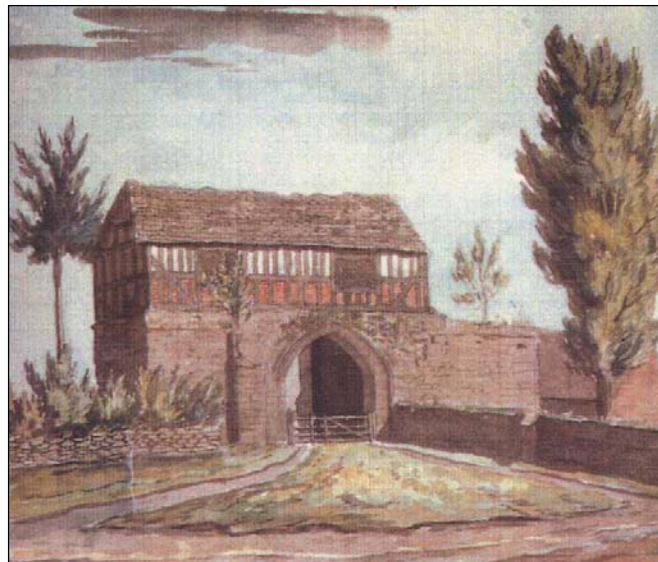


# The Landmark Trust

## BROMFIELD PRIORY GATEHOUSE

### History Album



**Compiled by Charlotte Haslam 1993**

**Updated 2012, re-presented 2015**

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**Basic Details**

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Built</b>                     | <b>14th century</b>                       |
| <b>Listing</b>                   | <b>Grade II*</b>                          |
| <b>Leased to Landmark</b>        | <b>1990</b>                               |
| <b>Architect for restoration</b> | <b>Arroll &amp; Snell Ltd, Shrewsbury</b> |
| <b>Main Contractor</b>           | <b>I J Preece and Son, Herefordshire</b>  |
| <b>Work completed</b>            | <b>1993</b>                               |

Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| SUMMARY  | 5  |
| The Repair of the Gatehouse                      | 6  |
| <br>   |    |
| Bromfield Priory Gatehouse                       | 9  |
| An Outline history                               | 10 |
| The Elizabethan Court House                      | 12 |
| Picturesque decay                                | 15 |
| The Victorian school                             | 21 |
| <br>   |    |
| Photographs before repair                        | 27 |
| <br>   |    |
| Article from <i>Country Life</i> , 22 March 1990 | 36 |
| <br>   |    |
| Articles from <i>Country Quest</i> magazine      | 44 |



## SUMMARY

The history of Bromfield Priory Gatehouse falls into three main periods. The first of these is medieval, and to it belongs most of the lower, stone, part of the building: the arch itself and the sides of the gate passage, and the walls to the left, or north, of it. The walls south of the gate arch are later, but may contain medieval masonry - narrow windows, or loops, in the gate passage show that there were originally rooms both sides of it.

This first gatehouse, possibly of just one storey, guarded the entrance to a small Benedictine priory beside the church of St Mary. There had been a religious community at Bromfield since before the Norman Conquest, which in 1155 became a priory subject to St Peter's Abbey in Gloucester. The gatehouse was not built for another two centuries after that, however: the design of the arch and the loops in the gate passage can be dated roughly to the mid-14th century. It probably replaced an earlier gatehouse. On either side of it there would have been a stone wall or a timber stockade. With this, and with the two rivers (the Onny and the Teme) which join east of the church, forming a narrow promontory between them, the priory site was a very secure one.

Bromfield Priory was dissolved in 1538. Its buildings were acquired by Charles Foxe who turned them into a house for himself. The gatehouse continued to preside over its entrance, and before 1600 it was enlarged by the addition of a timber-framed upper storey. This formed a single large room, the present living room, which was probably reached by an outside stair on the north-east corner. The gatehouse was smaller then than it is now, consisting of just the northern two thirds. Eighteenth century views also show it to have had two windows on the west side, a roof of slightly flatter pitch, and no chimney.

One reason for enlarging the gatehouse was undoubtedly to impress. A fashion for building ornamental gatehouses began in the early Tudor period, and was still going strong among the country gentlemen of Shropshire and neighbouring counties until well after 1600. There was obviously an advantage, too, in having the entrance to your house watched over, even in relatively peaceful days; while a good strong pair of doors could be closed in times of unrest.

At the same time, no one put up a large room intending to leave it empty. The upper room at Bromfield is thought to have served as a courtroom, where the manorial court was held and local disputes settled. Records of the manorial court in Bromfield continue until 1770. If it was indeed held in the gatehouse, its ending would explain why the building was abandoned after that, being shown in a state of picturesque decay by watercolourist of the 1790s.

Then, in 1836, as part of a general round of improvement in the village, the gatehouse was restored and enlarged again, this time to serve as the village school and teacher's cottage. The courtroom became the main schoolroom, reached by a stair at the north end: the low rooms there were tall enough for

children's cloakrooms. At the south end, a three storey addition was made, with a classroom on the top floor, and rooms for a teacher below. The oriel window on the west front, the chimney, and the decorative finials on the gables were all added at this time, as were the chimneypiece and cupboards inside, made up from an assortment of Jacobean and later carving.

In 1895 the school moved to a new building. The south end became an estate cottage, and the main room became a parish reading and recreation room. Although still used occasionally in the 1970s, the gatehouse was really by then in search of a new use once again. A solution was found when in 1990, the gatehouse was leased by the Plymouth estate to the Landmark Trust, a charity which specialises in the repair of historic buildings.

### **The Repair of the Gatehouse**

The Landmark Trust not only repairs buildings, but also secures their future by making it possible for people to stay in them for holidays. This use provides an income to maintain them, while allowing them to be enjoyed by a wide variety of people, who might not otherwise have a chance to live and sleep in an historic building. The gatehouse is now let to parties of up to five people, for periods ranging from a weekend to three weeks.

Before that was possible, the building had to be put back in good order. While some repairs had been carried out in the 1970s by the Plymouth estate, more work was needed, particularly on the Elizabethan timber frame, some parts of which were badly decayed. The roof also needed attention. This meant stripping off the tiles to repair the structure beneath, before relaying the tiles. To repair the framing of the walls, the brick panels between the timbers had all to be taken out. New oak was then pieced in, preserving as much of the old wood as possible. We could then have replaced the bricks with lath and plaster, which is what was there originally, but there were several arguments against this, both practical and historical. Not only does brick mean a warmer building, but the gatehouse today owes its character as much to the nineteenth century restoration as to its Elizabethan builder. There seemed little point in winding the clock back to a past which no longer exists.

Inside the gatehouse, some minor alterations were needed to make the building work more easily in its new use. The main room would become the main living room, with bedrooms and bathrooms in the cottage at the south end. However, when the school closed in 1895, the door between the main room and the cottage was blocked up. This was now reopened. At the same time, it was decided that the low rooms at the north end should be left as they were, and would not form part of the accommodation. To make space for a kitchen at the north end of the main room, it was decided to floor over the stair at this end, leaving just a trapdoor in case access was ever needed.

After being redecorated inside, and limewashed outside in the traditional way, the gatehouse was ready for furnishing in March 1993. The work had been supervised by the Shrewsbury architects, Arrol and Snell, and carried out by builders from Herefordshire, L.J. Preece and Son. English Heritage gave a grant for the repairs. While these were in progress, the opportunity was taken to learn a little more about the building. Richard Morriss of the Hereford Archaeology Unit did a brief survey of the building which confirmed the theory that the timber frame of the upper room is sixteenth century in date. It also revealed that the design of its roof trusses is highly unusual - no others like it have been seen in the area. So there is still more to learn in the future.



**c 1890, National Monuments Record**



## Bromfield Priory Gatehouse

The gatehouse at Bromfield is familiar to many explorers of Shropshire, and a number of people wrote to the Landmark Trust in the 1970s and '80s, suggesting that it was a building in need of help. At that time, Lord Plymouth, to whose family the gatehouse has belonged since the 18th century, intended that the estate would repair and convert the building itself, to house a local family. Work actually began in the 1970s and progressed some way before other projects took over. The builders were always about to return, but each time something more urgent would crop up elsewhere on the estate, and inevitably the empty building came last on the list. An approach by the Landmark Trust in 1988 was therefore met with interest, a lease was agreed and the transfer took place early in 1990.

At that time the Landmark Trust itself had more work than its officers could cope with. It therefore took several months to agree the final proposals with the architects appointed to oversee the work, Arrol and Snell of Shrewsbury; and with English Heritage, which was to give a grant towards the cost of the repairs to the roof and the timber frame.

Subjects for debate included the extent to which the brick panels would be taken out to repair the frame; and whether, if most were to come out, they should go back in again afterwards, or be replaced by lath and plaster, as would have been used originally. Both practical and historical arguments argued for keeping the brick.

Research showed that the gatehouse had been extensively restored and enlarged in the 1830s, as a school and teacher's cottage. As a result it had acquired its rather picturesque 'black and white' appearance. There was no point in trying to return to an earlier building which really did not exist any more - and which watercolours showed to have been half repaired in brick by the late 18th century

in any case. Besides which, brick would give far better insulation in the large upper room, with its variety of outside surfaces.

The arrangement inside fell easily into place, but there was some further debate over the finishing of the main room. It was felt that the walls should not be left just as bare plaster, and panelling was suggested. One idea was to base its design on the fragments of Jacobean carving used in the fireplace, and thereby to conjure up the manorial courtroom which the room may once have been.

However, from 1836-1895, it had been a schoolroom, and some simple boarded panelling survived. This seemed to suit its character much better - and was a great deal cheaper - and so this was the option chosen.

All these details finalised, and the formalities settled, work could actually start. I.J. Preece and Son arrived on site in March, 1992.

### **An outline history of the building**

In its recent abandonment the Bromfield gatehouse is typical of many other gatehouses, of which Shropshire has some fine examples. It is also typical in its earlier history and its use and change of use over the centuries. Historical research (in which a valuable helping hand was given by Dr David Cox of the Victoria History of Shropshire) and a new examination of the building during its restoration by Richard Morriss of the City of Hereford Archaeology Unit have helped to clarify the story, and we now have a reasonably accurate idea of what has happened and when.

The lower, stone, part of the gatehouse formed the entrance to a small Benedictine priory whose main buildings are thought to have stood to the south of the present church of St Mary. Although some authorities have suggested in the past that the timber-framed upper storey is also partly medieval, it is now generally agreed that it is a post-Reformation addition. It might, however, replace an earlier upper storey.

A date in the 14th century had seemed most likely for the original gatehouse, and this has now been confirmed by Richard Morriss:

The style of the arch, with its two-centred head and angle-roll, is a fairly common one and could date from the late 13th through to the mid-14th centuries - and later. The ogee heads of the small gate-passage loops suggest a date from the early to mid 14th century when this motif was very popular. The motif did, however, continue well beyond this date. The possible effects of the Black Death on monastic building in this area from the 1340s onwards should also be taken into consideration, as well as the later apparent poverty of the priory itself. All in all, a mid-14th century date seems likely.

