

The Wool Hall, Lavenham: an episode in the history of preservation

by

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A brief account of Lavenham's Wool Hall can be found in the many guides to that picturesque Suffolk village. Most will tell how in 1912 (or thereabouts) it was dismantled and carted away for re-erection elsewhere, but then returned and restored through the generous intervention of Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll. The full story is more complicated and more interesting. Other national figures were drawn into the saga, including A. R. Powys, secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the architects Basil Oliver and William Weir, and Canon H. D. Rawnsley and other luminaries of the National Trust. It can be pieced together from correspondence and other documents in the archive of the SPAB, together with a complementary collection of papers, hitherto unpublished, assembled by the daughter of the Revd Henry Taylor, the man responsible for organising the protest that resulted in the saving of the Wool Hall, and which record his dealings with local players in the drama such as the Walberswick architect Frank Jennings, Jennings' associate Sydney Seymour Lucas, and Princess Louise's equerry, Col W. G. Probert. This article examines the events of 1912–13, and places them in the context of similar incidents that occurred in Suffolk at about this time.

BACKGROUND

Lavenham (Suffolk)¹ is today well known as a small medieval town, now an attractive and unspoilt village, with a large number of timber-framed houses in an apparently perfect state of preservation. It owes its heritage of fine buildings to the manufacture of woollen cloth. In 1524 Lavenham ranked as the fourteenth wealthiest town in England; in that year it contributed over £179 in tax, more than the city of York. Its large parish church was rebuilt between about 1485 and 1525, and most of the timber-framed buildings belong to a similar period, c. 1460–1530.² But after this age of prosperity Lavenham declined sharply, and the survival of the medieval houses can be attributed to the lack of wealth in the 18th century, when houses in other comparable towns were rebuilt or were at least remodelled and refronted in brick. Some new industries developed in the 19th century, principally the processing of horsehair (mainly for seating) and coconut fibre (mainly for matting), and the railway reached Lavenham in 1865; but even so it was not considered a prosperous place, and 19th-century photographs show that many of the buildings were in poor condition.³ A number of the surviving medieval buildings were subdivided into tenements, while others, including the Old Grammar School in Barn Street, were converted to industrial use.⁴

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Fig. 1

Weaver's House, Lady Street, Lavenham, from the south, in the process of being dismantled ready for re-erection in Walberswick, 1908.

Lavenham Exhibition and Museum Trust

At least one building, however, suffered the fate of being sold, dismantled, and re-erected elsewhere. This was the early 16th-century Weaver's House in Lady Street (Fig. 1), which in 1908 was rebuilt in Walberswick, where it became known as The Mercers Hall (Fig. 2).⁵ The architect behind this was Frank Jennings, who was responsible for the architectural transformation of Walberswick in the years just before the First World War, and the new house (which was considerably altered in the process) was for his sister, Marie Rose.⁶ Most, if not all Jennings' houses incorporated reused bits of old buildings. Marshway, the house he built for himself in Walberswick, contains a 17th-century staircase from a cottage in Stanton; in the words of Lawrence Weaver, 'other details, such as a few doors and beams, are also *disjecta membra* of cottages that have disappeared'.⁷

Jennings was by no means the only person engaging on this sort of activity. Gill & Reigate were a firm of London antique dealers who specialised in period fittings including complete rooms and, indeed, whole houses. Their advertisements claimed not only 'the largest stock of genuine antiques in London', but also that 'we have in our possession for sale a Tudor House originally erected in Suffolk about A.D. 1590, and

we shall be pleased to submit plans and quote an inclusive price for its re-erection on the Purchaser's own site complete and ready for occupation'.⁸ This particular building has not been identified, but in 1908 they showed at the Franco-British Exhibition at the White City, London, a timber-framed house dated 1563 (Fig. 4) that had stood at the corner of Carr Street and Cox Lane, Ipswich (Fig. 5). By the time it reached White City it had been fitted with panelling from another Ipswich house, in Fore Street. It was then bought by the Hon. Ivor Guest and added to his house at Ashby St Ledgers (Northants.) as part of improvements being carried out by Edwin Lutyens (Fig. 3).⁹

Then in 1911 Gill & Reigate were responsible for one of the most famous cases of 'transmigration', that of The Moot Hall, Clacton-on-Sea (Essex), which was moved from Hammond's Farm, Hawstead, just outside Bury St Edmunds, in 1911 (Fig. 6). The proposal was welcomed in Clacton, the chairman of the

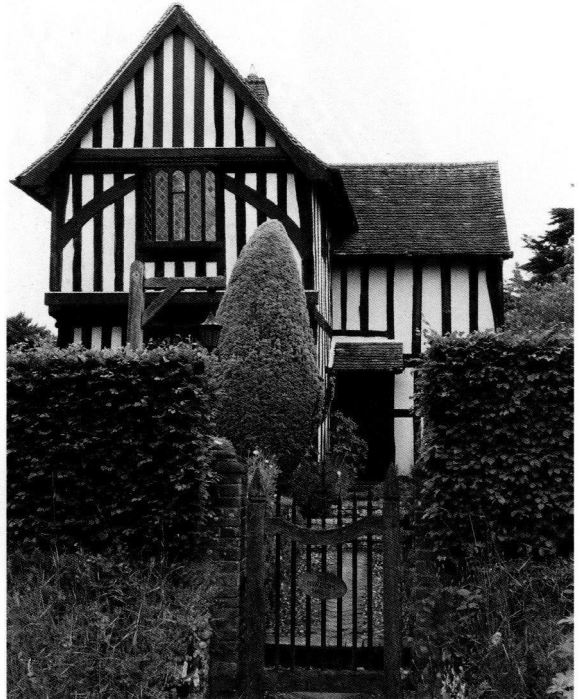


Fig. 2

Weaver's House, 2008, as re-erected in Walberswick by the architect Frank Jennings, and renamed The Mercer's Hall; listed Grade II in 1984.

Photograph 2008, author



Fig. 3

'The Old Tudor House' as an extension to the Manor House, Ashby St Ledgers (Northants.).

Photograph, Christopher Dalton

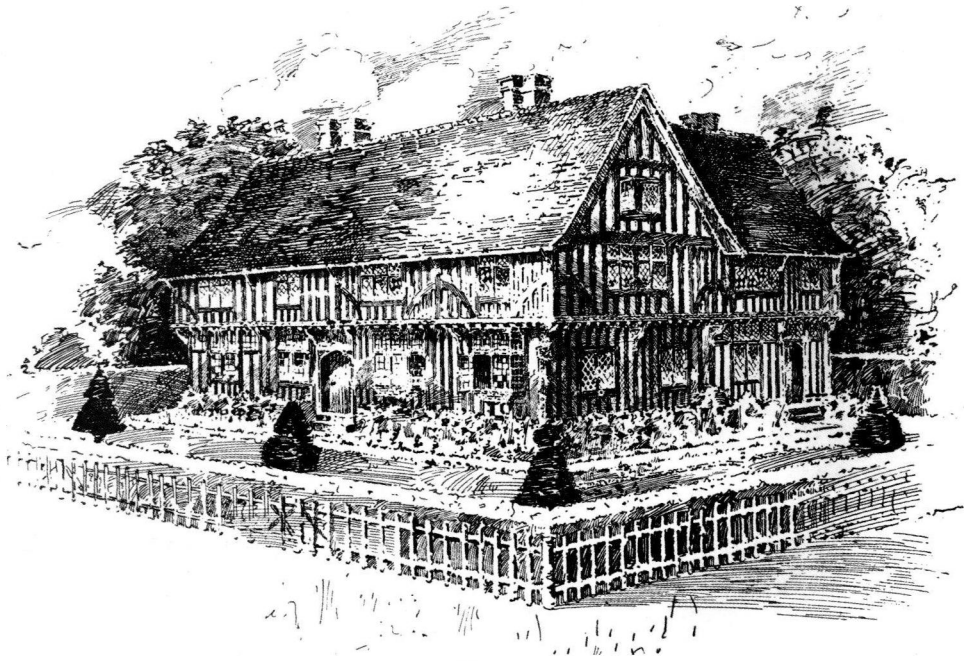


Fig. 4

'The Old Tudor House from Ipswich', shown in Gill & Reigate's display at the Franco-British Exhibition, White City, in 1908.

From Gill & Reigate's brochure



Fig. 5

'The Old Tudor House' in its original position on the corner of Carr Street and Cox Lane, Ipswich, shortly before its demolition in 1908.

From People and Places: a pictorial history (Ipswich & Norwich Co-op, 2000), page 29



Fig. 6

Sketch by J. A. Scheuermann (later Sherman) of the house from Hammond's Farm, Hawstead, as proposed to be rebuilt in Clacton-on-Sea (Essex), 1911.

