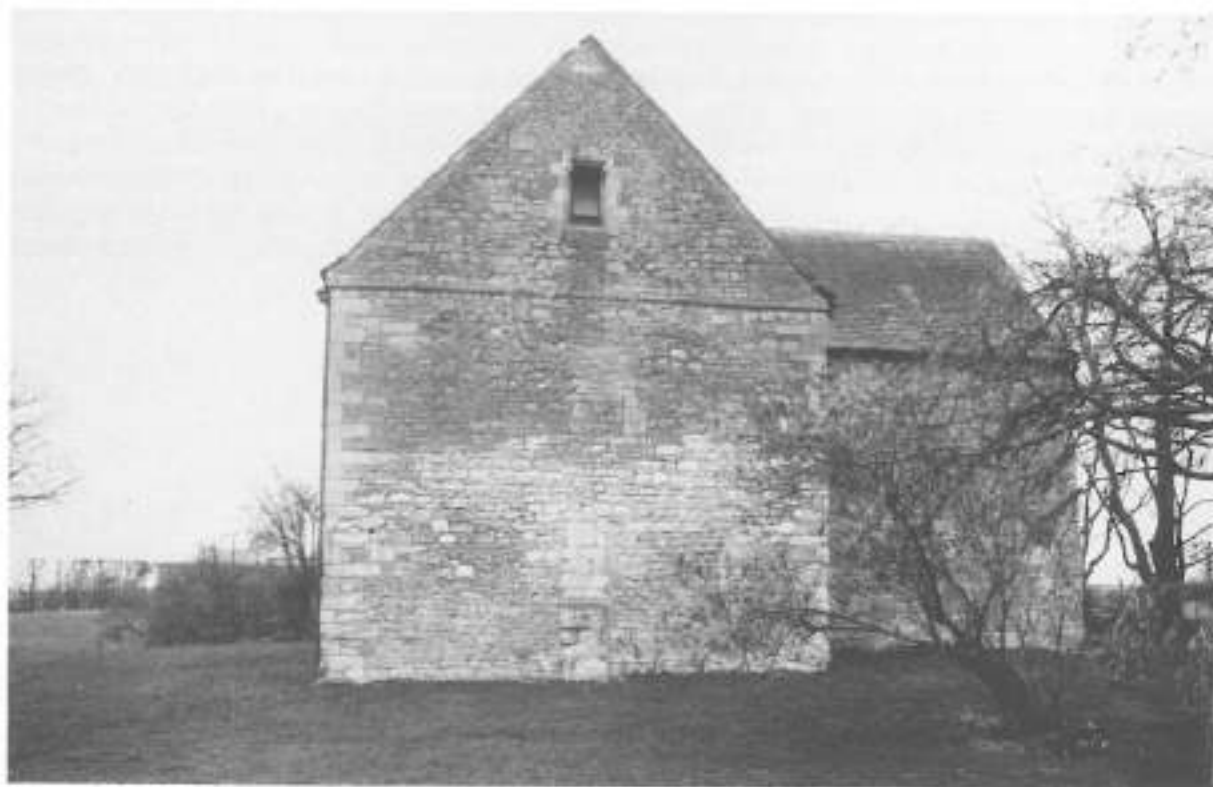
On the west wall is the massive chimney buttress, flanked by a smaller buttress which carries out a similar function to its opposite number on the east side. At ground floor level is another small square window with a lintel and relieving arch. It is blocked as is the two-light window above it. Beyond the chimney is the post-medieval extension, now derelict.

High up inside it can be seen the remains of another blocked window which may have partnered the two-light window on the other side of the chimney-breast. Two doors hacked roughly through the wall gave access to upper room and basement from this extension, which now lacks its upper floor.



Elevation of later western extension.

The north wall has at ground-floor level a buttress to support the barrel-vault inside and above it is another blocked two-light window.



North front, with buttress at ground floor level and blocked window above.

