

MASTERPIECES OF THE ROYAL ARMOURERS

COUNTRY LIFE

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TWO SHILLINGS



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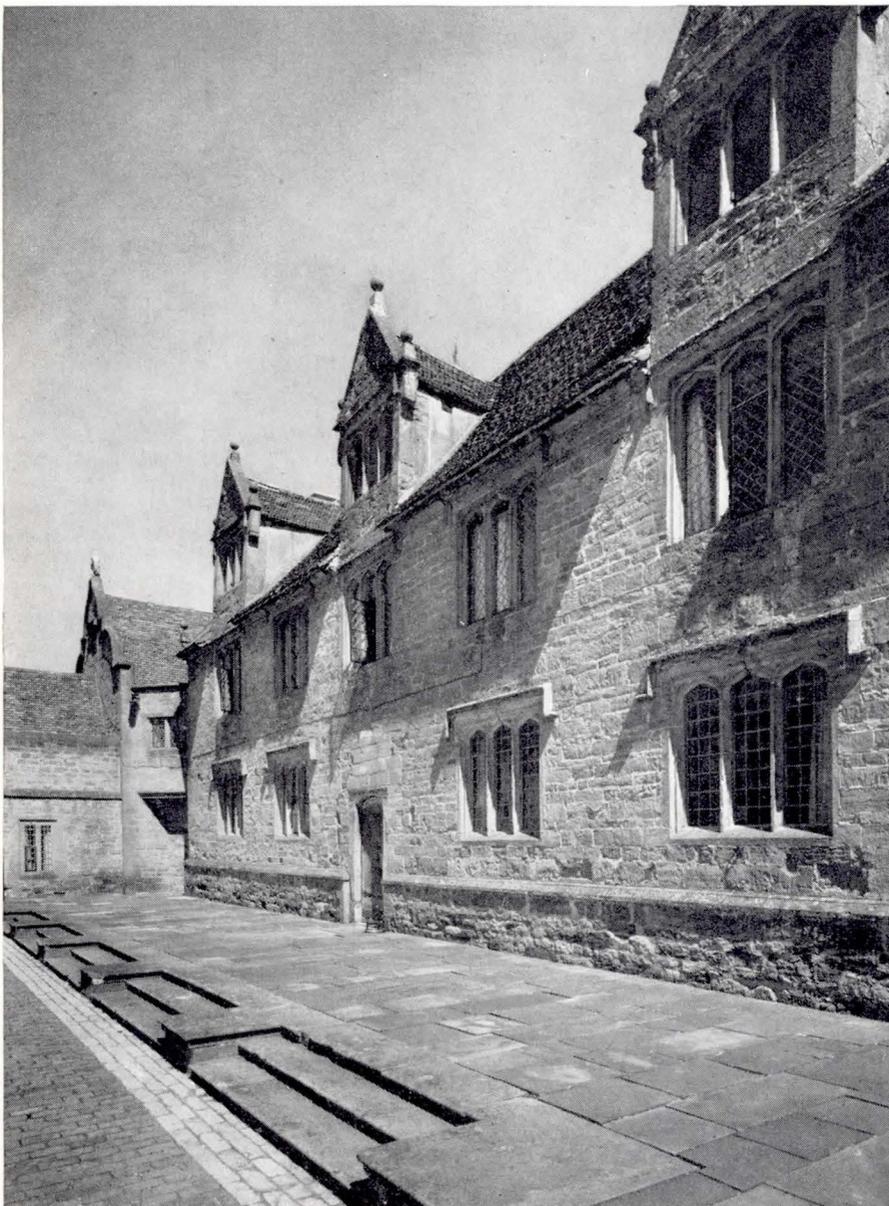
1.—THE EAST FRONT. The south wing is dated 1652; the remainder was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1909 to correspond