Courtesy, Suffolk Record Office SROB: HD526/63/13



Fig. 7

The Moot Hall, Clacton-on-Sea (Essex), 2003, as rebuilt in 1911.

Photograph, author

council saying ‘it would be a great advantage to the town to have such an interesting building. It would be no use then talking of Clacton-on-Sea being only 30 years old. (Laughter.)’¹⁰ In Pevsner’s laconic phrase, the building acquired in the process of re-erection ‘a symmetry not originally its own’ (Fig. 7),¹¹ and this aspect of the work achieved some notoriety as the result of a court case in 1912 when the degree of fakery was revealed. The case arose because Frederick Tibbenham of Ipswich, ‘dealer in antiquities & works of art (wholesale)... & cabinet maker’,¹² who had discovered the house in 1910 being used as a barn and stable, had not been paid by J. H. Gill, to whom he had sold it on and for whom he had added or modified various features, including the staircase.¹³

Gill’s architect was an Ipswich man, J. A. Scheuermann, better known as Sherman, the name he adopted during the First World War.¹⁴ In 1911, he organised the removal of a house at Thwaite (known as High Low House), about fifteen miles north of Ipswich, to Greenwich (Connecticut), for the American architect, Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, who re-erected it there for his own occupation.¹⁵

THREAT TO THE WOOL HALL

It was against this background that residents of Lavenham became aware of proposals to demolish the Wool Hall (Fig. 8).¹⁶ The building in question dates from the 15th century and is widely believed to have been built as the guildhall of the Guild of Our Lady, one of four guildhalls in Lavenham, although its layout is more typical of a house than of a guildhall. It consisted of a central open hall with crown-post roof, and two gabled and



Fig. 8

The Wool Hall, Lavenham, from the south-east, 2011; compare Figure 12.

Photograph, author

jettied cross-wings projecting towards the street. The space between the cross-wings was filled with a third gable, probably in the late 17th century: there was a date, 1696, in the plasterwork. This may have marked its conversion to the Wool Hall, a function it seems to have performed in the 18th century, although clearly its role as a guildhall would have ceased at the Reformation.¹⁷ By the end of the 19th century it had been divided into three tenements: two cottages and a bakehouse (Fig. 9). In 1907, when the bakehouse closed, the property was bought by W. G. Probert of Bures, and the modern history of the building began.

Probert, who had served in the Boer War with the Suffolk Regiment, lived at Bevills (now Great Bevills), a farmhouse gentrified by the Waldegrave family in the late 15th century. Although Probert was a descendant of the Waldegraves, Bevills had not remained in the family, but was bought by Probert soon after his marriage in 1891 to Mary Baynes Badcock. In 1895–96 Probert engaged his wife's brother, Edward Baynes Badcock, to make a small addition to the house. It was not very successful and, in the words of Richard Hewlings, 'Probert's remaining efforts were dedicated to hiding it'. This he did in a thoroughly antiquarian manner, incorporating reused material from elsewhere; the work was substantially completed by 1928. Probert seems to have acted as his own architect, but, as will become clear, he knew professionals who were engaged in similar work and may well have sought their advice.¹⁸

Probert's reasons for buying the Wool Hall are not known, although his friend, the painter John Seymour Lucas, later said that he advised Probert to do so and that 'I have now further advised the removal and restoration'.¹⁹ There was immediate concern in Lavenham that it might be under threat, such that a local property owner, the Revd Henry Taylor, tried to buy it in order to preserve it.²⁰ Taylor (Fig. 10) was from 1907 the rector of Great Barton, but had begun his clerical career as curate of Lavenham in 1897. There he had the good fortune to marry, in 1900, Bertha Biddell, daughter of William Biddell of Lavenham Hall. William died later that year and Bertha was by this time his only surviving child, so Taylor found himself, in his own words, 'principal landowner in Lavenham'.²¹ After his marriage he went to Bury St Edmunds for a year as curate of St James's, returning to Lavenham, still as curate, until 1907. Even after going

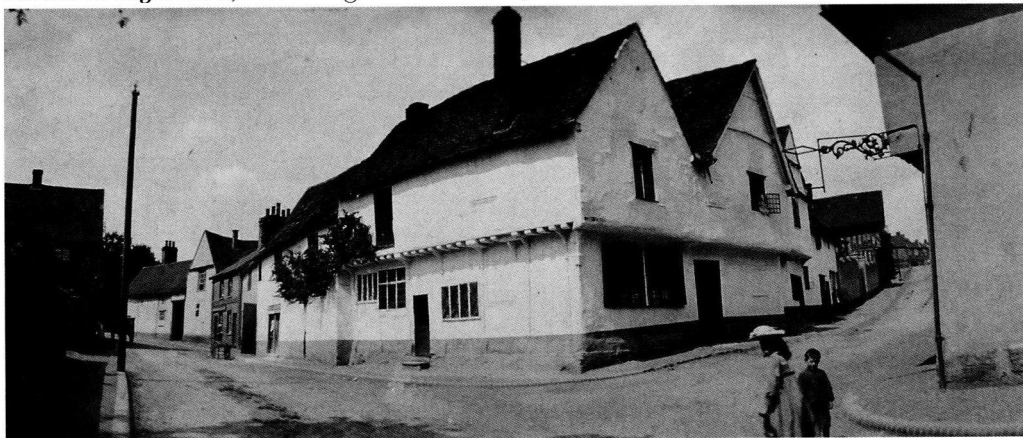


Fig. 9

The Wool Hall in 1904, apparently in a reasonable state of repair. Note the Weaver's House up the hill to its right.

Courtesy, Suffolk Record Office SROB: HD526/90/13(c)

to Great Barton much of his time seems to have been taken up with the problems of Lavenham's buildings and the housing of Lavenham's workers. As well as trying to buy the Wool Hall in 1907, he wanted to buy the Weaver's House that Jennings acquired for Walberswick 'to preserve it where it stood. I offered far more than what it made & cannot understand why I did not get it'.²²

Nothing further seems to have happened with the Wool Hall until the middle of 1912, when Probert sold it to George Springett, keeper of the Black Lion in Lavenham and 'a man who does not have the highest character in the village'.²³ At this point Taylor tried again to buy it, which elicited a letter from Sydney Seymour Lucas reminding Taylor of 'your promise to put the restoration of the case in my hands should you be successful in purchasing from Mr Springett'.²⁴ Sydney Seymour Lucas, son of Probert's friend John Seymour Lucas, is best known as a painter and illustrator, but also practised as an architect, describing himself to Taylor as 'really quite young

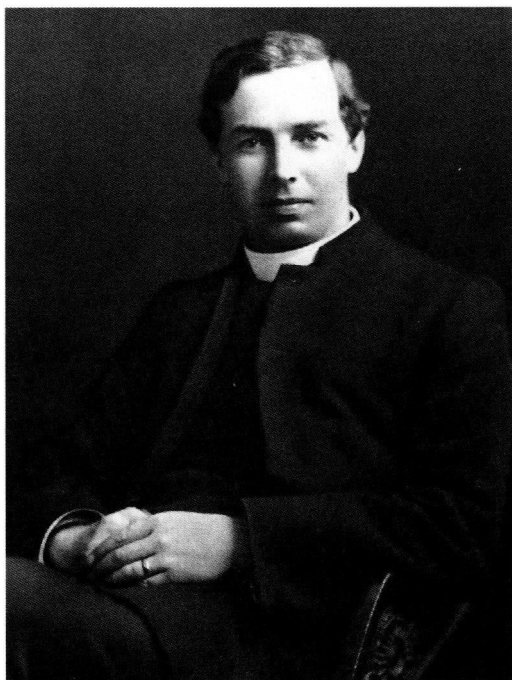


Fig. 10

The Revd Henry Taylor (1871-1915), rector of Great Barton 1907-15 and the leader of the campaign to save the Wool Hall.