The roof in its present form is post-medieval. The original would have been much steeper in pitch and may have been thatched. An earlier, steeper, roofline than present can be seen on the south side of the chimney. Presumably in the original design the first-floor rooms opened into the roof-space, without a ceiling.



Detail of chimney, showing earlier, steeper, roofline.

INTERNAL FEATURES

In most of the rooms are **aumbries**, designed as built-in cupboards and originally having wooden doors. One of these aumbries in the hall has a triangular top to it and may possibly have been a lamp-recess to light this end of the hall. It is constructed in the wall between hall and smaller chamber, and in this wall is also a round-headed door giving access between the two rooms. All the Norman windows on the first floor have a round-headed **tympanum** supported by a central shaft, and their very wide internal splays provided the maximum light from the minimum window size. Each of these windows also has a pair of window-seats where the occupants could sit to read, sew or carry out any task requiring good light. It is unlikely that the windows were originally glazed. They may have had internal wooden shutters to block out draughts when not in use.



Aumbry in first floor hall.



Norman two-light window with deep splay and window seats.

THE ORIGINAL LAY-OUT

The building that survives is remarkably complete but it does not tell the whole story. Larger medieval houses frequently had several ranges of buildings, each under a separate roof. At Boothby Pagnell the obvious features missing are the kitchens and privies which had such an important role to play. The site was originally surrounded by a moat and traces of the moat still survive to the south and west, though their lines are very much softened by subsequent landscaping. On the west side the moat is occupied by a track while to the east it is not clear whether the moat enclosed the area of the present house. A moat implies a bridge and also probably a gatehouse. The other buildings are likely to have lain disposed about a central courtyard, and might include stables, lodgings, kitchen, pantry, buttery, bakehouse, brewhouse and hall.



Roadway occupying moat on west side.

The site of Penhaliam Manor at Jacobstow in Cornwall, excavated between 1968 and 1973 by Mr. G. Beresford seems to offer the best parallels. Here a late 12th century stone block formed the core of a complex of buildings. It too had a first floor hall but the point is that this was not the main hall, which was of similar size but much of greater height being of one storey, but a private hall in a suite of rooms known as a **Camera** or chamber-block. This was where the head of the household and his immediate family withdrew for privacy. Other members of the household and servants took their meals in the Great Hall and slept either there or in the lodgings, a suite of small rooms elsewhere in the courtyard. The private chambers might also include a wardrobe i.e. a separate room for the storage of clothes, which may have been the function of the smaller room on the upper floor at Boothby.

It is clear that Boothby Pagnell represents the chance survival of a late Norman chamber-block, the other buildings having long since disappeared. Undoubtedly archaeological research would pick up traces of these other buildings disposed around the inner side of the moat, some of which might have been of timber or of mud-and-stud construction.

This being so the Manor House at Boothby Pagnell is likely to have been grander and more prestigious than is generally thought, and the number of its occupants much greater.

HISTORY

Little historical evidence survives for the Manor House. In 1086 (Domesday Book) there was a manor centred on Boothby which had formerly belonged to a man named Siwate, but now formed part of the extensive property of Gilbert de Gand. In around 1200 the manor probably belonged to the de Boby or de Boothby family, relatively minor gentry who clearly took their name from the village. The 'Pagnell' element does not come in until the early 14th century when these estates fell into the hands of the Paynells by marriage. John Leland, the Tudor antiquary, records the sad story of how the Paynells came down in the world and also their revival in his own time. He adds:

'Though the Paynelles were lords of the castelle of Newport Paine in Buckinghamshire, yet they had a great mynde to ly at Boutheby: wher they had a praty stone house withyn a mote'.



Arms of the Boothby family.



Tudor cap-badge in the form of a lion's head, found at Boothby Pagnell (Grantham Museum)

In 1563 Mr. Francis Paynell is supposed to have taken one of the old altar stones out of the church and made 'a fyre herth of it in his hall'. He died in 1595 and his widow in the following year.