ASHBY ST. LEDGERS, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE—II

THE HOME OF VISCOUNT WIMBORNE

By CHRISTOPHER HUSSEY

The enlargement of the Tudor home of the Catesbys was begun but not completed by John Ianson c. 1650. In 1904 the process was recommenced for the late Lord Wimborne by Sir Edwin Lutyens and continued intermittently till 1938



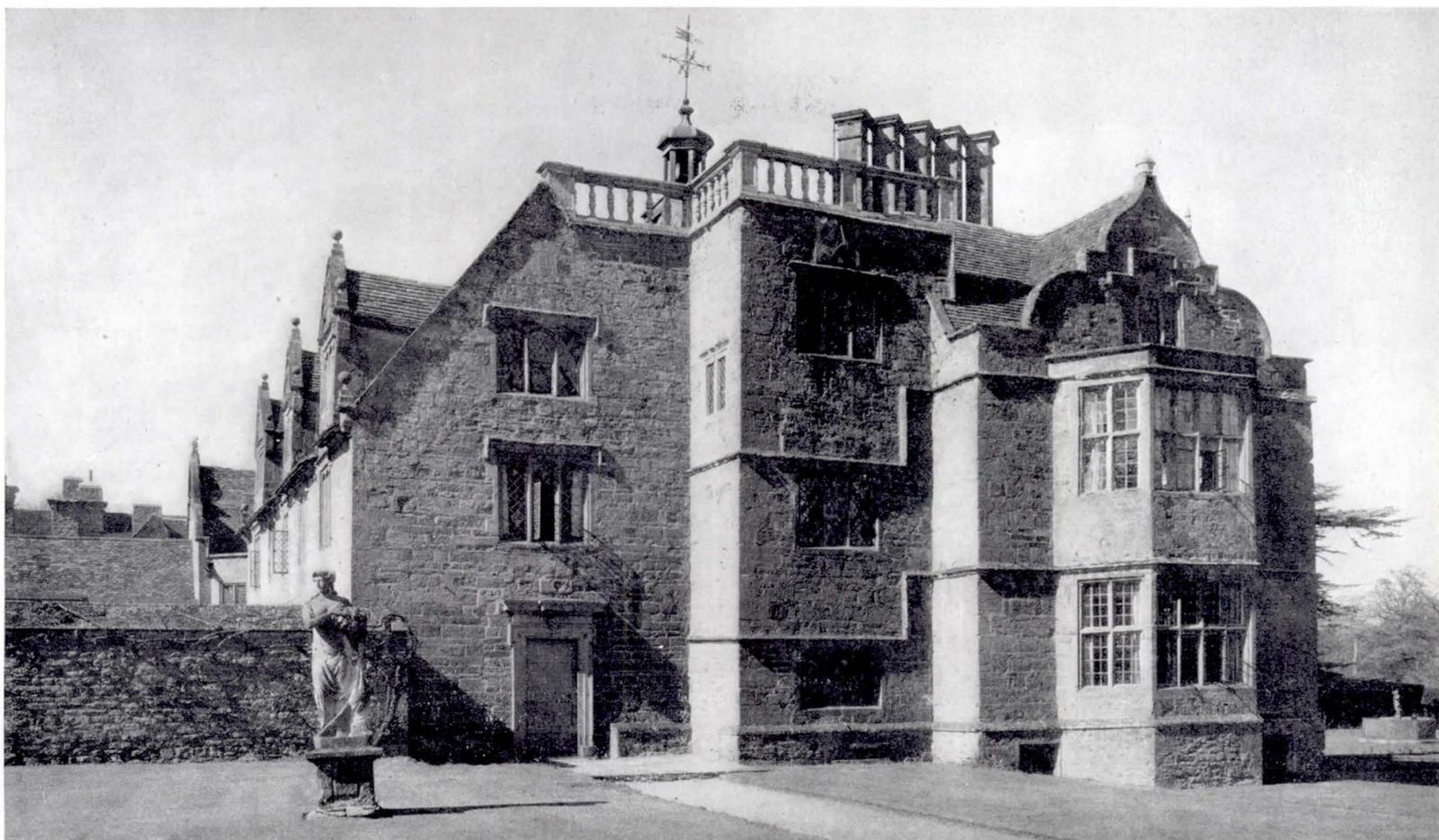
2.—THE ENTRANCE FRONT OF THE MANOR HOUSE, LOOKING WESTWARD TO THE FORECOURT. 16th and 17th century