Photograph, courtesy of Mary Wolton

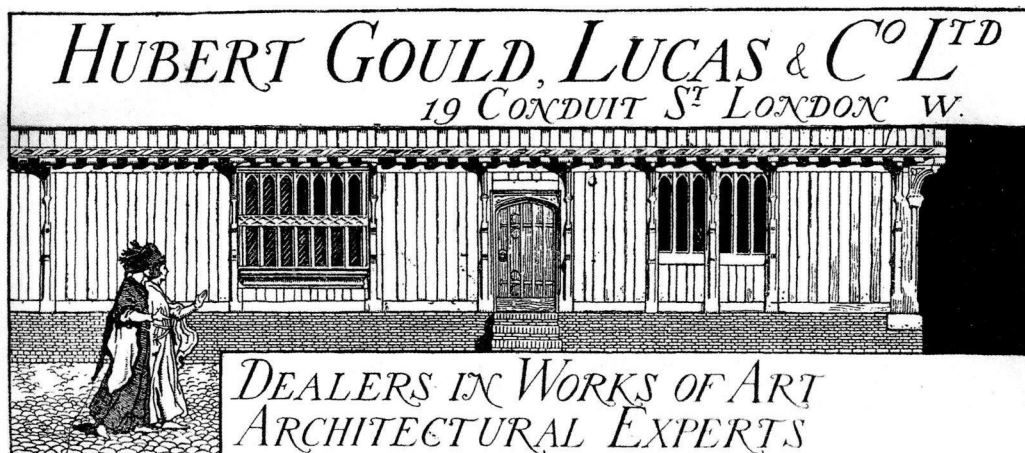


Fig. 11

Letterhead of Hubert Gould, Lucas & Co. Ltd, from a letter dated 17 February 1913.

Courtesy of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

The Wool Hall from the south-east: (a) before 1908 (Weaver's House is still standing further up Lady Street);
(b) and (c) during demolition in December 1912; and (d) after restoration by William Weir in 1913-14.

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Fig. 12a



Fig. 12b



Fig. 12c



Fig. 12d

in my profession'. He worked for Hubert Gould, Lucas & Co. Ltd, of Conduit Street, London, 'dealers in works of art' and 'architectural experts', a firm with which Frank Jennings was also associated (Fig. 11).²⁵ John Seymour Lucas was himself involved in this world.²⁶ From about 1901 he restored and enlarged The Priory, Blythburgh, a modest 17th-century timber-framed house, on to which he built an extension (including a jettied and gabled two-storey porch), reusing a 15th-century timber frame from Saffron Walden (Essex), as well as a room interior from the same town.²⁷ Further additions were made after 1911, and it is highly likely that either Sydney Seymour Lucas or Frank Jennings were involved with this work.

Sydney Seymour Lucas was not employed by Henry Taylor, but he was employed by the new owner of the Wool Hall. Early in December 1912 Bertha Taylor wrote to a friend at Beccles, Mrs B. C. Barrett:

We are nearly boiling over with grief & indignation because one of the principal corner old timbered houses in Lavenham is being taken to pieces to be removed. We have been wishing to buy it but unknown to us it has fallen into the hands of an innkeeper of very 2nd rate reputation. For some weeks Mr Seymour Lucas & various architects have been sketching measuring etc. the whole affair has been shrouded in mystery, no one would reveal who was the instigator of all this.²⁸

Mrs Barrett, a member of the SPAB, forwarded Bertha Taylor's letter to the Society, but by this time they were already aware of the situation, because Henry Taylor had sent to them, on 9 December, a photograph of the building taken by Charles Abbott, who himself had sent others separately (Figs 12, 13).²⁹ Both were following the advice of the architect Basil Oliver, then still with an address in Sudbury, where his family were brewers, although he had set up practice in London in 1910.³⁰ Oliver, who had recently joined the committee of the SPAB, acted as something of an *éminence grise* in the affair of the Wool Hall, in which he took a close interest. 1912 saw the publication of his book, *Old Houses and Village Buildings in East Anglia, Norfolk, Suffolk, & Essex*, which had a photograph of Lavenham Guildhall as its frontispiece. In it he comments on the current 'craze for antiques' that had led to the removal of woodwork from old houses, specifically mentioning 'the ridiculous re-erection of a genuine timber-framed yeoman's house of the 15th century (from the neighbourhood of Bury St Edmunds) on the front of an east-coast seaside resort', which clearly refers to the Hawstead house moved to Clacton in 1911.³¹

THE GROWING PROTEST

Meanwhile Taylor had, on 2 December, written letters to the *Bury Post* and *Essex and Suffolk News*, published on 6 and 7 December respectively. In these letters he 'asked for your powerful assistance to try and stop the destruction of the beauty of our Suffolk villages'. He showed, not for the last time, a tendency to be intemperate in his language. 'Next week, if you will allow me, I will send for publication, in the thickest and blackest type you possess, the names of all parties concerned in the destruction of a beautiful building in Lavenham'; and in the *Bury Post* letter he continued, 'It is now being marked by a Suffolk architect of good standing in the county, who has already robbed the village of one of its old timber houses'.³² This drew an immediate response from Rye & Eyre, solicitors of Golden Square, London, objecting to 'a most serious reflection on the character of Mr

Jennings, and likely to cause him very serious injury in his profession', and threatening Taylor with an injunction. The *Bury Post* warned Taylor that they would be unable to publish any further letters from him containing derogatory statements, and it is hardly surprising that when Taylor wrote to Jennings on 11 December, asking him to 'tell me by return of post who has bought the house & where it is going', it was Rye & Eyre who replied declining any further communication.³³

For the question of who was behind the 'taking to pieces' of the Wool Hall was by no means clear at this stage, although as early as 9 December Taylor drafted a letter to Princess Louise 'about an old timber house at Lavenham in Suffolk which is now being moved to your estate... We earnestly beg you to stop the outrage in our lovely village & county. We cannot believe that you are aware of such vandalism...' ³⁴ His wife Bertha, in the letter forwarded by Mrs Barrett to the SPAB on 10 December, says that:

the work of demolishing is begun, the tiles are being taken off the roof & now it has leaked out that the whole building is to be removed to Princess Louise's estate in Kent... I cannot believe that any member of our Royal Family would so outrage the feelings of all lovers of antiquity & take one of the greater treasures of our picturesque village.

Mrs Barrett, in her covering letter, speculated hopefully, 'Is it Princess Louise of Schleswig-Holstein perhaps who is mentioned and not the Duchess of Argyll?' ³⁵ But it was the Duchess of Argyll (whose estate was not in Kent, but on the Surrey-Berkshire border), and confirmation of this caused a good deal of surprise, and created a particular problem for the SPAB.

Princess Louise was the sixth of Queen Victoria's nine children. Her biographer described her as 'Queen Victoria's unconventional daughter', ³⁶ and that is how she is generally perceived. Of particular relevance to this story are her artistic interests. She was taught modelling by Mary Thornycroft, and attended the National Art Training School, Kensington. She later studied sculpture under Edgar Boehm (her presence in his studio when he died suddenly in 1890 gave rise to gossip), and her own works include a seated figure of Queen Victoria in Kensington Gardens and the Colonial Forces Boer War Memorial in St Paul's Cathedral, London. ³⁷ E. W. Godwin designed a studio for her in the grounds of Kensington Palace. ³⁸

Her links with the architectural world were strengthened by her marriage in 1871 to the marquess of Lorne, later 9th duke of Argyll. Her husband's sister, Lady Frances Campbell, married the architect Eustace Balfour, who was in partnership with Hugh Thackeray Turner. Both Balfour and Turner were involved with the SPAB, Balfour as one of the first committee members and an honorary secretary, and Turner the actual secretary. In 1911 Balfour died, and Turner took into partnership A. R. Powys, who the same year succeeded Turner as secretary of the SPAB. Turner then became chairman. ³⁹ Princess Louise was thus part of this small world and, indeed, was herself a member of the SPAB. Furthermore, she was one of the first vice-presidents of the National Trust, becoming president in 1902. This helps to explain why Bertha Taylor and Mrs Barrett were reluctant to believe that Princess Louise might be involved in what was happening to the Wool Hall.

The question of how or why she came to be involved at Lavenham is the result of a parallel trail of connections. In 1896 Princess Louise commissioned the young Edwin

Lutyens to make additions to the Ferry Inn, Rosneath, where the duke of Argyll had a secondary residence. Lutyens had come to the Princess's notice through Gertrude Jekyll, the gardener with whom Lutyens collaborated on a number of projects. There was a great rapport between Lutyens and the Princess, and the project helped Lutyens in his career, but the Princess 'wanted a technician who would execute her designs rather than his own ideas'. So when, in 1901, she wanted further work done at Rosneath, and also to Kent House on the Isle of Wight, she turned to another architect, Baynes Badcock. This considerably upset Lutyens, not simply because he had lost a commission that he might have expected to receive, but because it was through him that the Princess knew of Badcock. Badcock was Lutyens' extremely unsatisfactory partner ('sleeping partner', Lutyens called him, 'a chattering conceited cad, to put it mildly!') from 1898 to 1901. Moreover, the Princess met and greatly liked Badcock's young and pretty wife, Ethel, whom she 'adopted... as an unofficial lady and companion'.⁴⁰

In 1903, when staying *en famille* with the Badcocks, the Princess met Captain (as he then was) Probert, who, as we have seen, was married to Badcock's sister. In spite of his lack of relevant experience, the Princess appointed Probert to her household, initially to help with correspondence; in 1908 he was appointed her comptroller and equerry.⁴¹ The Princess's connections were now all in place: to the SPAB through her brother-in-law Eustace Balfour, and to Lavenham through her equerry, Captain Probert (Colonel in 1912) via Baynes Badcock, his brother-in-law and her architect.