A rough indication of the building and rooms then in existence can be gained from an Inventory Post Mortem of 'Dorothie Pannell', dated 1596, now in the Lincolnshire Archives Office (INV 87/258). Dorothy was the last of the Paynell family — her husband died in the previous year — and so the Inventory is unusually full. An earlier one, of William Paynell (INV 27/237) records only the contents of the house, valuables, and debts. Dorothy's however, was much more extensive and was carried out by five 'appraisers' who were perhaps neighbours. They walked around the property from building by building, room by room, describing what goods were in each. This is a summary of what they found:

In the Yard. Cattle, calves, oxen, colts, fowls.

In the Lower Shippen. Draught horses, sheep, ploughs and yokes, mangers and stalls, and beds etc. for the hind (i.e. the farm manager)

In the Hay Barne. A nag, mare, calves, 60 loads of hay.

In the Corne Barne. Wheat, beans, barley, oats, and barley, oat, and pea straw.

In the Yard more (i.e. additions). Shod mares, a hovell, pigs, one coach and fittings.

In the Gelding Stable. Geldings, saddles and bridles, beds, mangers, coach horses.

In the Brew House. A brewing lead, vats¹, boulting tubs, sows², a candle trough, a copper pan, five stone of tallow³, malt. (1, 2, 3 are concerned respectively with brewing, bread making and candle making)

In the Deary (= Dairy) House. Pans, brandreths, cheese vats, boards and shelves, trestles and forms, wooden bowls, pails, a kinnell, dishes, a cheese press, earthen pots etc.

In the Kitchen. Brass pots, posnetts, kettles, spits, ladles, chafing-dish, dripping-pans, pot-hooks, gallows-trees, chopping-knives, a hogshead, a strike of salt, dresser-boards, trestles, a hatchet, a fire-shovel, a fire-fork, ironwork, and 19 fitches of bacon.

In the Learder. Boards, shelves, salting troughs, barrels, a brass mortar, a pestle, a frying-pan, racks, a pair of mustard-querns, a ladder, graters etc., platters, middle dishes, salad dishes, plates, butter-plates, saucers, porringers, pie-plates, a great charger, old pewter pans, a hare-bason, and chopping knives.

In the Hall. Tables, forms, and settles.

In the Brewhouse Chamber. A feather-bed, bedsteads, and bedding.

In the Corne Chamber. Wheat, beans and peas (seed?)

In the Hay Chamber. Beds and bedding, various oddments including a case of pistols.