The two loops or narrow windows in the gate-passage show us that there were rooms on either side of the arch, as there are now. One of these might have been for a porter, the other perhaps for storage. It is impossible to say whether the gatehouse had an upper storey at this time. There is evidence that the walls were once higher, but Richard Morriss suggests that there could have been a battlemented parapet. There would also have been either a stone curtain wall, or a timber stockade, on either side of the gatehouse. With this, and the two rivers (the Onny and the Teme) which join east of the church, forming a narrow promontory between them, the priory site was a very secure one.

Bromfield Priory was dissolved in 1538, and its new owner, Charles Foxe, incorporated its buildings (including the chancel of the church) into a new house. The gatehouse continued its function of guarding the entrance to this, and before long it seems it was put to another use as well.

## The Elizabethan Court House

Richard Morriss points out one very obvious reason for thinking that the timber-framed upper storey is later than the stonework beneath it: it is shorter. Until it was restored and enlarged in the 1830s, the upper storey only covered the northern two thirds of the building - the area of the main room. A number of views and watercolours of the late 18th and early 19th century show that it ended only just to the south of the arch. A close look at the frame itself also showed that the truss which now divides the main room from the bedroom beyond was once an end wall, matching the present north gable. On the other hand, we have seen that in its earliest form, the building had another room south of the gate-passage. This must have been pulled down before the upper storey was added, although part of its west wall may have been left.

From the overall design of the timber-framing, which is 'fairly typical of Shropshire in the second half of the 16th century', Richard Morriss judged the addition to be mid to late 16th century. This would fit with the likely building of Charles Foxe's house. Foxe leased the priory buildings from 1541 but only bought them in 1558. Their remodelling probably belongs to the prosperous later decades of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

Richard Morriss underlines some problems that this particular building presents, however. In form it is what is called close-studded, the small upright timbers between the main posts being set closely together. They are divided horizontally by a mid-rail, running the length of the building; and further support comes from diagonal down-braces which run from corner posts to the sill-plate, or lower horizontal timber. So far, so good. What is puzzling is that where the studs meet another timber, the joints are not properly pegged, as you would expect them to be, and as the joints of the main frame are, the pegs serving to strengthen the traditional mortice and tenon joint.

More curious still is the roof, visible in the main room. Its trusses are 'a most peculiar, not to say unique, design.' Richard Morriss again:

It is the two intermediate trusses that are so strange. There are, and always have been, open. They each consist of a very thick-scantling and cranked, rather than cambered, tie-beam given additional support by straight braces from the principal posts. From the tie-beams angled struts rise to the soffit of each purlin, into which they are tenoned; the purlins are themselves trenched into the underside of the principal rafters;..Such a roof must have been difficult to build, as the purlins would have to be in place before the principal rafters; the conventional raising of a complete truss would have been impossible.

In conclusion, and taking both these oddities together, 'the very fact that the construction is so unusual is enough to add doubt to any suggested dating of the fabric, as it simply does not seem to have any regional precedent.'

Such misgivings apart, it is likely that the new room over the gate existed by 1600 and that the building as a whole then looked very much the same as that shown in the watercolours of two centuries later. It had a slightly flatter-pitched, probably stone-tiled, roof, two windows on the west elevation at least, and no chimney. Inside, there was just one room on the upper floor, and it seems likely that this was reached to begin with by an outside stair leading to a door in the north-east corner. To the north of the gate-passage there was originally just one tall room, with no stair or ceiling.

What was this remodelled gatehouse for? One reason for it was undoubtedly to impress. The building of ornamental gatehouses of varying degrees of elaboration began in the early Tudor period, and the practice was still going strong among the country gentlemen of Shropshire and neighbouring counties a century and more later. One of the most spectacular examples, entirely in stone, is the Landmark Trust's Tixall Gatehouse, near Stafford, of about 1580. Nearer to Bromfield there are others of more traditional build, the timber-framed gatehouse at Stokesay Castle of about 1620, and another Landmark, Langley Gatehouse, rebuilt about 1610, stone one side and timber the other.

There were obvious practical reasons, as well, in having the entrance to your property watched over, even in relatively peaceful days - a function which was continued in the lodges of the Georgian age and later. And a good strong gate could be closed in time of unrest, as it may have been at Bromfield during the Civil War, when Richard Morriss suggests the triangular holes, probably for muskets, were cut in the doors.

At the same time, no one put up a large building intending to leave it empty - even if that is what often seems to have happened after a while. Gatehouses were used for a variety of practical purposes. Some contained lodgings, providing extra accommodation for the household or for visitors. Sometimes, in a large household, this might be combined with the office of a household official, for whom it was helpful to see the comings and goings below. In other cases, as here, there is no evidence that the upper floor or floors were ever domestic, but had some more public function. Most often, especially if there was a single large room, this was as a courtroom.

The system of manorial justice provided a useful method of solving local disputes, usually over property, without going any further. It was also relatively profitable for the lord of the manor, since the punishment was generally in the form of a fine. Records exist for manor courts at Bromfield until 1770, and according to tradition, these were held in the gatehouse.

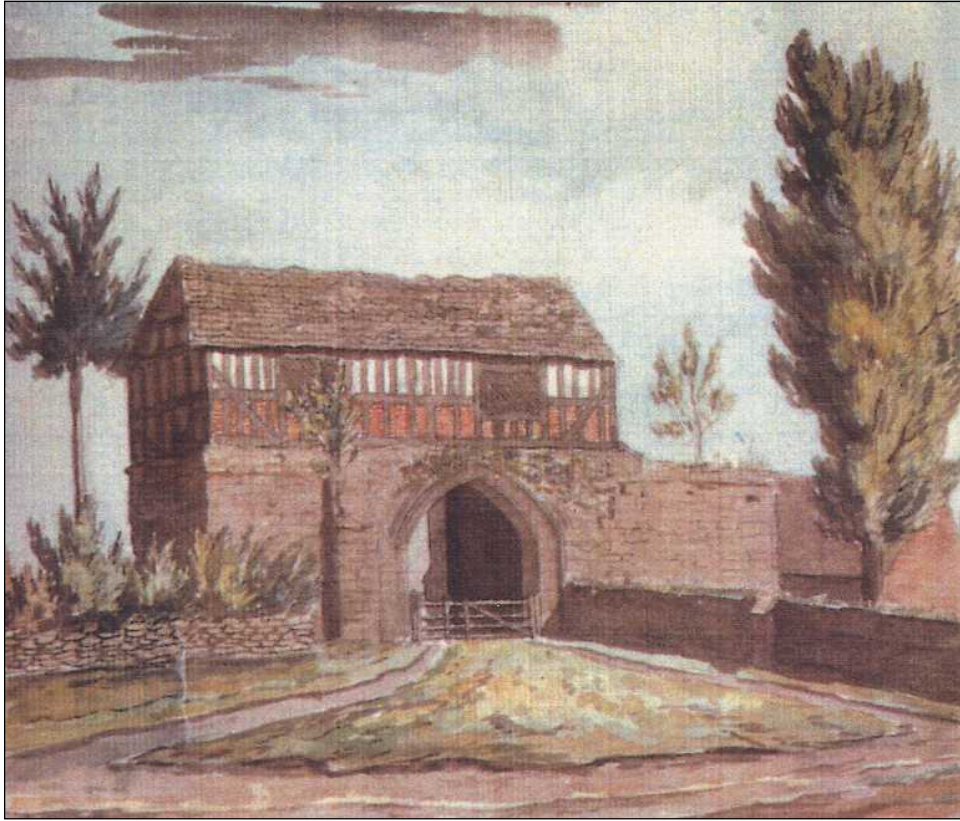
### **Picturesque decay**

By the end of the 18th century, the gatehouse was beginning to look a little battered. By then, the northern end had probably been floored in to make the existing two low rooms, presumably for storage, with a stair to the main upper room. Repairs had been carried out to the timber frame, replacing lath and plaster with brick in the lower panels. If it really had been the manorial courtroom, this use ended in 1770, and the building was probably left empty and neglected thereafter.

Curiously, it seems still to have functioned as a gatehouse. The tradition is that Charles Foxe's new Bromfield Priory perished in a fire in the 17th century and was afterwards abandoned, leaving just the fragments that stand on the south side of the church. His heir, Richard Herbert, reunited the chancel with the nave of the church in 1658, and commissioned its delightful painted ceiling in 1672.

It could well be that there continued to be a house of some sort among the priory ruins thereafter, even if it was let to a tenant, or housed a farm steward. This is supported by Roque's map of 1752, which has the words 'Onny Hall' printed near the gatehouse, possibly referring to the priory's successor. Meanwhile, the Herberts used Oakly Park, a former hunting lodge to Ludlow Castle. This was enlarged about 1750 by William Baker, and further remodelled for Lord Clive (of India) by Edward Haycock in the 1780s, before its final transformation in the 1820s and '30s by C.R. Cockerell.

The road that now runs past the front of the gatehouse, and over the apparently 18th-century bridge over the Teme, is effectively the drive to Oakly Park. However, watercolours by the Rev Edward Williams and Richard Canning of 1790 and 1796 show a wall running at right angles to the front of the gatehouse, south of the archway, and blocking the road.