When A. R. Powys first heard about the threat to the Wool Hall he had no idea that Princess Louise was involved. On 11 December he wrote a letter to *Country Life*, drawing readers' attention to 'the wanton destruction of old houses which is now in progress at Lavenham'. He mentioned the Weaver's House re-erected at Walberswick; 'now, at the moment of writing, a still finer house, dating from the fifteenth century, is actually being dismantled in order that it may be erected elsewhere, on some site which may be most unsuited to it. At present its destination is unknown.'⁴² The decision to send the letter was taken on 12 December by the SPAB committee, who 'were all very indignant'. It was further decided that the secretary should write to the local press, and also to Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, a committee member and active conservationist, asking him to write to *The Times*.⁴³

Meanwhile the Wool Hall was being dismantled (Figs 12, 13). H. C. Steed, Taylor's agent at Lavenham Hall Estate Office, reported on 12 December, 'Men recommenced pulling down this afternoon'. The roof was being stripped of its tiles, which were being loaded on to trucks and taken away by road. Taylor's allies in Lavenham followed the trucks and that evening one of them, R. Fayers (or Faiers), sent a telegram from Epping (Essex), saying that the destination was 'Escort' near Windsor Castle. On 14 December Steed wrote to Taylor from Sunningdale (Berks.), saying that he had travelled to Ascot with Fayers. 'We tried everywhere but no one knew of any estate near Ascot belonging to the Duchess of Argyle [*sic*]. Eventually, 'after making a lot of enquiries', the trail led to a house called Ribsdon at Windlesham (Surrey), although they got there before the tiles: 'saw a man who had been sent from Lavenham to unload tiles & he told me they had not arrived & he could not understand the reason why'. Reporting on his visit, Steed said, 'it is certain the Duchess of Argyle has purchased the old Lavenham House. I find



Fig. 13a



Fig. 13b

The Wool Hall from the north, looking down Lady Street with Water Street and Lavenham Priory in the background: (a) during demolition and (b) partially restored.

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a large house was pulled down for the express purpose of putting the Lavenham one in its place.' The architect for the replacement house was Sydney Seymour Lucas.⁴⁴

Taylor wrote with an increasing sense of urgency to Powys on Monday 16 December: first a telegram ('House nearly all down destination Princess Louise Ribsden Windlesham Sunningdale Please act immediately Taylor') and then a letter:

It is absolutely necessary that at once somebody with authority steps in to see Princess Louise. It will all be down by Thursday.

I am told another house at Boxford just by Lavenham is also being pulled down & for the same purposes. Part of this one was only built on to it a short time ago so that the Princess is being absolutely deceived in this case. But I have no definite knowledge of this.

I have found out all about the Lavenham house. At the Princess' estate Ribsden, Windlesham, Ascot she has about 60 acres of land and a house. This has been pulled down for the erection of the Lavenham house or probably a few more from Suffolk...⁴⁵

That same day Powys wrote to the Princess's equerry, enclosing the draft of a letter to the *Suffolk and Essex Free Press*, saying that the Society had refrained from sending the letter when it learnt that Princess Louise was the purchaser of the house, and believing that 'if Her Royal Highness, who is herself a member of this Society, understood the exact facts of the case she would not wish to move this ancient house from Lavenham'.⁴⁶

Taylor's next step was to organise a meeting 'to protest against the removal of our beautiful ancient buildings' and get people to sign a petition; 'we may yet save the Lady Street Corner'. It was to be held in the school on Thursday 19 December: 'Ladies are invited to be present' (Fig. 14).⁴⁷ As part of the build-up to this he wrote letters to a number of people, with varying degrees of success. Prince Frederick Duleep Singh was sympathetic ('ALL East Anglian Antiquarians are indebted to you for bringing the matter forward & for the energetic steps you have taken') and hoped to attend the meeting.⁴⁸ E. James, who seems to have been on close terms with Duleep Singh (whom he refers to as 'Prince Freddy') as well as Taylor, was more outspoken:

I quite anticipated that most of your half-timber houses would be carted to the States, because the American folk have no feelings

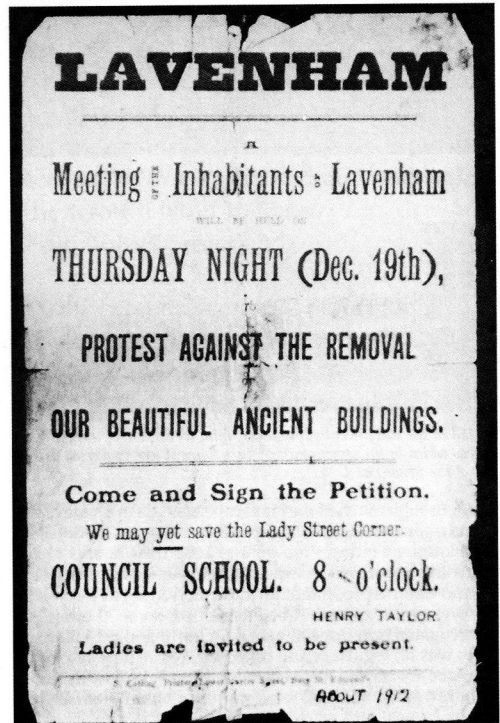


Fig. 14

Poster for the protest meeting planned for 19 December 1912 but not in fact held. Note that 'ladies are invited to be present'.

Photograph, C. Jennings, The Identity of Suffolk, page 17

on the matter, but that Princess Louise & Probert should be guilty of such vandalism surprises me... I always knew that Probert was a friend of Seymour Lucas-Johnson [*sic*]... I gather from your letter there's not much chance of staying the removal of the present house, of which you write, but I do hope we can rouse public opinion sufficiently to stop future sales, at any rate to people in this country. One would have thought the revelations at the court, when the Clacton house case was on, sufficient to deter anyone restoring half-timber houses, so much faking & so many additions were needed in the reerection, the thing could not afterwards be looked upon as a relic of antiquity... Of course Probert has undertaken the work for the Princess, who would not be likely to answer your letters.⁴⁹

Others were more circumspect. Sir Cuthbert Quilter, who lived at Methersgate Hall, near Woodbridge, but was the local M.P., offered to 'write Probert a private letter as I know him very well', but was able to see both sides of the situation: 'all I can really do in the matter is simply to ask him to use his influence with H.R.H. – One cannot interfere with the liberty of the subject, but no one deplores the destruction of ancient monuments more than I do... All I think that we can hope for is that no further damage may be done.'⁵⁰ The marquess of Bristol, writing from Ickworth, did not think a letter from him would carry much weight; 'surely the person principally to blame (if blame is attributable) is the person who sold these hereditaments without seeing that they would not be removed from the locality'.⁵¹

Others were positively hostile. John Seymour Lucas wrote a letter from which it is clear that he was very much involved in the whole business:

I understand from my Son [Sydney Seymour Lucas] that you are interesting yourself, in an old house at Lavenham, and having advised a friend of mine some years ago to acquire the property, solely on account of the fact that it was owing to neglect, rapidly falling to pieces, I would like to give you my views, not only as an Antiquary, but also as a Member of the National Trust for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings.

My friends and I agree that it is always a matter of regret when old buildings are moved, particularly if they are sent out of the Country but in this case force of circumstances, to wit, the state of the structure, which is now practically worn out, the sanitary condition – and position, render it impossible to retain and preserve the building on the present site.

As a lover of old buildings, however, you may rest assured that the house will be very faithfully preserved, in fact a very large sum will be expended on its restoration to its original condition, and that course would be a matter of impossibility at Lavenham.

Lucas then made a very pointed remark, calculated to undermine Taylor's position:

Looking at the position all round, I feel sure you will agree with me that there is no alternative than the one decided on, and you will yourself remember that some few years ago, no doubt with equal reluctance, you had to take down your old Elizabethan Farm House, Nether Hall.

No further information is given concerning this matter, which was undoubtedly raised with the purpose of embarrassing Taylor: the story was soon circulating in the village that he was 'supposed to have pulled down an old building' and he found it necessary, later in the proceedings, to explain to Basil Oliver what had happened to Nether Hall, a farm at Little Waldingfield.⁵² Lucas continued:

You will further, I am certain, agree with me that in these cases, it is far better to move and retain, than to allow buildings of Architectural or Historical interest, to fall into

decay and so perish, and this I am sure would have been the inevitable fate of the house referred to, and it was on this account that I advised my friend to purchase, and that I have now further advised the removal and restoration.