THE setting of the manor house, adjoining a picturesque Northamptonshire village and the fine old church, was described last week, when its arrangement round three sides of a spacious forecourt was illustrated. It was said how the Catesby family, living here before 1400 till 1611, were then succeeded by Brian Ianson, a citizen of London with property in Buckinghamshire. In 1903 the late Lord Wimborne, then Mr. Ivor Guest, bought the property and began the long sequence of additions by Sir Edwin Lutyens which, while greatly enlarging and beautifying the manor house, did not change its character. In this article we will look at the original parts of the house more closely.

It lies at the east end of the forecourt, from which, at first sight, little is noticeable of the additions, and the general character is of the early 17th century. The entrance front (Fig. 2) is essentially an early Tudor building of the Catesbys' time, with the dormers added probably soon after the Iansons' coming in 1612. In this view, however, the furthest projecting gable, of curvilinear outline reproducing those of the south-east wing, and with an upper window canted across the angle, is part of the first Lutyens addition in 1904-5, and forms the west end of the large hall added in 1909-10 and seen in Fig. 9.

The only date on the building is 1652, which occurs in the south-east gable of the south side (Fig. 3). The picturesque composition presented by this elevation is the result of the scheme, presumably undertaken at that date by John Ianson but not completed, of adding a symmetrical east front with curly-gabled wings. It is the return of the southernmost of these, the only one then built, which is seen in Fig. 3 adjoining the tower containing the staircase, apparently added simultaneously, and abutting on the end of the older range. The tower has a flat balustraded top, the platform of which was carried across to the west gable, while the string-courses of the new gable were stepped down across the tower in such a way as to suggest its purpose effectively. The whole design is most sensitive and skilfully performs the transition from the plane, and peaked gable, of the older building to that of the curvilinear new gable. The balustraded tower is reminiscent of the much larger one at Castle House, Deddington, near Banbury, with which it may be almost contemporary if the rain-water heads at the latter, dated 1654, refer to the date of its building.

Assuming that 1652 is indeed when John Ianson



3.—THE SOUTH SIDE. The tower and right-hand gable, added in 1652, compose a skilful transition from the Tudor west front

embarked on this work—and we shall find some confirmation—it is a rare and interesting example of the architecture of the early years of the Commonwealth, showing how the earlier tradition persisted despite the recent innovations of Inigo Jones and his followers. Ianson, with his London affiliations (his father and both his wives came of City stock), can be presumed to have been of Parliamentary sympathies and therefore free from the burdens then pressing on Royalists.

Later, probably by Joseph Ashley who bought the place in 1703, the walled lawn between the house and the church was laid out as a formal garden adorned with vigorously carved stone figures, and the classical doorway opening into the hall was inserted in the end of the old west range.

John Ianson died in 1657, which probably accounts for no more than one end of his projected new front having been completed. Two hundred and fifty years later the east front assumed a form that must be very near to what was intended (Fig. 1). Lutyens exactly repeated the southern wing in a northern counterpart, joined to it by the set-back front to which a wide many-windowed square bay provides the centre.

But although John Ianson did not complete the front, somebody else did, out of scale; Fig. 8 shows this side of the house as it was before 1904, and how the east elevation stepped forward in three gabled projections, the northernmost of which just failed to balance with the Ianson wing. The room adjoining the wing appears from

its massive fireplace, shown in old plans, to have been of considerable age, probably older than 1652; but the rest was indifferent mid-19th-century Tudor. It was from the outset proposed to rebuild this to a symmetrical design, but not till the second stage of alterations in 1909 was the careful, if unoriginal, completion of the 17th-century scheme put in hand. Lutyens has sometimes been criticised for this reproduction, which, as Mr. A. S. G.