**Rev. Edward Williams, 1790**

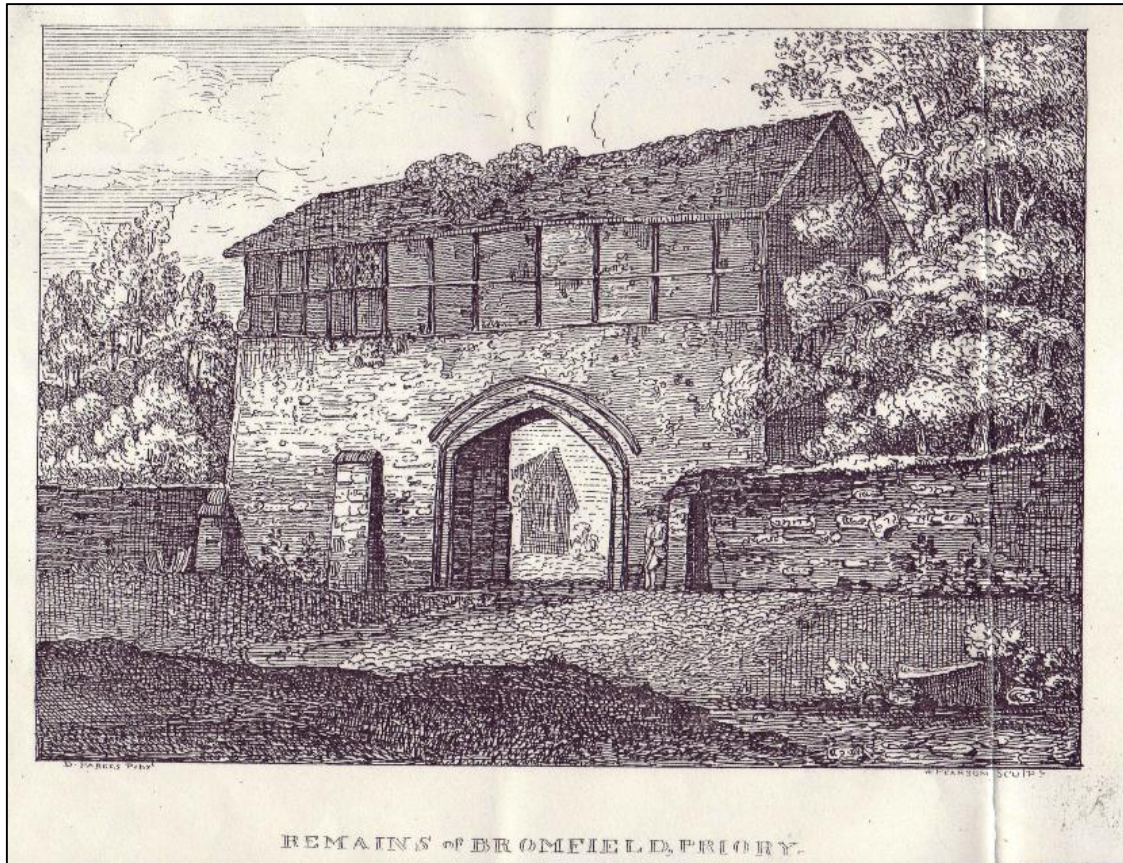


**Richard Canning, 1796**

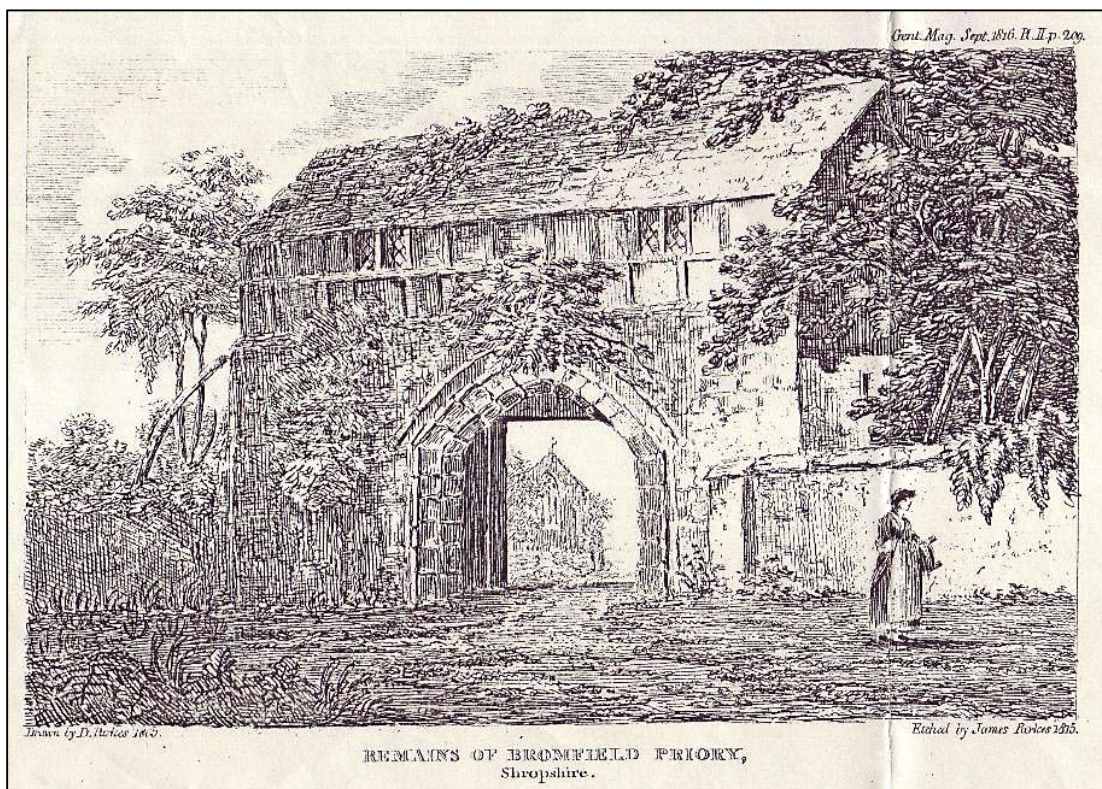


Traffic for Oakly and the farms beyond must therefore have passed through the gatehouse. The road would then have had to turn right and right again round it, in a sharp and awkward bend, to reach the bridge. An alternative might be that the road was simply set further back from the gatehouse, where it does not show in the views. It would then have passed through what is now the garden of Bromfield Manor, the 19th-century vicarage.

The gently decaying gatehouse was clearly a popular subject for watercolourists and topographical artists, from the number of views that exist. It was to remain in this state until 1836 when, as part of a general round of improvement in the village, it was thoroughly restored.



From Shrewsbury, Local Studies Library, engraving no. B86. Undated



From *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1816, pt.II



Shrewsbury, Local Studies Library, J.H. Smith collection, no 252. J.H. Smith flourished 1822-64.



Shrewsbury, Local Studies Library, J.H. Smith collection, no 203 (collection of Mrs Frances Stackhouse-Acton, d.1874), f. 6. Artist and date unknown.



interior

*Bromfield, nr Ludlow.*

[ Shrewsbury, Local Studies Library, MS. 1235  
(watercolours by Edward Arthur ('Evacustes')  
Phipson, c. 1890, vol. i ), f. 21 ]

## The Victorian school

In 1836, the gatehouse became the village school, and it seems reasonable to assume that it was restored and enlarged with this purpose in mind. The work was done carefully, in a historical manner; for example, Richard Morriss points out how the new first floor window on the churchyard side was inserted level with a window north of the arch, although this means that it comes very close to the floor in the bedroom. The new timber framing also follows the general design of the old, which was extensively repaired at the same time, particularly on the east side. The roof was renewed, although many of the old rafters were reused, turned the other way up.

Furthermore, the cottage at the south end is of roughly the same proportion as the medieval porter's lodge on the south side of the gate-passage, which thus became central once again. The symmetry of the building was emphasised by the new oriel window on the west, although to make this, one of the main posts of the frame had to be cut away, and the roof truss above supported on a heavy lintel and two new posts.

Finishing touches were provided by bargeboards and gable finials, latticed windows, and by the new brick chimney. Such details were clearly in favour with the estate's owner of that date, Robert Henry Clive, or more probably his agent. Other buildings in the village are in a similar style, such as the row of cottages dated 1848, the Vicarage, there by the 1840s, and the disused mill on the south bank of the Teme, extended in 1826 to designs of an as yet unidentified 'D W.'

Inside, the main room, which was to be the schoolroom, was given a new fireplace cleverly assembled from a variety of fragments of Jacobean, and later, carving. The two large cupboards may date from the same time, for storing school books. They too are cobbled together from fragments, one of which bears

the surprisingly late date of 1681. However, in 1988, the cupboard on the right, although fixed to the wall, blocked the door which has now been reopened, and which certainly existed while the building operated as a school. It may, therefore, have arrived in the building at a later date, or was moved from another position. To prevent draughts coming through the floor, the elm floorboards are steel-tongued, providing a closer and tighter fit.

The children arrived in the classroom by stairs at the north end, perhaps having left their coats in the low room on the first floor. On the top floor of the new south end, where there are now two rooms, there was in 1871 just one, a classroom, perhaps for older children. The two floors below were the teacher's accommodation, a living room cum kitchen on the ground floor and, presumably, a bedroom above.

Detailed information about the school comes from a public inspector's report of 1871, accompanied by a sketch plan showing its arrangement. The proportions of the rooms were noted (the schoolroom 36 ft. by 21 ft. and open to the roof, the classroom 12 ft. by 21 ft.), as was the fact that the teacher had a living room at the south end on the ground floor. Boys, girls and infants were all taught together, with an average attendance of 50. Each child paid 2d. a week, but the fourth child in any family went free. A night school was held in winter. The principal teacher, Miss Fanny Mitchell, received £25 a year from the Lord Windsor's trustees, plus half the school pence and free accommodation, firewood and coal. There were two other teachers, who lived out, presumably in the village. The plan shows earth closets for boys and girls, and a wash house in the little yard at the south end.

One pupil at the school was Elizabeth Good, born 1855, the eldest daughter of Edmund Good, the estate gamekeeper, who lived in Cockerell's lodge to Oakly Park. Her great-granddaughter, Miss P.K. Crimmin, generously gave a donation towards the restoration costs of the gatehouse as a commemoration of her great-

grandmother's school attendance, and as a memorial to her own mother, brought up by her grandmother on tales of the Bromfield of her childhood.

In 1895, Lord Windsor built a new school in the village. The south end was made into a separate cottage, by blocking the door on the top floor. It had two bedrooms on the top floor, with a sitting room, or another bedroom on the first floor, and a kitchen on the ground floor.

Kelly's Directory of Shropshire of 1900 tells us that the schoolroom had become a parish reading room, open from 6pm to 9pm during the winter, and with 35 subscribing members. Later directories describe it as a parish hall (1929) or as a recreation and reading room (1941). It had a billiard table in it, which was used by the present Lord Plymouth and his friends when he came to live at Oakly Park in the 1950s. In the early 1970s the gatehouse was still used by the youth club, and for meetings of the St John's Ambulance, but less and less often. To all intents and purposes, the building had once again reached a hiatus in its existence, and was awaiting another change of use.