Other houses in Lavenham have as you know, been allowed to fall into a sad state of disrepair, particularly the very beautiful Guildhall which as you will recollect, was restored with great care by the late Sir Cuthbert Quilter, and I have little doubt that the same would happen with the house the subject of this letter.

It was I know a great grief to my old friend Sir Cuthbert Quilter to find the inhabitants of Lavenham, so unappreciative of his lovely old house, and it was also a matter of sorrow both to him and to me, when they allowed the building at the side of the house now being moved, to fall into such an absolute state of decay.

The building was in a lamentable state, but luckily someone of taste acquired the old materials, and restored it on another site in Suffolk.⁵³

There was much here for Taylor to respond to, and the draft of his reply is seething. 'Your remark about the Guildhall is quite beside the mark. The late Sir C. Q. only restored the back of it & I worked in it for 15 years with clubs for girls and boys. We appealed to him time after time to restore the front but he always refused. The danger apparent to the eye is the result of builders' neglect & damage of time & weather.' Taylor was right; the Guildhall was partially restored and extended to the rear by J. S. Corder soon after Quilter bought it in 1887. The remainder was not restored until 1913, for the second Sir Cuthbert, who inherited in 1911. The restoration, by Kemp & How, was deplored by the SPAB and was the subject of a scathing letter to *Country Life* by Basil Oliver.⁵⁴ 'The other house you mention (now removed to Walberswick) I tried to buy over & over again to preserve it where it stood', as we have already seen. As for the Wool Hall:

I tried to purchase it from [Major Probert] many years ago but felt it was safe in the hands of a gentleman... We know the old house is going to P.L.'s estate at Windlesham. I have organised a petition to her R.H. pressing our point – she will act as Royal people do & restore it to our village... May I appeal to your better nature to do what you can in your influential position to stop this vandalism.⁵⁵

THE BEGINNINGS OF A SOLUTION

It was becoming apparent to those in high places that there was the danger of a great deal of embarrassment being caused to various parties. Thackeray Turner, chairman of the SPAB, started looking for a way out of the Society's predicament by writing to Canon H. D. Rawnsley, one of the co-founders and honorary secretary of the National Trust.⁵⁶ 'A somewhat awkward thing has happened', he wrote. It was not just that 'great indignation has been expressed locally and the Society appealed to'. There was a further particular cause of potential embarrassment. The SPAB was supporting the Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Bill that was then going through Parliament, a bill that had been prompted by the proposal, in 1911, to dismantle Tattershall Castle (Lincs.) and ship at least part of it to America.⁵⁷ As Turner wrote to Rawnsley, 'it is a most injudicious action on her Highness' part to purchase the building for it is just such action which the present bill before Parliament is aiming at stopping... I believe you know Her Highness

well & it has occurred to me that you may be able to point out to her how very unpopular such action must necessarily be.⁵⁸ One of those closely involved in the passage of the bill, incidentally, was the earl of Plymouth, who wrote a letter to Taylor that accompanied John Seymour Lucas's of 14 December and took very much the same line.⁵⁹

Rawnsley did as he was asked and wrote to the Princess. A number of letters from him to Taylor show how hard he worked behind the scenes to understand fully what had happened and to find a solution. 'It is clear as daylight the Princess has been ill-advised & misinformed by her architect', he wrote. 'Certainly you were not well treated – & I cannot understand why there was this apparent misleading of the destruction & secrecy. All I am sure of is that the Princess knew nothing about it & has been very badly served by her friends and agents.'⁶⁰

Before a long-term solution could be found, however, there was still the matter of the public meeting planned for Thursday 19 December. The day before, F. G. Rye of the solicitors Rye & Eyre came down to Lavenham ' & offered negotiations. They promised to stop any further work on the house if we postponed the meeting', which is precisely what happened.⁶¹ There also seems to have been an understanding that nothing further should appear in the press, but unfortunately that same day Powys's letter was published in the *East Anglian Daily Times* and the *Suffolk and Essex Free Press*;⁶² and his letter to *Country Life*, which, because of the delay, he assumed was not going to be published, appeared on 28 December. There was also a short piece in the *East Anglian Daily Times* on 21 December, based on information supplied by Taylor, in which it is said that the house 'passed through the hands of one or two people before it reached those of the firm of Herbert Gould & Co. [*sic*], who, it is presumed sold it to the owner of the estate on which it is to be re-erected'. It continues:

After the facts which came to light in the recent trial about the Clacton house, of the additions and facings required to make these re-erected houses of any use, they can no longer be considered "ancient," and all their history has vanished. It is time that some steps were taken which will put a stop to a course which one day will be bitterly regretted.⁶³

The story and accompanying photograph found their way, in due course, into the *Architects' and Builders' Journal*.⁶⁴

Rye's proposal was that the owner (never named in his letters to Taylor) was prepared to sell the Wool Hall to a local purchaser or purchasers on condition that 'they undertook to faithfully restore [it] to its original condition'. The sum named was £1200, 'to clear the owner's outlay (including the cost of the materials now at Ribsden)'.⁶⁵ Taylor's response to this was that there was no one locally in a position to pay the price that was being asked.

I was willing to purchase the old house many years ago & the owner at that time was fully aware of my views & wishes for its preservation. If he will put it back in its original state (as when he bought it) I will give the price he then gave for it £500. I shall then deal with it as I think fit & can promise you faithfully that it will not be removed... On the other hand if the present owner could see a way to present it to the village as a Guildhall I will be responsible for the furnishing and upkeep (a most popular gift to working people)... L is a place of 2000 people all working men & women. There is no squire & nobody of means. The manufacturers whom you saw are the great employers of labour & their capital is locked up in their business.⁶⁶

Rye was surprised that Lavenham could not find the difference between the £500 that Taylor was personally offering, and the £1200 asked for, and rejected Taylor's alternative proposals.⁶⁷ Taylor held his ground, saying there was

no further advance in the prospect of raising the £1200 for the L ruin. The people all along have been outraged by the action of the various owners. It has all been done so secretly & in spite of our interest that we find it impossible to persuade ourselves that we ought to pay the damage. I have just found my letter from Col Probert in 1907 in reply to my protest at that date when the removal of the house was 1st suggested.

If the authorities had listened to me then all this damage would not have taken place. I was willing then to purchase at the price then given. I cannot now be expected to give four times that price to pay for all the needless expenditure.⁶⁸

Taylor explained his position to Powys:

[Rye] has the idea that Lavenham is rich & willing to buy back the house at the cost for all they have wasted. Please disabuse his mind of that. The place is as poor as poor can be. Anything that is raised must be done by me & after the shabby treatment I have received from the very first from the various agents in the matter I do not feel inclined to do much. May I say I have just signed a cheque for £1019 and another £400 is due in a few days to purchase other places in Lavenham upon which this group have designs. You will understand that I cannot afford to add to this simply to pay for the stupid damage these people have committed in spite of our protests.

I think if the S.P.A.B. Committee put the case strongly before Mr Rye he will see the building restored & given to the Village as a Guildhall or working men's club. I hope the Committee will not allow themselves to be walked over by this clever lawyer – that Lavenham does not love its buildings – that they take no care of them – that they can afford to pay for them. We could indeed before this wanton damage was committed.

He added as a postscript, 'After all this I shall wish to be a Life Member of the SPAB'.⁶⁹ The other buildings he mentioned having bought probably include the houses opposite the Wool Hall, Nos. 10–11 Lady Street, sometimes known as the Tudor Shops, which he did buy in order to save them from demolition.⁷⁰

Rye may reasonably have felt that he was getting nowhere with Taylor, and concentrated instead on the SPAB, writing a conciliatory letter to Powys on 28 December:

I can assure you that there was no intention whatever of committing an act of vandalism, but instead the owner, who is a great lover of old buildings, was anxious to faithfully restore the building, and it was with that object that part of it was taken down, and sent to her Estate in Surrey. Other buildings in Lavenham have in the past been damaged by the inhabitants, and as this was so, the owner was advised by her Architects and others that the proper course to adopt with a view to safeguarding the old building was to remove the structure, and faithfully restore it to its original condition, but on another site.

At the same time Rye was concerned that no more letters should be written to the press, 'the more especially as the owner's intentions have been approved by Lord Plymouth, Mr Seymour Lucas R.A. and others' – to which Powys readily agreed.⁷¹

Meanwhile Canon Rawnsley was continuing to work behind the scenes, together with Philip Norman, 'whose opinion carries great weight on my [SPAB] Committee'.⁷² On 2 January 1913 Rawnsley wrote to Powys:

Sir Robert agrees with me in thinking that it will be most important that we should have the opinion both of Mr Weir and generally about the possibility of putting back the old Guild Hall or Wool Hall at Lavenham at the strictly confidential meeting that is being called for next Friday week by wish of HRH Princess Louise, of which you will have notice tomorrow. I think Mr Weir has been down to Lavenham if he has not will you ask him to go and will you also make it convenient to go down.

