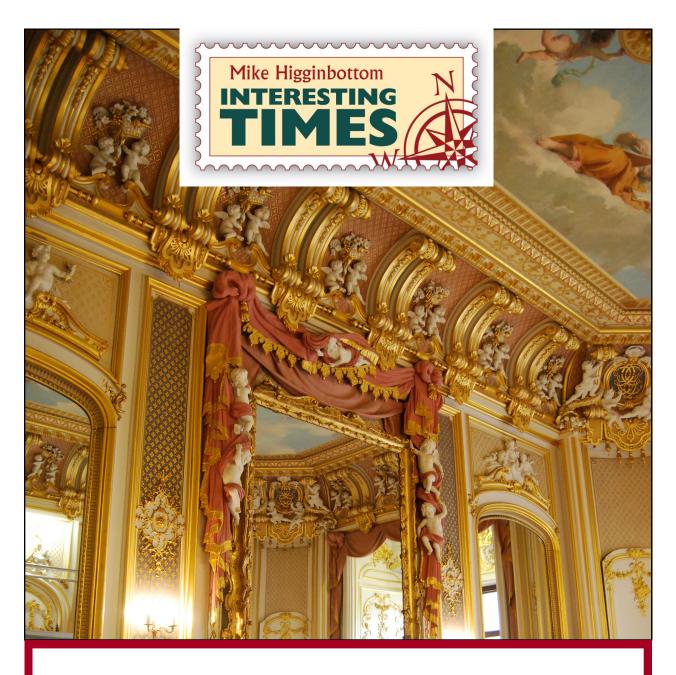# SAMPLE PAGES

The 40-page, A4 handbook for <u>Country Houses of Lincolnshire</u>, with text, photographs, maps, a chronology and a reading list, is available for purchase, price £15.00 including postage and packing.

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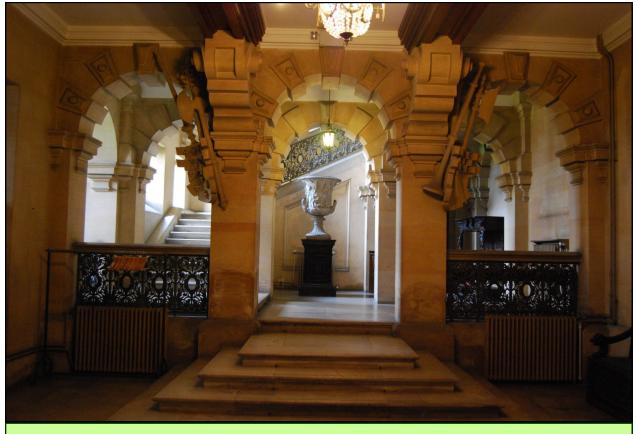
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Country Houses of Lincolnshire

Harlaxton College, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG32 1AG
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Friday August 6th-Monday August 9th 2010

interesting breaks with interesting people

Contents

Above: Harlaxton Manor: entrance hall and staircase

earlier house. Vanburgh's intention to move the state rooms from the east front to the west, where they would overlook the park, was unfulfilled, and the existing rooms – now the King James Room, the State Drawing Room and the Tapestry Room – were updated in Rococo style by Peregrine, 3rd Duke of Ancaster, who modified exterior details, dated on the south front 1759, to harmonise with the picturesque features of the surviving Tudor façades.

The dukedom of Ancaster and Kesteven died out with the demise of Brownlow, 5th Duke in 1809, and the barony passed to his aunt, the third Duke's eldest daughter, Priscilla, 21st Baroness Willoughby de Eresby. The house had fallen into poor repair during the lifetimes of the fourth and fifth Dukes, and in 1811 a comprehensive but sensitive scheme of improvement to the Tudor parts of the house, supervised by the architects Samuel Page and Henry Garling, gave the house its present external appearance. The façade of the east front was regularised, and the west front gained an added storey. The abrupt junction between Vanburgh's work and the earlier building was modified. At about the same time the painted Chinese wallpaper was added to the rococo decoration of what is now called the Chinese Drawing Room.

Lady Willoughby de Eresby's will required a sale and dispersal of the contents of Grimsthorpe Castle, except for the family portraits, and much of the existing furniture represents the purchases of her son Peter Robert, who inherited his father's title as 2nd Baron Gwydir alongside his mother's as 22nd Baron Willoughby de Eresby. He also, by his marriage to Clementina Sarah Drummond, daughter of Baron Perth of Stobhall, brought Drummond Castle, near Perth, to the family.