Charlotte Haslam

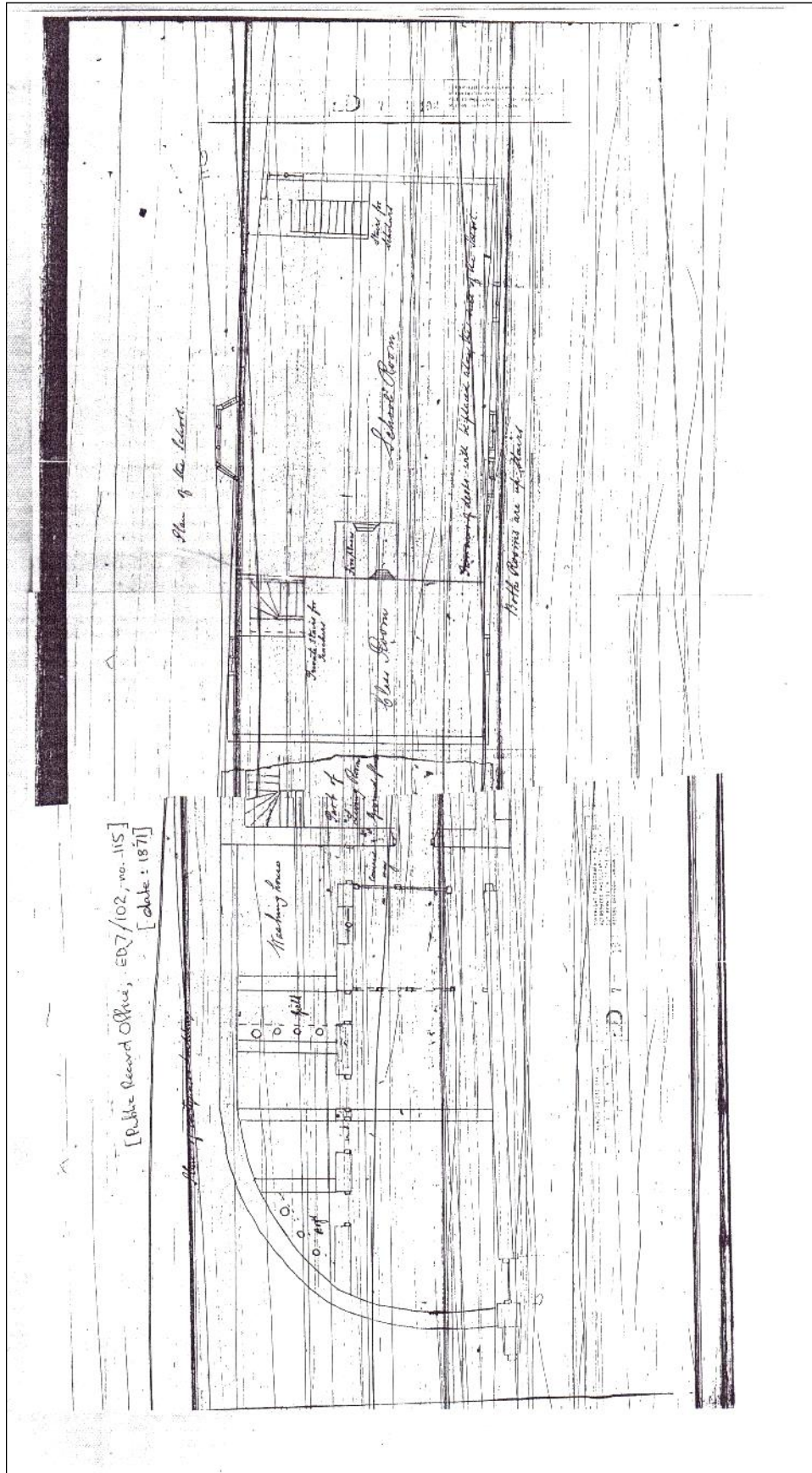
March 1993

Readers of our logbooks will be interested to discover two entries from November 1996 and April 1998, written by descendants of the Baker family who lived in the cottage on the south side of the building from 1894 until 1967. The additional two articles from Country Quest magazine provide further details about life at the gatehouse in the early part of the 20th century.

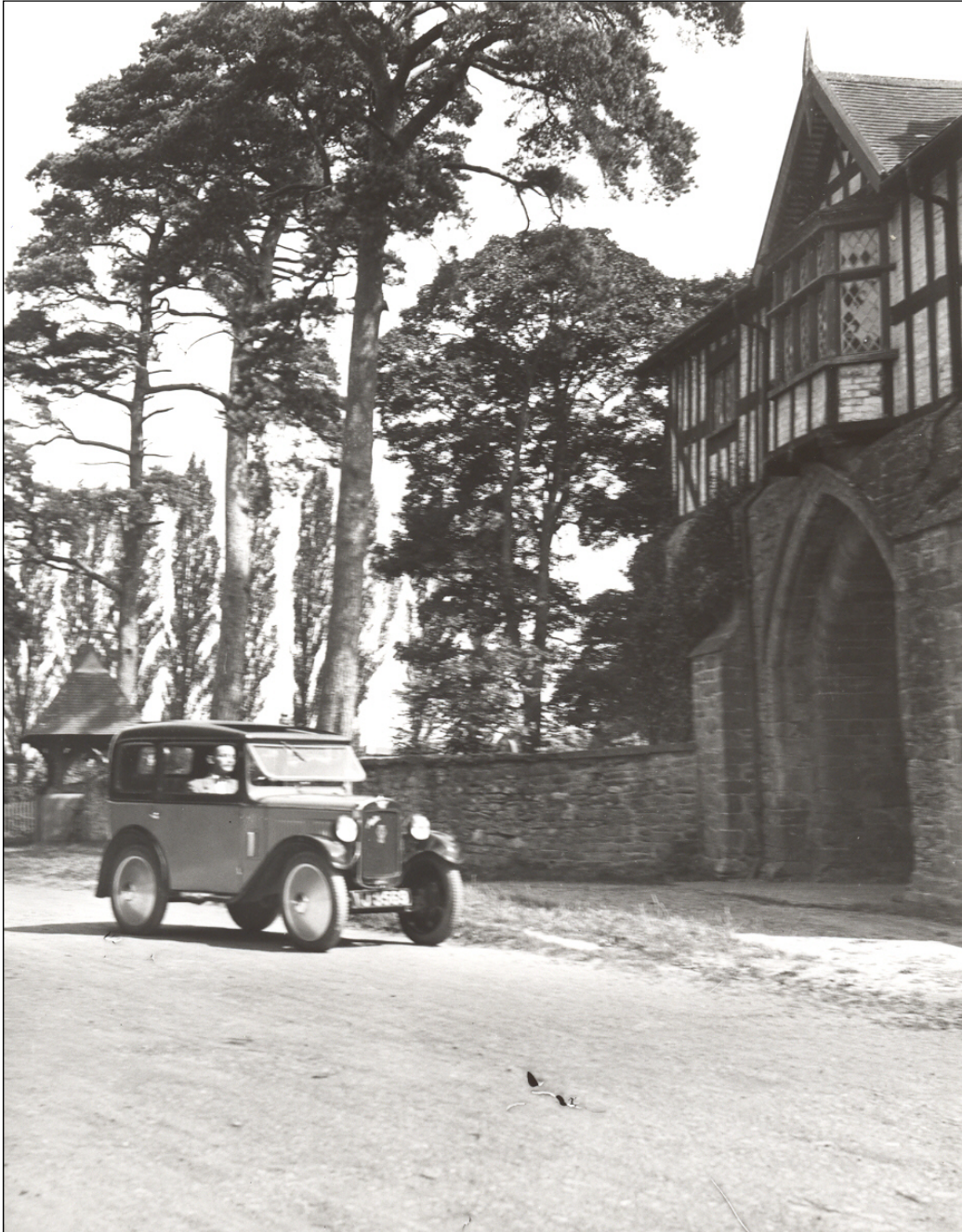


**National Monuments Record**





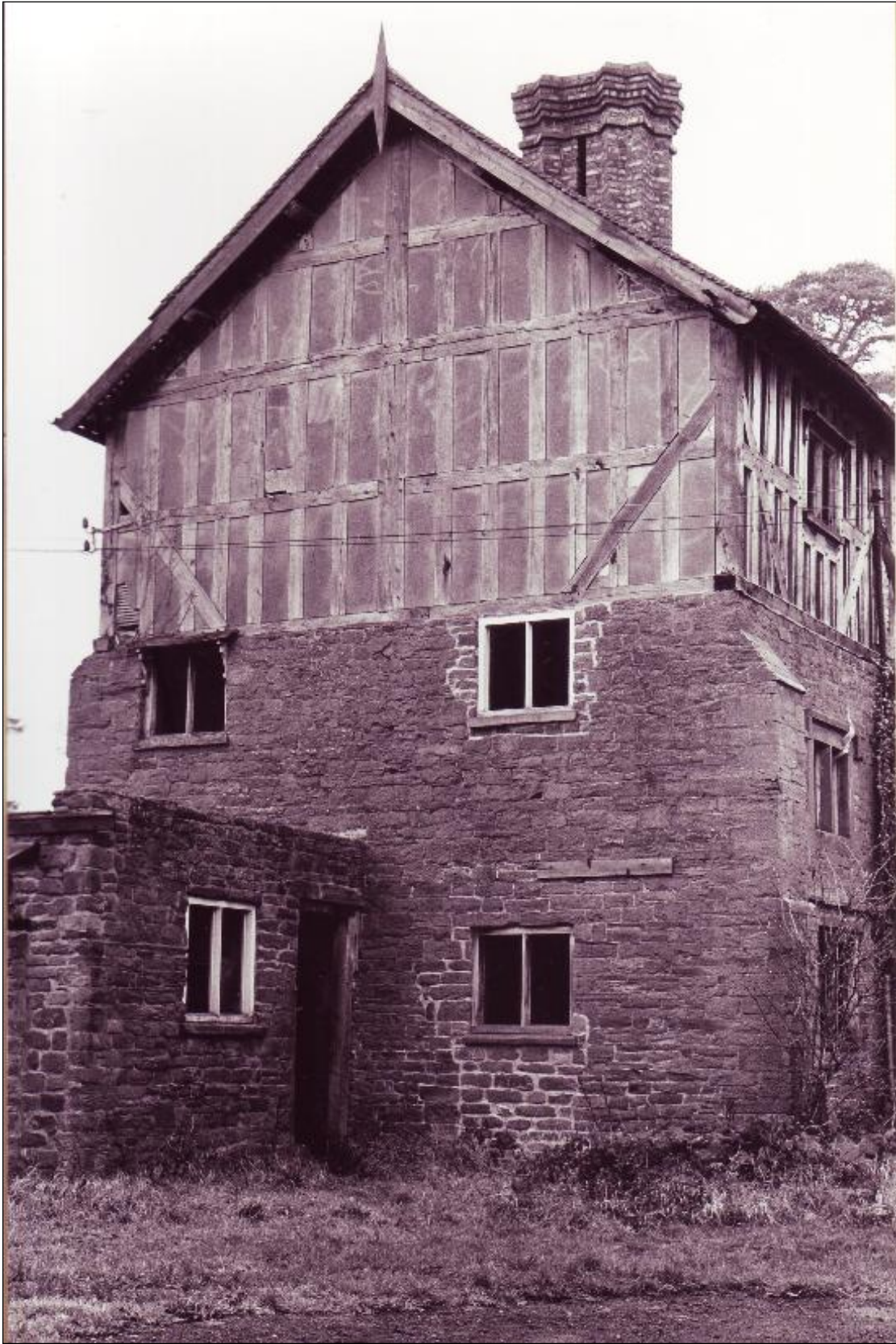
The plan that accompanied the inspector's report of 1871, showing the school at that date



**National Monuments Record**

Photographs of the Gatehouse in 1989, before repair









Looking south (above) and north (below)