‘Sir Robert’ is Sir Robert Hunter, another of the co-founders of the National Trust and chairman of the executive committee,⁷³ and ‘Mr Weir’ is the architect William Weir, a committee member of the SPAB who did much work on their behalf and, later, for the National Trust.⁷⁴ In fact Weir visited Lavenham on 6 January and reported to Powys on the condition of the Wool Hall (Figs 15, 16):

I found the building practically dismantled down to the first floor level and exposed to the wet. All the main timbers are numbered for refixing & could be put together without a lot of trouble...

The roofs were covered with hand-made tiles of which some are stored in the building, and I was informed that two truck loads have been sent away to Walberswick [sic].

I consider the cost of re-erecting and repairing the dismantled portion would amount to the sum of £250, and to put the lower portion in repair a further sum of £250 would be necessary.

At present there are no floors of any use at the ground level, and the timber work & plaster filling require a lot of repair.

The later addition to the centre portion facing Lady Street is poorly constructed, and it might well be removed with advantage to the appearance of the original building.⁷⁵

At this point, according to Basil Oliver, the SPAB decided on ‘having a rest while negotiations are going on’. At the committee’s meeting on 9 January he found that ‘there seems to be a distinct “back-peddalling” going on in high quarters over the Lavenham house & I only regret it didn’t take place sooner... It was decided to “wait & see”’. At the following meeting, on 16 January, ‘the Lavenham houses did not come up for consideration’.⁷⁶

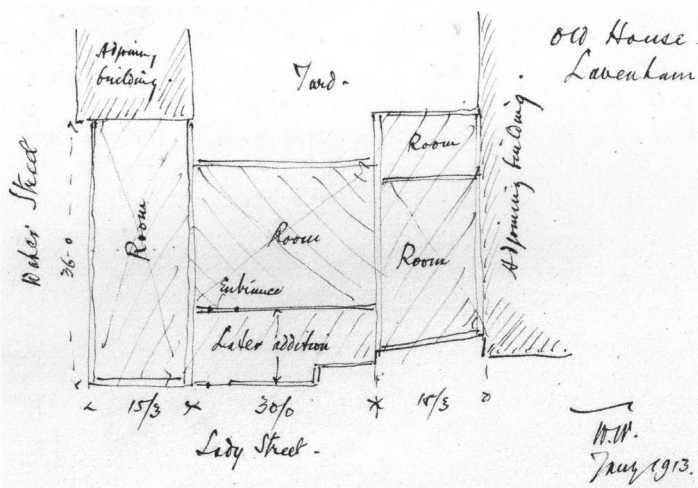


Fig. 15

Sketch plan of the Wool Hall by William Weir, 1913. Note the ‘later addition’ between the cross-wings that was omitted by Weir in his rebuilding.

Courtesy of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings



Fig. 16

The interior of the Wool Hall, December 1912, showing the timbers numbered before being dismantled. The floor, probably inserted in the 16th century, was not reinstated as part of Weir's restoration.

Taylor Papers

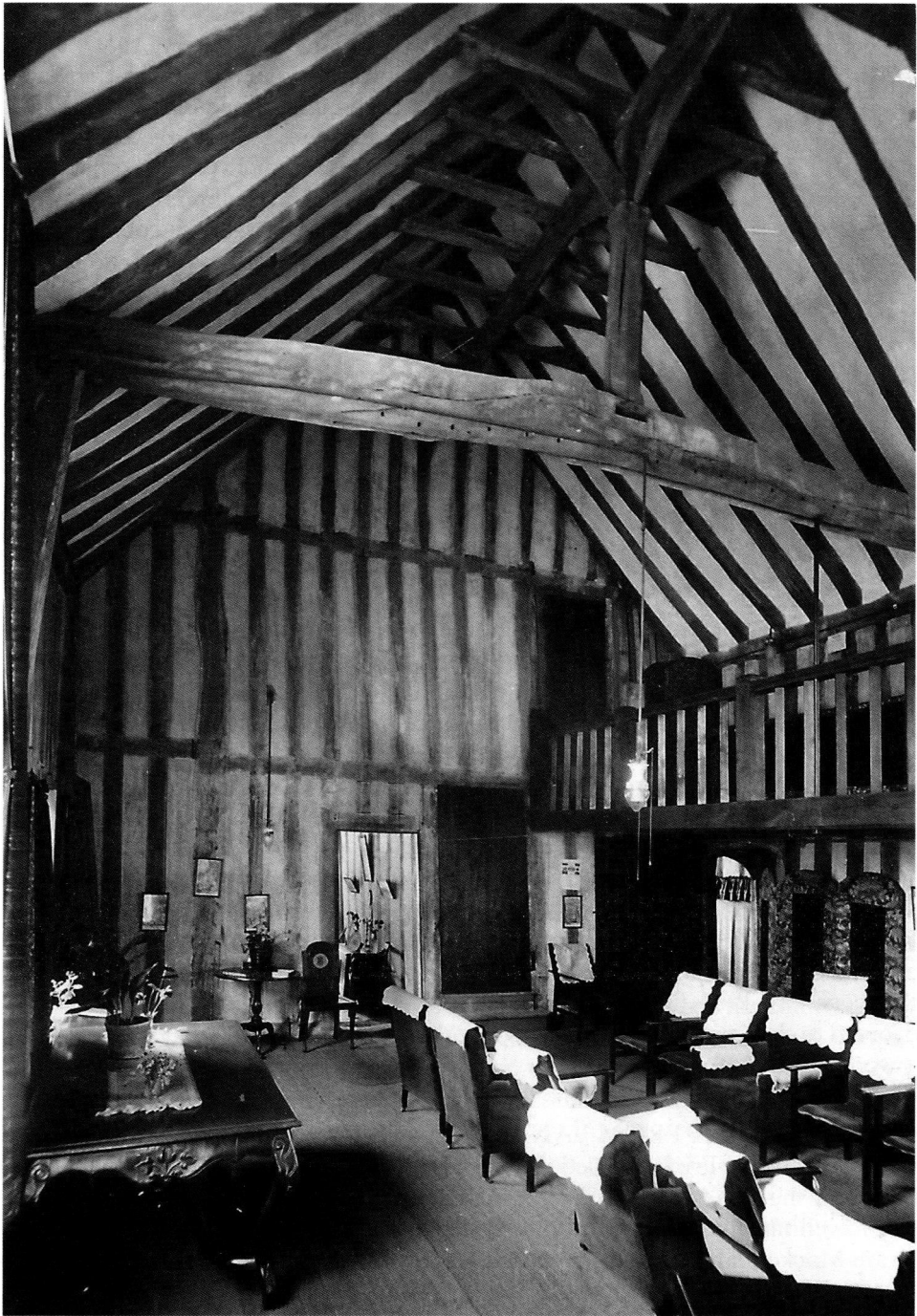


Fig. 17

The interior of the Wool Hall during its time as a convalescent home for railway women. The gallery on the right was introduced by Weir to improve internal circulation, and was removed when the hall became part of the Swan Hotel.

Taylor Papers

THE WOOL HALL SAVED

What everyone was waiting for was the 'strictly confidential meeting' that was being set up by Canon Rawnsley. This finally took place on 31 January 1913 at the National Trust's office in Victoria Street, London. Powys was invited by the secretary of the Trust, S. H. Hamer, to attend 'a small private Conference of those interested in the question of the Wool Hall'.⁷⁷ The outcome of this, as Powys reported to Taylor, was that Princess Louise was to be advised to reinstate the building and then offer it for sale to the National Trust; the work of reinstatement should be offered to Weir, working in conjunction with Sydney Seymour Lucas. 'I expect that even when we have instructions to do this work, if we get them, that we shall be asked to do the work without mentioning for whom.'⁷⁸ Basil Oliver passed a similar account to Taylor:

a resolution was passed to the effect that the National Trust would take over the Lavenham building (for use as a club I believe) if H.R.H. would rebuild it as it used to be... This result, which I think you will agree is very satisfactory, has been largely brought about by the united efforts of Canon Rawnsley & Dr Philip Norman FSA... The people of Lavenham & everyone interested in it indeed owe you a debt of gratitude.⁷⁹