Butler has written in *The Architecture of Sir Edwin Lutyens*, "any of our leading exponents of Tudor architecture might have done almost, if not quite, as well." But at the time, and under the circumstances, no other solution would have been satisfactory. One might have preferred the central feature more dominant, with a porch perhaps; and there is an early variant design with a five-sided central bow. We shall see later how the decision to



4.—THE LOWER HALL LOOKING TOWARDS THE UPPER HALL THROUGH THE ENTRANCE SCREEN. An ingenuity devised by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1904



5.—THE MUSIC ROOM, c. 1912

accent the wings and not the centre influenced the really superb garden lay-out.

The extent to which Lord Wimborne's ideas, moreover, controlled his architect is illustrated by the former's decision in 1908 to obtain further accommodation and prolong the east front by erecting next to it an old house from Carr Street, Ipswich, lately exhibited at the White City as a fine example of timber construction. Lutyens was indignant at the interpolation, but worked it into the plan. As was intended, the timberwork introduces variety amid the brown stonework of the buildings regarded as a whole.

Comparison of the plans of the house as before and after alteration helps to show Lutyens's ingenuity in assimilating other parts of the rambling building to the requirements of an Edwardian establishment and picturesque design. As it was, there was a low porch, subsequently removed with good effect, to the entrance on the west front (Fig. 2). Inside that the hall occupied the south end, and the kitchen, at a lower level,



6.—THE CARD ROOM. (Right) 7.—ORIGINAL PANELLING c. 1660 IN THE STUDY



8.—THE EAST FRONT IN THE 19th CENTURY

the north, with offices beyond it. The latter looked westwards into a laundry yard screened from the forecourt by a venerable blind wall, and containing out-buildings which became the new pantry and cellarage. One of the first works was to roof over the space inside this wall to form a long room, originally intended to be a library, with unobtrusive windows inserted in the wall, and a tall bay window at its west end. At that time Lutyens considered making the principal entrance in the angle of these two ranges, which would have had easy communication with the new office block added northwards. The former kitchen was in fact removed to form an extended hall, revealing the original ceiling beams of c. 1500 (Fig. 4). The problem of the different levels in the ground floor of the entrance front was solved (1904) by the arrangement which survives (Fig. 4). The whole space was thrown into one to form an upper and lower hall, the latter at first used as a common room. The two halves were divided and linked by



9.—THE STONE HALL, 1909-10. (Right) 10.—FROM STONE HALL TO LOWER ENTRANCE HALL

a double timbered screen in three sections, that next to the entrance hall serving as an inner porch. At this stage, it must be realised, Lutyens was still in his romantic phase, fresh from his Elizabethan triumphs at Marsh Court and Little Thakeham.

In stage two, beginning in 1909, the original proposals, and the link between house and wing, were transformed by the promotion of a space, visualised in the early plans as "degagement" for service, and running northwards into a lofty hall running east and west at the north end of the manor house, at right angles to the Lower Hall. The Stone Hall, as it is called (Figs. 9 and 10), has an open timber roof for which oaks were cut at Canford, the family's Dorset home. The result is notable as one of Lutyens's few works in Gothic timber tradition, though characteristically he produced an original form—a variation on the hammer-beam principle. The prolongation downwards of the hammer posts is not, to my eye, altogether happy, but, given the desire for height, and the steep pitch of the roof, it is not easy to see how the thrusts could have been handled otherwise; and it is a nobly devised piece of carpentry.

The Stone Hall prolongs the axis of, and adjoins, the library, which became the dining-room, replacing that hitherto retained in the north-east wing of the east front (which was now taken down). An additional staircase, using the woodwork of an old one removed from the entrance hall, was introduced between the Stone Hall and this wing as rebuilt.