The middle bedroom

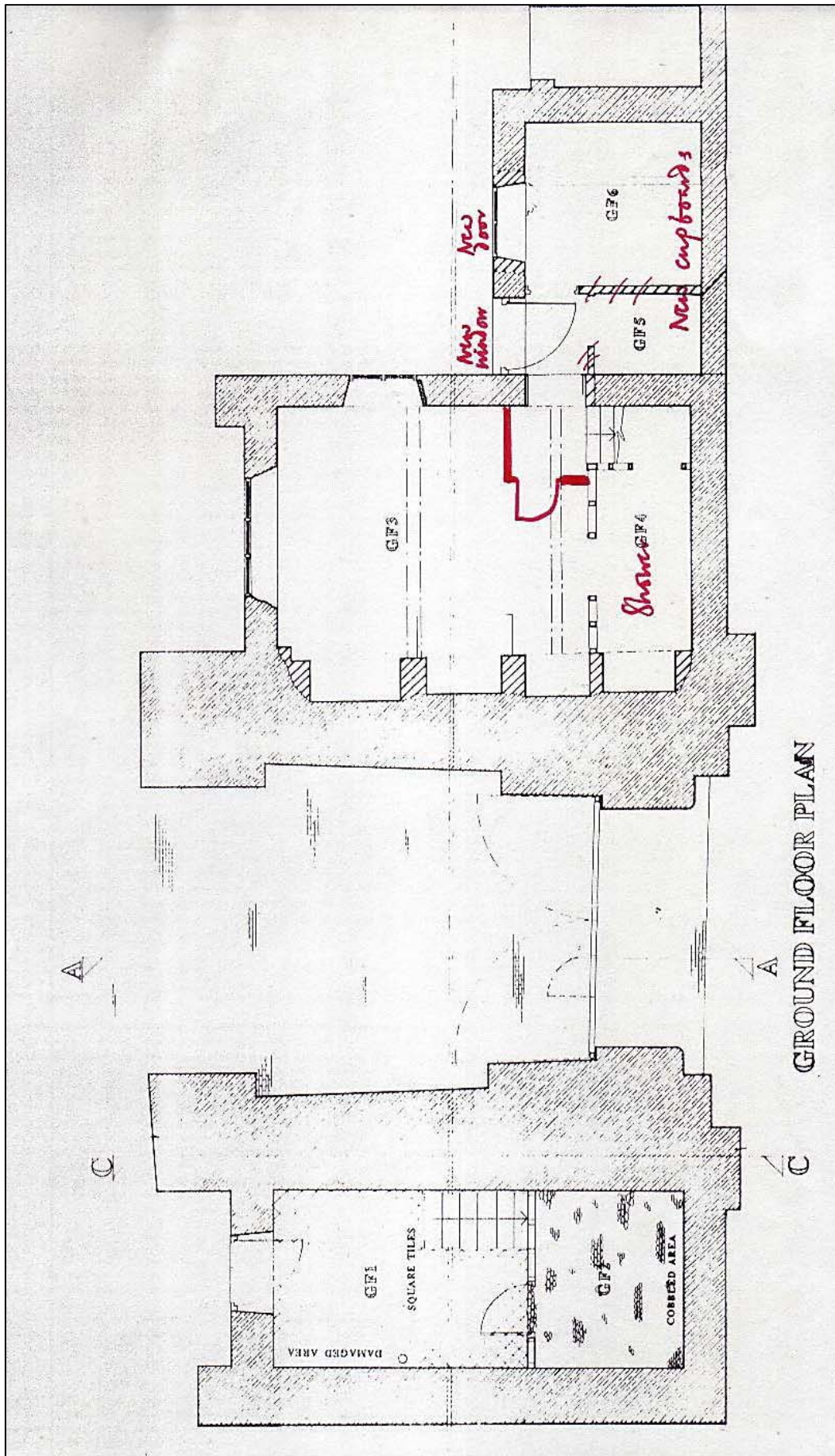




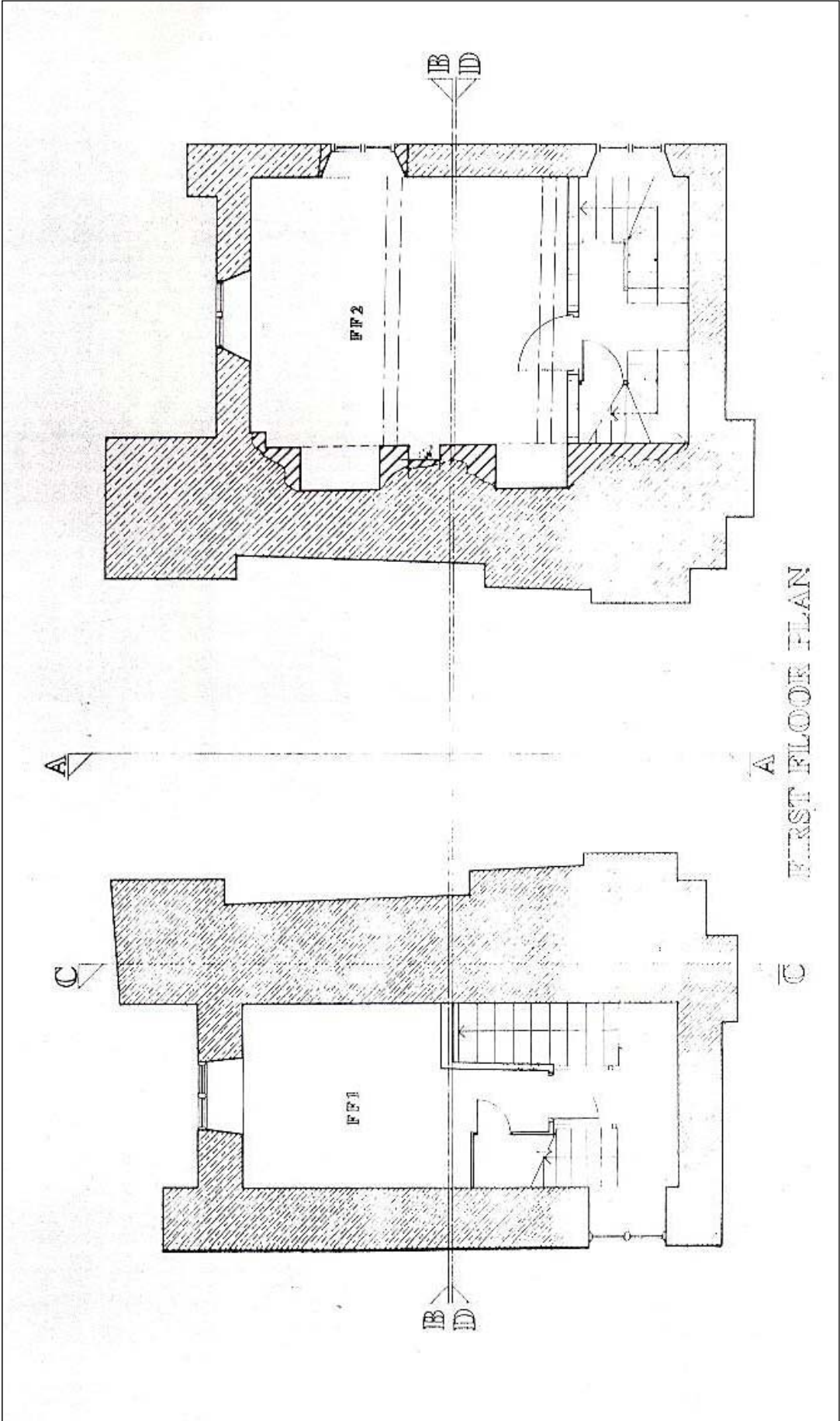
The top bedroom



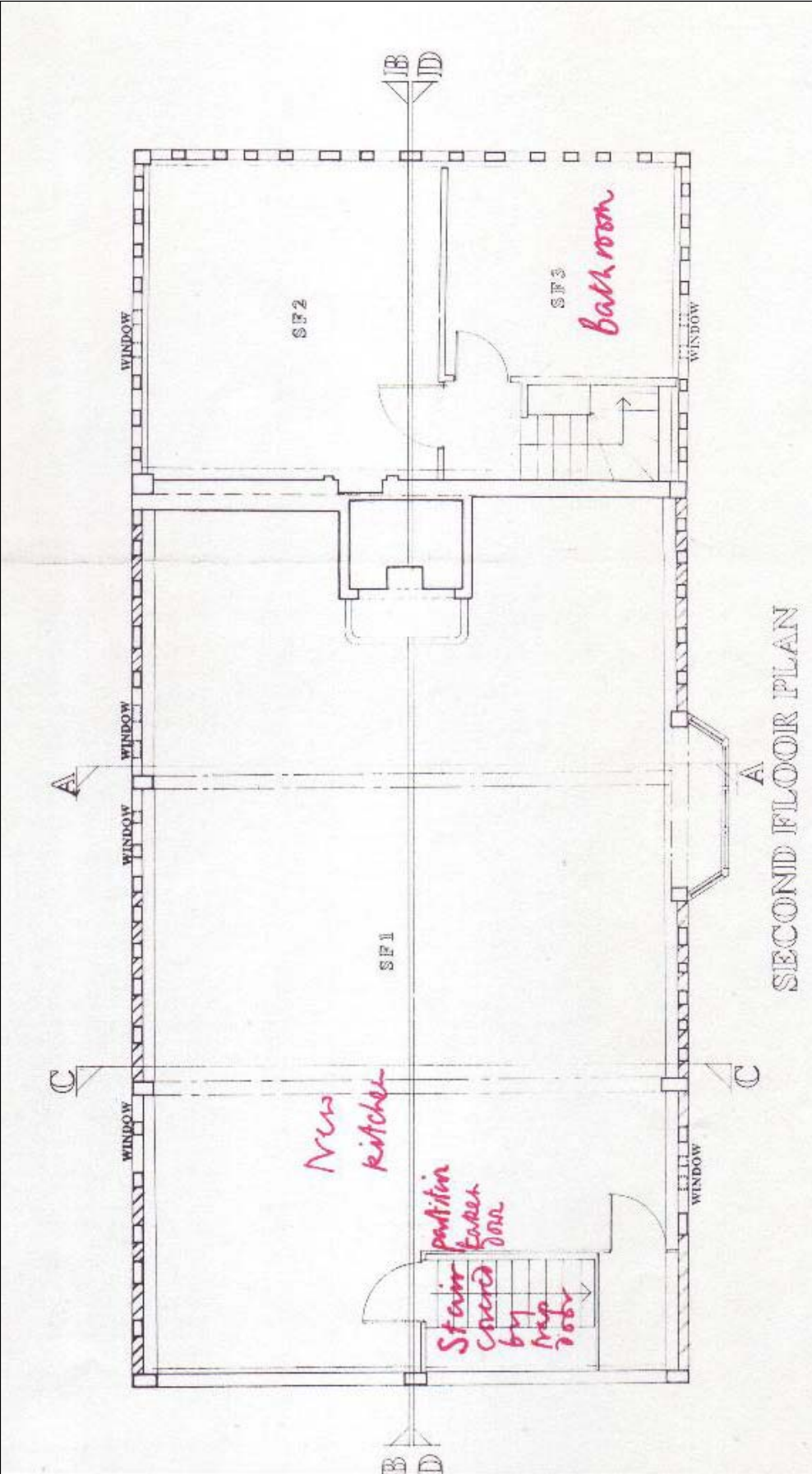




Before repair and restoration



Before repair and restoration

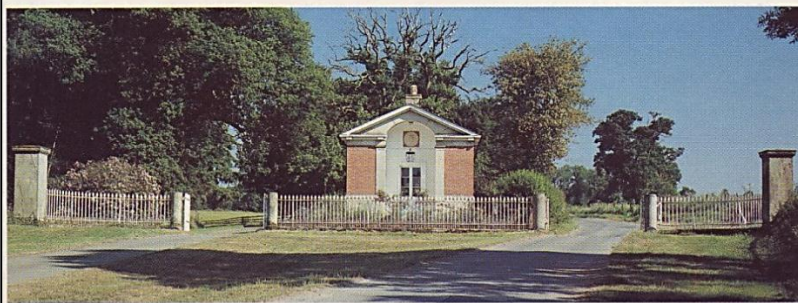
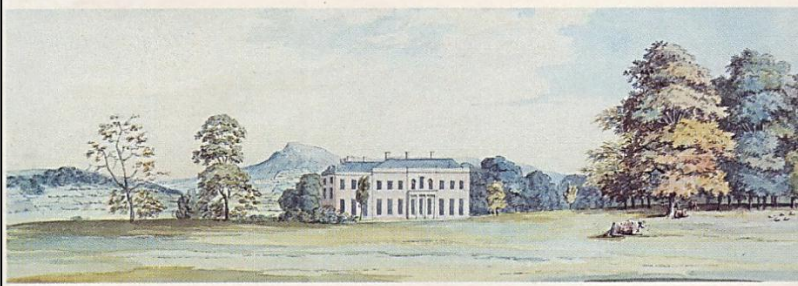


Before repair and restoration

152 COUNTRY LIFE MARCH 22, 1990

# OAKLY PARK, SHROPSHIRE

THE HOME OF THE EARL AND COUNTESS OF PLYMOUTH by RICHARD HASLAM



**D**ESPITE the Napoleonic Wars closing Europe to educational travel, there was no dwindling of interest in architectural discovery. Charles Robert Cockerell, born in 1788, grew up amid an increasingly archaeological outlook, and was duly sent abroad in 1810. From Constantinople he went into the mountains of Greece, partly lured by a remote temple dedicated to Apollo the Helper, near the ancient village of Bassae. Said to have been designed by Ictinos, the builder of the Parthenon, it had been rediscovered in 1765. Cockerell may have been hoping to find carvings to match Lord Elgin's famous coup.

He was successful, and in 1812 sold to the British government the frieze from the temple's cella. In addition, Cockerell found an 18in-high fragment of the marble Ionic capitals, which he later gave to the British

1—The east parterre and orangery colonnade at Oakly Park, Shropshire, were laid out by C. R. Cockerell in 1824. (Above left) 2—Moses Griffith's drawing of the west front in 1793 shows the house before Cockerell began work. (Left) 3—Cockerell's lodge of 1826-27

MARCH 22, 1990

COUNTRY LIFE

153

*In 1819 the young C.R. Cockerell was commissioned by the Hon. Robert Clive to remodel Oakly Park, near Ludlow, Shropshire. A rare example of the Greek Revival in domestic architecture, its main rooms were intended for Clive's collection of pictures.*



Museum. It belonged to the attached columns inside the cella. This beautiful design is distinct from the common form of volute in being defined by a spiral tendril, and has the most subtle geometry.

Cockerell adopted the Bassae Ionic as his own; it appears, for instance, to great effect on the facades of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. But its earliest use in his work may have been at Oakly Park, Shropshire, which was the result of a collaboration between the academic young architect and his fastidious patron, the Hon. Robert Henry Clive, grandson of Clive of India (Fig 10).

The Bassae discovery made Cockerell's name, and he was clearly qualified to join the committee of the recently founded Travellers' Club. In 1820 he produced a Grecian design for its new premises, where he built a domed staircase and installed

4—The south and west fronts of Oakly Park were remodelled for R. H. Clive by Cockerell in 1820-36. (Right) 5—The right-hand porch was redesigned in 1836, using archaic Doric columns which had been carved in 1821, during an earlier stage of alterations





casts of the Bassae and Parthenon friezes. This project was familiar to Clive, one of Cockerell's fellow committee members and only a year his junior.

Clive also had an interest in the eastern Mediterranean, which bore fruit in the 1840s, when he travelled in the Middle East, recording antiquities in vivid water-colour drawings. He brought back a Ptolomaic basalt figure which is still at Oakly, and a large Assyrian relief from the mound at Nimrud.

Some light is thrown on the character of his patron in Cockerell's diaries: "Lord Clive (his brother) & Robert Clive of the modern school, bred in diplomacy in the midst of all the exertions & efforts made in the last wars, companions of Castlereagh & Wellesley, educated in the constant anxious employm't of the East 10 yrs. no corrupting leisure of Italy or India, no vicious virtue, both married early . . . great respect for all that is truly great and respectable . . . cautious & dry & careful as their education, punctual, economic."