There is no indication in either Taylor's papers or the SPAB files whether or not Taylor found the outcome satisfactory; there was certainly some continuing local dissatisfaction. Canon Rawnsley learnt to his dismay 'that a very grievous lampoon... had been posted in the village & I think also what seemed to reflect on Col Probert & those who had employment about the house... As regards [Probert] he is certainly a straight man & an honourable one but he was in such a position that he could not answer your question...'.⁸⁰ The Wool Hall was restored by William Weir in the course of 1913-14,⁸¹ although it is not clear whether Lucas worked with him; it seems unlikely that there would have been much agreement between them as to how to go about such a project. The restoration was paid for by Princess Louise, as agreed, but the building did not then come to the National Trust. Instead, she handed it over in 1915 to Mrs Bruce Culver, wife of the secretary of the Railwaymen's Convalescent Homes, for use as a home for railway women, becoming formally one of the Railway Convalescent Homes in 1921 (Fig. 17). Originally intended principally for wives of railwaymen, it was increasingly occupied by female railway staff, whose numbers grew considerably during the First World War. The home closed in 1961, its end hastened by the closure of Lavenham Station to passengers in that year.⁸² In 1964-65 the Wool Hall was incorporated in the Swan Hotel, adapted and joined to the original hotel buildings by the architect for Trust House Hotels, James Hopwood (Fig. 18).⁸³

PRINCESS LOUISE: FROM VANDAL TO SAVIOUR

The story of how the Princess saved the Wool Hall was soon known locally, but not the full story of how she came to be involved. There seem to have been no hard feelings towards her in Lavenham. When she came to unveil the statue of Thomas Gainsborough by Bertram Mackennal in Sudbury in June 1913, she arrived by train at Lavenham Station and was presented with a bouquet by Taylor's youngest daughter Betty, while her three sisters Molly, Hilda and Ruth strewed flowers in the Princess's path.⁸⁴ She did not stop to inspect the Wool Hall, and was taken off by car to Brettenham Park for lunch with the

lord lieutenant, Sir Courtenay Warner. Soon, however, she was being hailed as the Wool Hall's rescuer, with no hint that she had, for a time, been the client for whom it was being destroyed. In December 1918, a 'fancy fair' was held at the Wool Hall to raise funds for the home to buy a piano. Readers of the *Suffolk and Essex Free Press* were reminded that

the Princess generously purchased the Hall, and under the deft hands of Mr William Weir, the restoration and renovation have been admirably carried out, though all the ancient features were retained. In this sequestered spot it forms an ideal home of rest, for which the women will ever feel grateful to the beneficent, large hearted Princess.⁸⁵

Powys, on the other hand, seemed to consider himself bound by the vow of secrecy he agreed to in 1913. The SPAB's 1919 annual report published a photograph of the restored Wool Hall, stating simply that 'the lady who so generously preserved the house... has placed the building at the disposal of the Railway Workers' Homes'.⁸⁶ When *The Times*, in August 1933, published a photograph of the Wool Hall under the headline 'Unspoilt East Anglia', Powys (still secretary of the SPAB) took the opportunity of writing to the paper to point out the part the Society had played in preserving the building, with due acknowledgement of Taylor's actions; although his memory was slightly at fault when he spoke of 'traction engines that were carrying the timbers away' – nothing at the time indicated that more than roof tiles were removed. Without naming her, he wrote how 'the generous owner restored it under our advice to its original place', and went on to point out two morals: first, that 'it is a shameful thing to buy and destroy old buildings, thinking that to build them elsewhere is to preserve them', and second, that the SPAB 'deserves a much greater public support than it has'.⁸⁷ Only in 1939, after the death of Princess Louise, was it thought appropriate to acknowledge her role. On 13 December a letter was published in *The Times* signed by F. W. Troup, hon. secretary of the SPAB, but drafted by Basil Oliver. This letter set out, for the first time, 'to give the full story of the Wool Hall and the reasons for her Royal Highness's public-spirited action':

It is the unusual one of a building totally demolished, taken away, but happily brought back and re-erected on its original site.

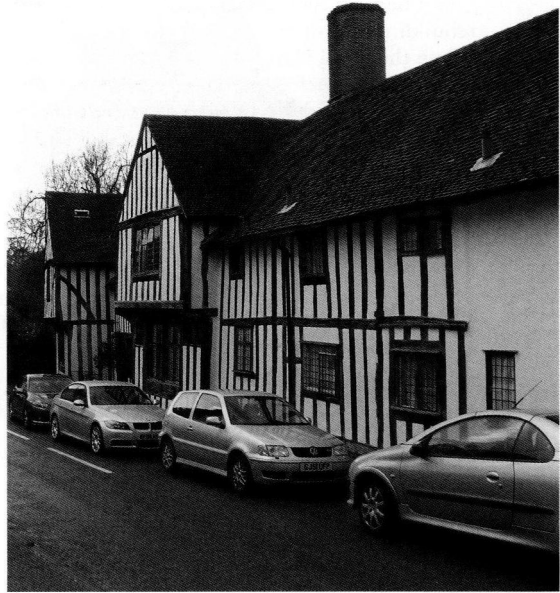


Fig. 18
The Wool Hall from the north, 2012;
compare Figure 13.
Photograph, author

For some time prior to 1913 the local inhabitants – and indeed Suffolk people generally – had become increasingly concerned about the sale of medieval timbered houses for rebuilding elsewhere (*e.g.*, at Walberswick, Suffolk, and on the front at Clacton-on-Sea). When the Wool Hall fell a victim to this form of vandalism the late Rev. Henry Taylor – who did so much to preserve Lavenham – discovered, with difficulty, who had bought the house. He did this by hiring cyclists to follow the lorries carting away the numbered timbers to a then unknown destination. These men tracked them all the way to Ascot, Berks, where, it was discovered, Princess Louise then had a cottage. To this it was proposed to add the Lavenham building.

Armed with this information, the late Dr Philip Norman FSA, a member of the committee, saw the Princess, who was so horrified when she realized how badly advised she had been that she abandoned the project and had all the materials brought back to their original site and re-erected under the skilful direction of Mr William Weir, and had the whole house reconditioned...⁸⁸

This gives a better idea of the Princess's role, and there is no reason to doubt that she was 'horrified' when she learnt the truth of the matter.⁸⁹ It was also Canon Rawnsley's opinion at the time that she had been badly advised by her 'friends and agents':⁹⁰ by Sydney Seymour Lucas, undoubtedly, probably by John Seymour Lucas, and probably by Probert. Where Oliver's memory was faulty was in saying that the building had been 'totally demolished', that the numbered timbers were taken away, and that Princess Louise had a 'cottage' at Ascot. F. Lingard Ranson, author of a history of Lavenham that appeared in five editions between 1937 and 1965,⁹¹ helped to perpetuate similar versions of events, such as that 'the whole building was dismantled' and 'rebuilt on the original site by the generosity of Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll'.⁹² Celia Jennings, in *The Identity of Suffolk*, said that 'an enterprising local man... approached Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, known for her sympathy towards preservation, who bought the building back from the purchaser and had it restored to its original position', which considerably misrepresents the part played by both Taylor and Princess Louise; although not as much as another account which tells how Taylor 'mounted on his bicycle with robes flying, chased after the disappearing vehicles and presented a petition to the Princess, begging her to return the Hall'.⁹³ The fact that the 17th-century addition to the original building was omitted in Weir's restoration is generally overlooked; although this decision seems to have caused no controversy at the time, it surely would now.

The Identity of Suffolk, which is principally a history of the Suffolk Preservation Society,⁹⁴ presents the protest at the dismantling of the Wool Hall as an isolated case. It was, as we have seen, only one of a number of similar episodes round about 1912 of buildings being dismantled for re-erection elsewhere, and it was possibly the first instance of the removal of a house being prevented. It was not, however, much of a turning point, in spite of occurring at the same time as the passing of the Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act. Lavenham's buildings took up much of the SPAB's time in the 1920s and 1930s, although the Society was mostly concerned with straightforward threat of demolition or excessive restoration. In 1926, however, a remarkably similar situation arose when a house in Water Street (Fig. 19), very close to the Wool Hall, was dismantled. 'It was to have been taken away for re-erection in another county, but the outcry which that prospect has aroused from people in various

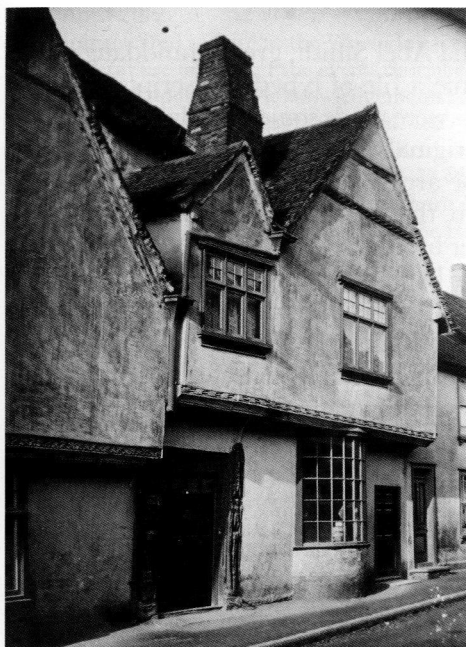


Fig. 19

De Vere House, Water Street, in the early 20th century.