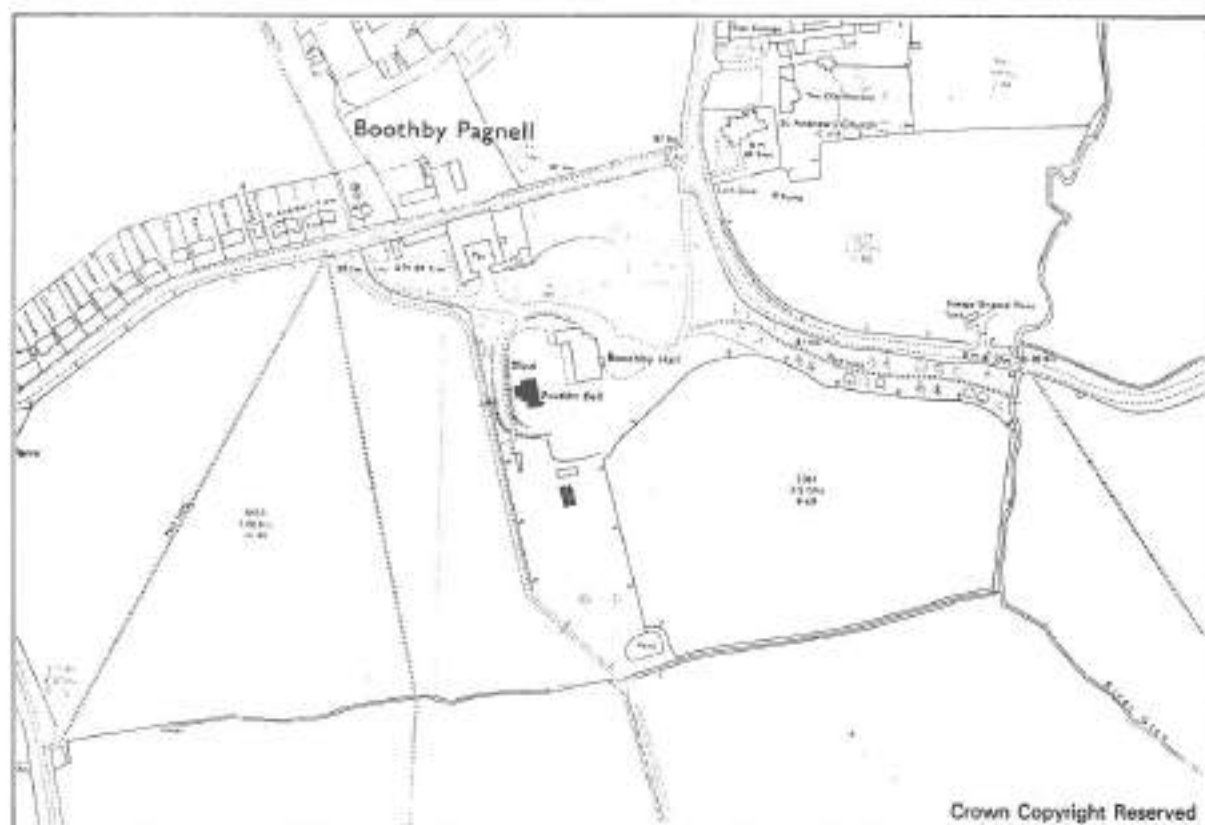
In the Servant Women's Chamber. Beds and bedding.

In the Buttery. (From here on the Inventory has at some stage been attacked by damp and is illegible).

This Inventory indicates considerable wealth and social position. The coach and horses were perhaps made more useful by the fact that the Great North Road lay nearby. It is interesting to see the mixture of possessions in the various rooms and the way in which each group of servants slept over their work-place, men and women being rigidly separated. The main private room or rooms, other than the Hall, are presumably in the missing part of the Inventory.

In 1596 the estate passed to Thomas Harrington and he may have been responsible for building the oldest part of the present Hall just across the lawn in the 1630s. It is possible that this involved the rebuilding of one of the other structures on the far side of the moated area. By 1705 the Litchford family had acquired the property and they held it until 1857. Since then it has belonged to Thorolds and Rayners, and has had a number of owners this century. We must be grateful that Harrington decided to build on a new site and did not attempt to alter or enlarge the Norman building to suit new tastes.

The Manor House is not now inhabited and may be visited only by special appointment, as it stands on private property. It is a Grade I listed building and a scheduled Ancient Monument (County No.13)



Crown Copyright Reserved

GLOSSARY

Aumbry — a cupboard set in the thickness of a wall.

Buttery — a store for wine/ale in barrels (butts)

Camera — a group of chambers for private use.

Pantry — a store for bread etc. (from French pain = bread)

Lodgings — separate 'bed-sitters' for retainers

Tympanum — a flat stone panel filling the upper part of a round-headed door or window.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to thank The Hon. J.A. and Mrs. Turner for permission to examine the Manor House, and Mr. G. Beresford for his helpful comments on the architectural links with Penhallam Manor.

SOURCES

G. Beresford. The Medieval Manor of Penhallam, Jacobstow, Cornwall. *Medieval Archaeology* 18, 1974, 90-145.

L.T. Smith. *Leland's Itinerary* vol. 1, 1910, 23-6.

T.H. Turner. *Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England 1851*. 52 and figs.

M.E. Wood *Norman Domestic Architecture*. 1974

M.E. Wood *The English Medieval House*. 1965.

Lincolnshire Archives Office

Lincolnshire Museums: City and County Museum records.

WRITTEN BY

Andrew White
City & County Museum
Lincoln.
March 1981.