The year 1817 not only saw C. R. Cockerell set up practice as a London architect, but also the death of Lady Clive. The wife of Clive of India (1725-74), she was still living at Oakly Park, which, more than Walcot or his native Styche, was the Shropshire house he had liked best.

Oakly had been bought from the (Herbert) Earls of Powis before the marriage between Lord Clive's son and Lord Powis's niece in 1784. The drawing room (Fig 13) is still much as it was in Lady Clive's day and would have been hung with her husband's pictures. His grandson came into the property by family arrangement on her death, but alterations did not begin till two years later, when he married the younger daughter of the 5th Earl of Plymouth.

In the 1780s John Hiram Haycock had altered Oakly, adding a west front to William Baker's north range and building the stables. Moses Griffith, who illustrated Pennant's *Tours*, drew it in 1793 (Fig 2), in its setting of immemorial oaks and with Clee Hill rising beyond. The house still has a plain Georgian character and rooms level with the lawns. The next alterations came in two stages, in the early 1820s and again in the mid 1830s.

Clive and Cockerell kept the entrance on the west, though in 1817 Edward Haycock had proposed making a long entrance front on the south. J. H. Haycock's circular vestibule was redesigned in 1823 with a diagonally coffered saucer dome. It was made to connect with the drawing room to its right, but not (until the second stage) with the dining room (1820) to its left.

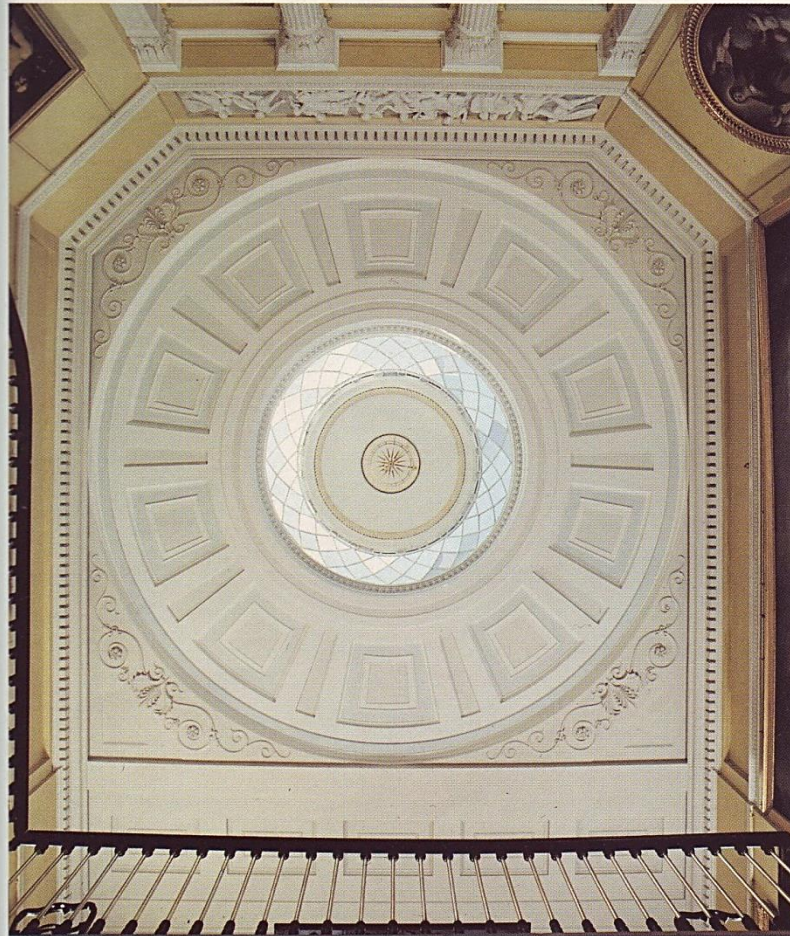
This change involved some geometrical sleight-of-hand to make the four doors appear symmetrical. Beyond, the more monumental staircase hall-cum-picture gallery (1823-24) rises to a glazed dome and gives access to new rooms, including the library (1821-23).

On the south façade this new work involved masking the joint with the three extra bays for the library. Despite his

6—Monolithic columns in the staircase hall. (Left) 7—The view down the stairs



The upper level of the staircase hall, designed in 1823. A sense of monumental proportion is created by the cast from the Bassae frieze above the composite Order and by the flat Grecian coffering round the dome



somewhat 18th-century recourse of adding a pediment, Cockerell resisted placing an accent on the centre. The drawings show him trying two windows before resolving the problem with a central blank bay below and a niche above, each decorated with a copy of an antique vase (Fig 4).

An analogous difficulty occurred on the west front, where the tetrastyle stone portico of the 1820s was in any case slightly off centre. In 1836, when the facade was made wider and higher, a second porch was added on the left, on the axis of the main passage of the 18th-century house. It seems the potential ambiguity was thought less important than a functional plan expressed in pure architectural language. When seen in perspective, as the drives require, the way this front steps back from colonnade to attic level looks like some ancient urban terrace.

In their later form, these porches have two columns between antae (or side walls). But the porch in the first scheme, engraved in 1821, had four columns without antae. It may be that Cockerell reused those columns—15ft monoliths, of an as yet unidentified sandstone—in pairs in the second phase (Fig 5). The order is a little-used archaic Doric derived (according to David Watkin in *The Life and Work of C. R. Cockerell*) from the Olympieum at Syracuse and the Temple of Hephaestus at Girgenti, which Cockerell had visited. Narrow sections of recessed fluting occur at top and bottom beneath the round surface of the shaft.