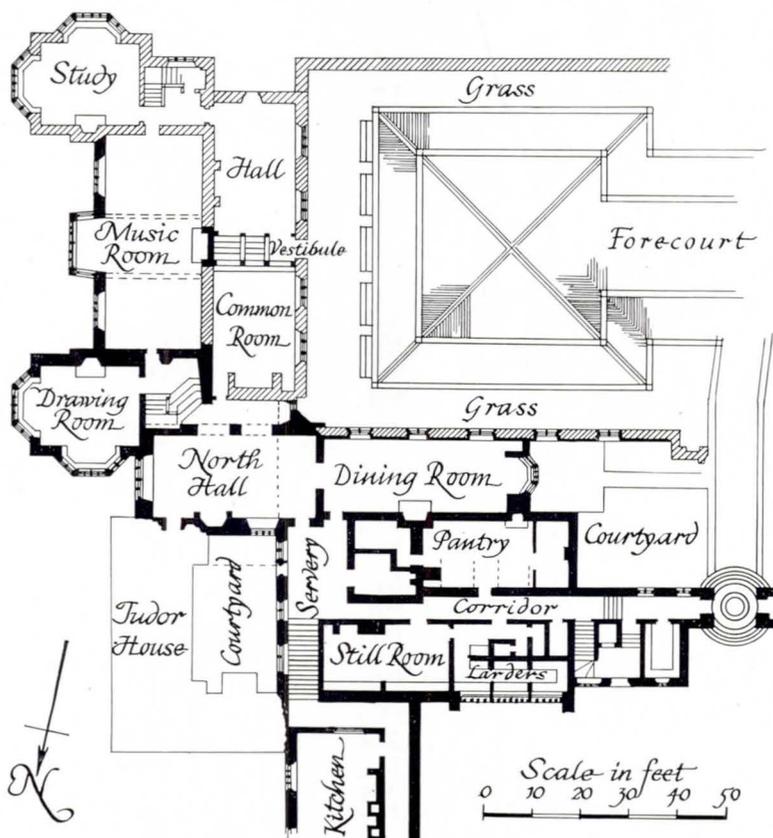
The east front, as rebuilt, contains a single long music room filling the centre (Fig. 5),

its Renaissance type of chimney-piece facing its wide square bow window. As decorated, with a set of Brussels *paysage* tapestries of indigo and ochre colouring, gilt Baroque furniture, and fine Persian rugs, it reflects the genuine *flaire* for decorative ensembles of the late Lord and Lady Wimborne, which in the nineteen-tens foreshadowed the Baroque vogue fashionable in the 'twenties. The new north-east wing contains the room (Fig. 6) lined with bolection oak wainscot of c. 1700. With its furniture of "the age of walnut", and several interesting

cinquecento Italian paintings, it is a room of cosy, but considerable, distinction and goes by the name of the Card Room.

The corresponding south-east wing which contains the original staircase of Carolean type is, of course, that built by John Ianson. The study (Fig. 7) has unusually elaborate wainscot and chimney-piece; its graduated oak panelling rests on an uncommon kind of dado, consisting of arched panels with carved spandrels. The chimney-piece pilasters are enriched with foliage scrolls, except the central one in which a pair of tulips reflects the contemporary rage. In the frieze above the lateral pilasters are inset a rampant horse and dragon. These may stand (heraldically) for Brian Ianson and his wife. He succeeded his father John in 1657 and evidently finished off the building so far as it had progressed, and decorated this room; for his are the armorials painted in the overmantel panels: on our left Ianson quartering Stone (for his mother), on our right his coat impaling that of his wife, Mary, daughter of Edward Williams, merchant of London, but, so Brian's monument to his father takes care to inform us, "of the ancient family of Williams of Wollaston, Co. Salop".

In the next article it will be shown how in 1923-4 a large wing to the northwards, begun in 1910-12, was extended, and a second dining-room was added, westwards of the former library, enlarging the house very greatly as seen from the northwards, but invisible to one entering it from the forecourt till, as he passed from hall to hall, the visitor might well be astonished at its extent.



11.—GROUND-FLOOR PLAN BEFORE 1920

(To be continued)