In the following generations Grimsthorpe was little used. Alberic, 3rd Baron Gwydir and 23rd Baron Willoughby de Eresby, lived abroad; his sister and heir Clementina, 24th Baroness, was the widow of Lord Aveland of Normanton Park, Rutland, which she preferred as her English residence; her son, Gilbert, who in addition to his existing titles, 2nd Baron Aveland and 25th Baron Willoughby de Eresby, in 1892 became the first Earl of Ancaster, used it only occasionally, though he refurbished the seventeenth-century chapel in 1899 to designs by S T Aveling.

Gilbert, 2nd Earl of Ancaster, inherited Grimsthorpe Castle in 1910, and with his American wife, Eloise, modernised the house and built a service wing in the courtyard. Their architects were Detmar Blow and Fernand Billerey, and their decorators Lenygon & Company. When Normanton Park was demolished in 1924, the Heathcote family paintings, furniture and garden statuary were brought to Grimsthorpe. After wartime military occupation, the estates and titles passed in 1951 to the 2nd Earl's son, James, 3rd Earl of Ancaster and 27th Baron Willoughby de Eresby, who with his countess, Phyllis Astor, employed the architect R J Page and the decorator John Fowler to alter and improve the house, replacing the Edwardian service block with a single-storey kitchen range and turning the riding school into a garage. The third Earl created the Grimsthorpe and Drummond Castle Trust to safeguard his inheritance which passed on his death in 1982 to his daughter Jane Marie Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby, 28th Baroness Willoughby de Eresby (born 1934).

Above: Grimsthorpe Castle: return of north front to west front

Not only did Turnor imitate the Harlaxton style, but like Gregory he chose to build his big new house on a fresh site, high above the lake, but unlike Harlaxton approached circuitously, so that the main façade takes the visitor by surprise. The façade has a more horizontal emphasis than Salvin's main front at Harlaxton, and the whole effect is more composed. The central block is flanked by a large domestic wing and an orangery, similar components to Harlaxton as modified by Burn, but on a far more compact, economical and manageable scale. The decorative details of the exterior are eclectic in origin, yet fit the vocabulary Burn had developed at Harlaxton – oriels, strapwork, curly gables and a lively skyline. The obelisk which acts as a focal point in the approach was erected by Christopher Turnor in 1847 to commemorate Sir Isaac Newton who "drew his first breath in the neighbourhood" and in fact began his education in Stoke Rochford parish.

Within, the hall and staircase make major statements, but the chief stylistic hallmarks – featured again at Rauceby and Revesby – are the fireplaces, showing the influence of Wendel Dietterlin's *Architectura* of 1598. The fine library at Stoke Rochford, nearly seventy feet long and dated 1845, has a strapwork ceiling similar to the dining room, and there is a series of *Louis-Quinze* rooms also reminiscent of Harlaxton interiors. The fall of the land enabled Burn to provide huge basement-space, in places on two levels with, as at Harlaxton, a railway system to move coal to each part of the house. The original design provided for fifteen water-closets and two bathrooms.

After Christopher Turnor's death the house was for a while tenanted, but when his son's nephew, also Christopher Turnor (1873-1940), inherited he made it his residence. (The villagers greeted him and his bride on their return from honeymoon with a rather pointed banner which read, "Make this your home.") He himself built the green-glass fireplace and in the 1920s carved the panoramic views on the staircase balustrade.

Stoke Rochford ceased to be a house when it was requisitioned in the war. It became the Kesteven Training College for teachers in 1948, and was taken over as a conference centre by the National Union of Teachers in 1978. It was badly damaged by fire in 2005, and has been meticulously restored.

Stoke Rochford Hall receives at most a footnote in most works on Victorian country-house architecture. Apart from the entry in Sir Nikolaus Pevsner & John Harris, *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire* (2nd edn, revised by Nicholas Antram, Penguin 1989), the main source appears to be an unpublished essay by Terence R Leach, *A short history of Stoke Rochford Hall*.

Opposite: Stoke Rochford Hall: coal railway

Grimsthorpe Castle

Geoffrey Beard, The Works of John Vanburgh (Batsford 1986)

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Timothy Connor, 'Grimsthorpe Castle', *Archaeological Journal* Vol 131 (1974), pp 330-3

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Tim Knox, *Grimsthorpe Castle, Bourne, Lincolnshire* (The Grimsthorpe & Drummond Castle Trust 1996)

Harlaxton Manor

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Jill Allibone, *Anthony Salvin: pioneer of Gothic Revival architecture* (Lutterworth 1988)

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Russell Read, *Harlaxton* (Harlaxton College 1980)

Above: Great Ponton parish church: Anthony Ellys' inscription, "Think and thank God for all"