Cockerell's respect for the archaic and elemental in architecture can be traced in his ideas for using the Orders at Oakly. His first thought was to employ fluted or unfluted Doric for the porch, Doric for the staircase hall, and Ionic for the upper gallery. The complete scheme for the staircase, dated July 25, 1823, still shows that series, but a quotation from Bassae has appeared in the use of the frieze all round the upper level.

Clearly Robert Clive reconsidered the scheme with Cockerell, since further drawings dated December 17 show the final options emerging. Yet more archaeological as built (Figs 6-11), the Doric is confined to the house's exterior (apart from the almost abstract design in the fireplaces). The Bassae Ionic is used for the screen which supports the landing. A fluted Order with lotus capitals, derived from the Tower of the Winds in Athens (Fig 8), decorates the first-floor level opposite the main entrance. Above it is a single length of frieze, cast from the Bassae relief of Greeks fighting Amazons. The present colouring is John Fowler's.

The staircase hall merits detailed analysis. The columns bear only lintels, not arches, as is revealed by the coupling of the screen columns with their responds, and by the flat coffered ceiling round the oculus (Fig 9). It is clear from the broken capital and from Cockerell's reconstruction drawings of 1860 that the Bassae Ionic columns

9—The plaster ceiling and the dome over the staircase have recently been restored. (Left) 10—The capitals of the Ionic columns in the entrance hall are an unusual form, copied by Cockerell from the Temple of Apollo at Bassae, which is said to have been designed by the architect of the Parthenon





11—Benjamin West's huge painting of *Clive Receiving the Diwani of Bengal from the Moghul* was originally painted for Clive of India's house at Claremont. It was hung in the staircase hall at Oakly by his grandson.

were fluted. The Oakly versions, like those in the destroyed dining room at Grange Park, Hampshire, are unfluted (Fig 6). The room displays an interest in British stones typical of the early 19th century. The polished grey-brown limestone of the columns and pilasters—monoliths again, which is rare in English houses—is thought to come from Orleton in Shropshire.

A comparison with the more mature Ashmolean Museum is irresistible on several grounds, and not just the Bassae Order, used as a newel on the stairs in both. It is a pity that documents illuminating R. H. Clive's intentions for architecture and pictures have not survived. Making a neo-Classical framework of this scale and monumentality, apparently to display works of art, has parallels in other country houses of the time, and also in concurrent moves to set up public museums.

This noble hall forms the core of the house at several levels and performs several functions. Despite its static architecture, it follows the Baroque use of space practised, for example, by the Wyatts. By various contrivances, it links the main rooms in place of passages and provides the vertical circulation and access to pre-existing parts

of the house. The flow of space is summed up in the line of the handrail, supported on brass banisters on the cantilevered stone stairs; it starts by curling round the cut-off column, rises without angles to the landing, and ends by swerving aside to allow for a huge picture (Figs 7 and 11).

The tremendous canvas of *Clive Receiving the Diwani of Bengal from the Moghul* is by Benjamin West, who had advised Lord Clive on his purchases. It is part of the unfinished Indian cycle begun in 1774 for the dining room at Claremont, and thankfully appreciated by R. H. Clive. His top-lit staircase hall, taken with the rooms of more domestic character, offered space for other big but lesser works he collected. They included two Snyders school hunting pictures and two other Rubens school paintings, by De Vos and Rombouts. These have since left the house to make room for more important paintings from Hewell Grange, the Plymouth family seat in Worcestershire, sold in 1945. His Luini *Nativity* in the hall is a major religious painting. *The Drummer* by Miguel March and the *bodega* scene from the studio of Velazquez, both hung in the Breakfast Room, are remarkable Spanish works.

Pictures of greater distinction had been collected by his grandfather in the early 1770s (COUNTRY LIFE, November 18 and 25, 1971). They went to Powis Castle for some years round 1800 and have since been partly dispersed. Although the gallery there was built in 1775-77 for the Powis collection, there are later picture plans showing the two collections hanging together. Some, like Poussin's *Funeral of Phocion* (which is now on loan to the National Museum of Wales), Claude's *Cephalus and Procris* and *Landing of Aeneas*, and *Christ on the Sea of Galilee* by Simon de Vlieger, returned to Oakly Park and R. H. Clive. This must have happened during the lifetime of his father, the 1st (Clive) Earl of Powis, perhaps when the Powis estate was in financial difficulties.

Robert Clive's taste and Cockerell's understatement were perhaps best expressed in the library (Fig 12). The bookcases, as precisely designed as the vestibule doorways, are sunk flush on the long walls, but stand in recesses on the short walls. Photographs of the house in 1892 show above the latter what were probably copies of Attic hydria, possibly ordered by Cockerell, and the effect of that purest of



12—The library, designed by Cockerell in 1821. This is the purest of the Greek Revival interiors at Oakly

shapes has now been recreated. The strong green stone behind the colonnettes of the fireplace, with their Indian lotus-leaf capitals which afterwards worried the architect, is thought to be a serpentine from the west of Ireland.

Oakly Park is a house which neither has nor needs small *objets d'art*. But its neo-Classical architecture is ideal for showing the many fine large paintings and sculptures, and these have recently been rearranged. The dining room of 1836 was very different to that of 1820, which had been entered at both ends from beyond columnar screens. As enlarged it was rather awkward for its original purpose; but, now called the Blue Room, it is an excellent setting for some of the biggest pictures. These include notable turn-of-the-century family portraits from Hewell Grange, such as Burne-Jones's full-length portrait of Lady Windsor and a conversation-piece in the hall at Hewell Grange by William Nicholson.

Its fine volute chimneypiece is suitable in size but lacked all other furniture, so two boldly scaled bronzes after an antique Juno and Hercules have recently been found to

stand on it. In the statuary niches are now placed Grecian busts, carved in Rome in about 1800, of the 5th and last Windsor Earl of Plymouth and his wife.

A large portrait of this Countess of Plymouth by G. Sanders is hung on the axis in the drawing room. It has replaced the *Tomb of Lord Somers* by Canaletto (from the series painted for Owen MacSwinsky in 1722 by Piazzetta, Canaletto and Cimaroli), which is now on loan to Birmingham City Art Gallery. A portrait by Lawrence of Lady Harriet Windsor, Robert Henry Clive's wife, hangs over the drawing-room chimneypiece (Fig 14), with the same artist's unfinished one of her husband to her left. The earldom of Plymouth was recreated for her grandson, a trustee of the National Gallery, who purchased the Florentine Mannerist portrait on this week's cover. Others in this group of family portraits are by Dance (who painted Lord Clive) and William Owen.

Outside, the formal garden and orangery on the east followed in 1824-25 (Fig 1); the colonnade was reinstated in the 1970s, but the iron roof made by Jones & Clark of Birmingham vanished before the war. The

lodge, with its railings and gates on either side (the opposite of what might be expected), lend a French clarity to the entrance to the park from the old bridge over the River Teme (Fig 3) and date from 1826-27.

After R. H. Clive's death in 1854, Oakly Park was used for almost a century as a dower house, so when the 2nd Earl of Plymouth died in 1943, leaving Oakly in military use and its original architectural pieces and garnitures destined for disposal, there was no living tradition of its value. Christopher Hussey's articles (*COUNTRY LIFE*, March 1 and 8, 1956), were the first step to rediscovery. But full evaluation did not take place till David Watkin's monograph on C. R. Cockerell appeared in 1974.

Apart from a few plans and papers dating from the years of Cockerell's work (1819-38), the most important record of the original appearance of the rooms is the series of photographs taken by Bedford Lemère in 1892. These were the starting point for the reinstatement since 1985 of what (in view of other losses) is now far the most important example of Cockerell's



13—The drawing room, formed for Clive of India's wife. (Below) 14—Lawrence's portraits of R. H. Clive (*bottom right*) and his wife (*middle*)

early work. Using the photographs, Lord Plymouth has made some attempt to recover the atmosphere as well as the detail, so far as practicable, of what was lost in the war. This has ranged from small-scale architectural pieces, like having the missing dark stone vase on the stair newel recarved in Italy from a Bedford Lemère photograph, to the complete restoration of the dome and its ceiling, enriched with Greek motifs, which had not been touched since construction.

The guiding light in this operation was a description of Cockerell's own, which seems as valid now as it was then. After visiting R. H. Clive at Oakly in late 1838, he wrote: "we have just finished a work which is the very picture of himself having been molded by our joint labors these 10 or more years. It is substantial, of very handsome intrinsic material, almost unadorned, except by minor features, beside those solid proportions, shewing a refinement that would escape vulgar eyes . . . of low proportion & Doric in all its character. & I was happy to find him in high good humour."

*Photographs: Tim Imrie.*



Articles from Country Quest magazine

## A HAUNTING HOLIDAY

by Beryl Copsey

Would you care to share your holiday home with ghosts! Guaranteed gentle, even benevolent, ghosts?

The borderlands where England and Wales meet is companionable country. Rounded hills invite investigation, flowers flourish in hedgerows and streams sparkle over stones. Towns browse over their history, awaiting visitors.

The A49 from Shrewsbury runs between rolling hills and green pasture land, until, nearing Ludlow, it passes through the village of Bromfield. There, a quick-glance to the right has for years been rewarded by a glimpse of an attractive gatehouse in a side road. Sadly, it seemed to be drifting into decay. Now, with half-timbering looking fresh again, it is obvious that someone cares for this building. The Landmark Trust has rescued it and, judging by the popularity of the Landmark lettings, many others will come to know and love the gatehouse.

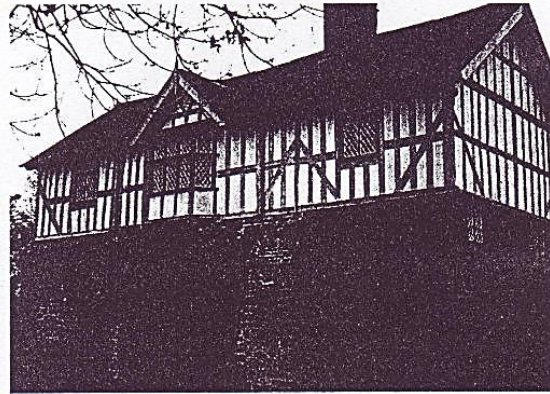
The transformation of use is entirely appropriate. As a Benedictine foundation the small Priory at Bromfield would have offered hospitality from the twelfth century onwards to pilgrims and travellers. Now, anyone wishing to find tranquility may journey to Bromfield to find shelter there, though the hospitality must be self-catered. Visiting fans of Brother Cadfael will be happy to find themselves in the setting featured in "The Virgin in the Ice", which book, naturally is one of those supplied by the Landmark Trust for the use of tenants.

In the Handbook issued by the Trust there are at least seven gatehouses, some stood to guard the entrance to castles, some to abbeys, some embellished the estates of grand houses. Most are, indeed, impressive, but Bromfield Priory Gatehouse is endearing.

With little alteration the monastic buildings became an ordinary house after the Dissolution of Monasteries. Only to return, again hardly changed, to religious use at the end of the seventeenth century, as the parish church of St. Mary. Through each conversion the gatehouse stood for security. As times became, generally, more peaceful the large room over the gates adapted too, now serving to hold sessions of the manorial courts. After 1770 this use was outmoded and for a while the building sank into that picturesque state of decay so beloved and often painted by water-colourists of the Romantic Period.

Bromfield village shook itself to life once more when the young Victoria came to the throne. Education for all was, at long last, acceptable and the ladies of the Clive family, at Oakley Park mansion nearby, intended to sponsor a school. What better place could there be than the upper room of the old gatehouse? Once again there was a flurry of restoration and, this time, additional rooms to provide a small home for a teacher.

By 1852 everything was running smoothly, the school and its pupils had become the pride of Bromfield. All the same, it took an American visitor to provide posterity with a pic-



ture of this phase in the history of that gatehouse. Anna Maria Fay, of Savannah in Georgia spent a year with relatives near Ludlow, was caught up in local society and shared her experiences with her family in a series of long letters home.

When invited by Lady Harriet Clive to inspect Bromfield School, Anna Maria, then twenty-three, was quite ready to be impressed. The girls, she reported, "from four to twelve or thirteen, all had spotlessly white aprons. The boys were younger for the older ones have to go in the fields."

Lady Harriet provided means for the children to tidy themselves when some had had long walks to school. She gave canvas shoes for indoor use and, innovatively, 'a swing and gymnastic exercises in the yard'. Even one of the new-fangled Christmas trees in due season, with a present for each child. No wonder 'they sang for us admirably'. These children must have been the happiest little scholars in Shropshire.

But inevitably a newer and larger school was eventually needed. This built, Bromfield Gatehouse was free to assume its next role and soon became the village reading and recreation room. When this function, too, faded, so did the appearance of the building, not derelict, but needing a purpose.

Enter the Landmark Trust with its record of caring and of careful restoration. At every turn the history of the Gatehouse seems to have forecast its present use. With hospitality, learning and leisure as a background; with Ludlow a mere morning's stroll away; with castles, hill-forts and enchanting small villages in easy reach Bromfield Gatehouse makes an ideal holiday home. And if a gentle monastic ghost or a childishly-giggling presence is sensed, surely only the kindest of welcomes is intended.

Information about the Gatehouse and the Trust's other buildings can be obtained from The Landmark Trust, Shottesbrooke, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 3SW. A fully illustrated handbook is obtainable from the same address at £8 including p and p (refundable against a first booking).□

# MEMORIES OF BROMFIELD

by Richard Snelson

**I** read Beryl Copsey's delightful article about the Bromfield Priory Gatehouse - A Haunting Holiday - in the May issue with great interest and an even greater sense of reminiscence. Our annual family holiday was spent in the gatehouse every year from the late 40s to the early 60s and I have indelible and joyful memories of those idyllic summer days I spent as a child in Bromfield.

My maternal grandmother, Fanny Jones (née Baker), was brought up in the gatehouse, the address of which was, at that time, and may well still be, 13 Priory Gateway. Fanny was the eldest daughter of James Baker by his second wife Mary Jane Burton. I never knew James, for he died in 1894 aged 55 years, but I do faintly recall Mary Jane who survived her husband by 56 years and died in 1950 when I was two and a half years old. James was a farm bailiff and the family lived in a tied cottage on the far side of Ludlow racecourse, which is next to Bromfield station.

It was after James's death that Mary Jane and her six young children, the eldest being twelve at the time, moved to live in the gatehouse. Mary Jane secured a position as a washer-woman for the Clive family at Oakley Park and it was Miss Clive who offered them the gatehouse as a home.

It is here that I must take issue with Beryl Copsey who, rightly draws attention to the use of the gatehouse firstly as the school and later as the village reading and recreation room, but then says that the building faded in appearance and was in need of a purpose.

This may be true of the site of the building nearest the church lychgate and the upper central section above the imposing main gate itself, but the entire parkside half of the house certainly lacked no purpose.

It became a warm, welcoming and totally captivating family home from 1894 until 1967, nigh on three quarters of a century, during which time it was occupied solely by the Bakers and their descendants. Beatrice, the fourth child of James and Mary Jane, lived in the gatehouse from the age of 2 years until

her death in 1967 at the age of 75 years. It is the recollection of the holidays that the family spent with Beattie and her husband, Charles Hillman Jones, that still brings so much joy to me and to other members of the family.

Charlie and Beattie had two children, George and Olive. George, now, sadly no longer with us, became Mayor of nearby Ludlow and Olive, who once ran the Bromfield village shop and post office at the village end of Station Lane, now lives on the Angel Bank just outside Ludlow.

If one studies the excellent wooden panels in the old recreation rooms above the gate, it can be seen that many of the figures have lost their noses. I have it on good authority that the young George Jones, future Mayor of Ludlow, armed with a small pocket-knife, was solely responsible for their sorry state!

The gatehouse had none of the comforts of a modern home, yet it was the cosiest house I ever knew. I could scarcely contain a boyish excitement as I stepped through the Judas gate in the huge, solid main gate and entered the paved archway within. A marked hollow ran along the centre of the archway floor and I was always told by my grandmother - Nain to all of us - that it marked the line of an underground passage that linked the gatehouse to the old priory behind the present day church of St. Mary the Virgin.

A right turn out of the archway led past Charlie's immaculate vegetable garden, sadly now tarmaced over to provide additional parking for the Oakley Park estate office staff. The diamond-lead window of the main room looked out over the garden and a second right turn led down a stone-flagged passageway to the one and only door to the living quarters, up two stone steps to the right. Straight ahead lay the cold scullery. There was no creature comforts here. To the left, opposite the steps to the house, was the gate to The Green. If ever there was a misnomer, this was it! The Green was merely a small enclosed grassless yard in which Charlie kept his firewood, a few garden tools and a pen for the pig which was fattened up every year to provide home-cured pork, ham and bacon for the family.

In the corner was the toilet - a primitive contraption consisting of little more than four walls, a suitably modified wooden bench and a metal bucket! It was a

far cry from our home comforts in Rhyl, but, somehow, all seemed to be as it should be in Bromfield. Mains sewage would have been so out of place.

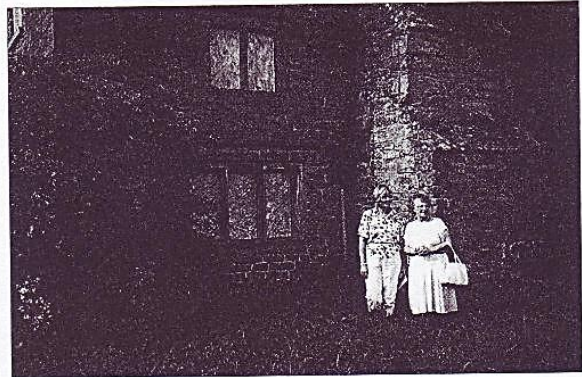
The main room was a real gem. Opposite the curtained door at the head of the steps was a large black-leaded cooking range with a central log fire. This is where Beattie did all her cooking and what a cook she was! In the corner of the wall opposite the window was a door leading to a walk-in pantry and another door in the opposite corner of the same wall led to the quaintest, crookedest, steepest stairs I have ever known. The weak light - electric in my day - cast weird shadows round the corners of the staircase and the over-active imagination of a small boy would run wild. In the daytime, I would love to sit in the small window half way up the stairs and look out over the churchyard, in which, incidentally, is buried Henry Hill Hickman, the father of anaesthesia. Nothing, however, would entice me through the stairway door unaccompanied at night. The main room had a beamed ceiling and from each beam there protruded a number of sturdy metal hooks on which smoked or salted joints of last year's tenant of The Green hung in splendid glory, promising future gastronomic delights.

Charlie, a retired gangman on the railway line through Bromfield, was a real man of the country. He was a small man with a large, drooping moustache and a shirt which saw a collar only on Sundays. He could never creep up on anyone for his hob-nailed black boots could be heard down the road long before ever he came into sight. He would pick fruit and mushrooms and sell them in Ludlow at the Butter Cross.

Though Beattie was a faithful member of St. Mary's, the church next door, Charlie was a lay preacher with the Primitive Methodists and would walk past the church and a further three miles to the plain little chapel at Vernold's Common twice every Sunday, unless, of course, he was preaching elsewhere. Sometimes we would go with Beattie to St. Mary's, but on other occasions we would try to keep up with Charlie's resonant black boots as he led his conscript congregation to Vernold's Common.

My lasting memory of old Uncle Charlie is of him at supper in the gatehouse. He would sit at the head of the table and devour his food, somewhat noisily in double-quick time and wash it down with a pint of steaming cabbage water, the cooking medium of whatever green vegetable Beattie had laid before us that day. To this day, I don't know how he could do it!

The bedrooms in the gatehouse were small and cosy. The rear bedrooms overlooked the churchyard and those in the front looked out towards the vicarage



**The author's sister and mother standing outside the leaded window of the main room in 1991, before the restoration of the gatehouse.**

and The Crawl, a large, open parkland pasture alongside the River Teme. Our days in Bromfield were spent in innocent, unsophisticated, uncomplicated but incomparable pleasures. We would play in the old hollow tree in the Crawl, throw sticks into the river by the weir or walk to Ludlow through Oakley Park.

Charlie died suddenly, but peacefully, in his chair in front of the log fire in the gatehouse one day in 1961. Beattie survived him by six years. The last time I saw her alive was in mid-June 1967 when my mother, out of the blue, suggested we visit Beattie for the day in Bromfield. She was then confined to a wheelchair and we took advantage of the fine weather by taking her for a ride in her chair through Oakley Park. A few days later, Beattie died in much the same way as Charlie had done. She was carried from the main room in the gatehouse to her last resting place just inside the lynchgate on a hand-drawn bier. It marked the end of an era.

The house was briefly occupied by a new tenant after Beattie's death, but lay empty for many years until the Landmark Trust's timely intervention. I have visited Bromfield every year of my life and have bemoaned the changes made to my childhood haven. The noble grove of poplar trees were felled to make way for a new bridge - how much better a by-pass would have been! The road up to the gatehouse was re-routed and the main thoroughfare from the north was blocked off in favour of a characterless highway. Throughout this time, 13 Priory Gateway fell into disrepair, and though I wrote to the Earl of Plymouth's estate on several occasions asking of his intentions for the gatehouse, nothing was done. But now it is safe. The village may have changed, but at least there is a new grove of poplars shooting up by the river and the prospect towards the park, past the old mill, is as it always was. Bromfield will always have a special place in my heart. □