Photograph, by permission of English Heritage



Fig. 20

De Vere House, Water Street, the result of partial demolition in 1926 and subsequent rebuilding.

Photograph 2012, author

parts of the country has caused the new owner to promise to return the shell, so that the antique beauty of the street may not be ruined'. The building in question, now known as De Vere House (Fig. 20), was indeed reconstructed, but without its 'fine old ceilings, which were what the purchaser most sought'.⁹⁵

Timber-framed buildings have always been moved for one reason or another, because the timbers themselves were too good to waste and because the nature of the buildings meant that they could be dismantled and re-erected elsewhere relatively easily – much more easily than buildings of stone or brick. Indeed, in the early 17th century many of Lavenham's rich clothiers took to dismantling and selling their houses in the town to make up for the loss of income from the declining cloth trade. What was unusual about the fashion for moving timber-framed buildings in the early years of the 20th century was that it was so blatantly commercial, and often meant transporting buildings to new sites far away and quite alien in character. Some of those who supplied the demand justified their activity by saying that they were thereby saving a building that would otherwise be lost altogether, which was John Seymour Lucas's position. Henry Taylor's achievement at Lavenham was to show that it was possible, and altogether preferable, to restore such buildings where they stood.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The impetus for this article was provided by Julia Abel Smith, great-granddaughter of the Revd Henry Taylor, who in 2008 showed me a file of typed transcripts of letters relating to the events of 1912–13. These transcripts were made some years later by Taylor's second daughter Hilda. The whereabouts of the originals are unknown, but because other copies of some of the letters are preserved in the archive of the SPAB, it is possible to say with some certainty, after comparing the two, that the transcripts are accurate and reliable. I am grateful to Mrs Abel Smith and her brother, Peter Wolton, for lending me the transcripts (referred to in the notes as 'Taylor Papers') and for allowing me to quote from them, and to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings for access to their archive and for similar permission, and to Elaine Byrne and Anna Foreshew for their assistance. I am grateful also to Jan Michalak for interesting conversation arising from his study of conservation and commerce in Lavenham and Sudbury.⁹⁶

NOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise stated, all places mentioned in this article are in Suffolk.
- 2 For a succinct account, see L. Alston, 'The Old Grammar School: the finest merchant's house in Lavenham', *Historic Buildings of Suffolk*, 1 (1998), 31-4; for a fuller account, A. Betterton and D. Dymond, *Lavenham: industrial town* (Lavenham, 1989).
- 3 K. Ranson, *Lingard's Lavenham: a photographic tour of Lavenham past* (Lavenham, 1990), and *Lavenham Panorama: Lingard's Lavenham II* (Lavenham, 1992) contain numerous examples.
- 4 Alston, 'Old Grammar School', 42.
- 5 Listed Grade II, 1984. The description says that it was re-erected c. 1920, but there is no basis for this; it is shown in *The Country Home*, 6 (1910), 14-15.
- 6 There is no printed account of Frank Jennings' fascinating career, and not one of his buildings is mentioned in N. Pevsner's *Suffolk* (Harmondsworth, 1961; 2nd rev. edn with E. Radcliffe, 1974) or in N. Scarfe's *Shell Guide* (London, 1960, new edns 1966 and 1976). I am grateful to Bill Ungless of Walberswick for sharing his knowledge of Jennings, and for a copy of his DVD, *Frank Jennings: architect and magpie* (2008).
- 7 L. Weaver, *Small Country Houses of To-Day: second series* (London, 1919), 31.
- 8 *The Times*, 24 May 1912, 7. Design for 'Proposed restoration of old Tudor house 1590' in Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, HD 2449 (J. A. Sherman, filed with Clacton-on-Sea drawing).
- 9 Gill & Reigate Ltd, *The Old Tudor house from Ipswich* (London, 1908), in National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, Box 57.C; C. Jennings, *The Identity of Suffolk* (Lavenham, 1980), 12; C. Aslet, *The Last Country Houses* (New Haven and London, 1982), 158-9; Ipswich and Norwich Co-operative Society, *People and Places: a pictorial history* (Ipswich, 2000), 29; *Country Life* 198 (4 Nov. 2004), 60-7. See also J. Harris, *Moving Rooms: the trade in architectural salvages* (New Haven and London, 2007), especially 105-06, 152-3, 247; Harris says that the house was then exported to the United States, based on an inaccurate story in *East Anglian Daily Times*, 1 Jul. 1970, 4.
- 10 *Bury Free Press*, 18 Mar. 1911 (cutting in Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds, HD526/63/14(b)); *East Anglian Miscellany*, no. 3376 (1911), 39.
- 11 N. Pevsner, *Essex* (Harmondsworth, 1954), 113. Listed Grade II in 1983; the description states that it was Mannings Farmhouse, as first reported, in accurately, in *Bury Free Press*, 18 Mar. 1911.
- 12 *Kelly's Directory of Suffolk* (1912), 279.
- 13 *Bury Post*, 22 Nov. 1912, 6.
- 14 Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, HD 2449 (J. A. Sherman); Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, D/UCt/Pb1/1397.
- 15 Plans in Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, HD 2449 (J. A. Sherman); F. Skinner ed., *Greenwich in Pictures* (Greenwich, CT), 1929; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Newton_Phelps_Stokes> (accessed 5

- April 2012).
- 16 It is referred to here as the Wool Hall for convenience, but the name does not seem to have been in general use until after the events described.
- 17 Taylor Papers (see Acknowledgements above), Introduction by Hilda Taylor; L. H. Whitehead, *Lavenham: its antiquities* (Lavenham, 1927), 26-7; F. L. Ranson and L. H. Whitehead, *Lavenham Past and Present* (Lavenham, 1930), 51; F. L. Ranson, *Lavenham Suffolk* (Lavenham, 5th edn, 1965), 51-2; Betterton and Dymond, *Lavenham*, 78-9; D. Dymond, *A Walk around Lavenham* (Lavenham, n.d.); National Trust, *Guildhall of Corpus Christi Lavenham* (Swindon, 2004), 11.
- 18 R. Hewlings, unpublished report for the Historic Buildings Council, 1984; information from Geoffrey Probert, 2008.
- 19 Taylor Papers, J. S. Lucas to Taylor, 14 Dec. 1912.
- 20 Taylor Papers, Taylor to J. S. Lucas, 17 Dec. 1912, Taylor to Rye & Eyre, 24 Dec. 1912.
- 21 SPAB, Wool Hall file, Taylor to SPAB, 9 Dec. 1912.
- 22 Taylor Papers, Taylor to J. S. Lucas, 17 Dec. 1912. According to Bill Ungless, Jennings paid £80 for Weaver's House.
- 23 Taylor Papers, Taylor to Princess Louise, 9 Dec. 1912.
- 24 Taylor Papers, S. S. Lucas to Taylor, 24 Sep. 1912.
- 25 SPAB, Wool Hall file, letterheading, S. S. Lucas to SPAB, 17 Feb. 1913. Lucas and Jennings collaborated on the restoration of Priory Farm, Felixstowe, 1914, and Jennings signed a letter to Felixstowe Urban District Council, 21 May 1914, on Hubert Gould, Lucas & Co. headed paper (Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, EF12/3/5/2646 Box 46).
- 26 He, rather than Sydney Seymour Lucas, may have been the 'Lucas' of Hubert Gould, Lucas & Co. The firm became better known as art dealers, advertising regularly in *The Connoisseur*. It was wound up in 1954 (*London Gazette*, 27 Aug. 1954, 4968).
- 27 *Country Life*, 35 (1 Apr. 1914), 7*-11*; information from Nick Haward, 2009.
- 28 SPAB, Wool Hall file, Mrs Barrett to SPAB, 10 Dec. 1912.
- 29 Charles Abbott is listed in *Kelly's Suffolk*, 291, as 'watch maker, High st'.
- 30 *Kelly's Suffolk*, 402; S. Oliver, 'Basil Oliver and the end of the Arts and Crafts Movement', *Architectural History*, 47 (2004), 328-9.
- 31 B. Oliver, *Old Houses and Village Buildings in East Anglia* (London, 1912), 60.
- 32 Taylor Papers, Taylor to *Bury Post*, 2 Dec. 1912, published 6 Dec. 1912, 4.
- 33 Taylor Papers, Rye & Eyre to Taylor, 10 and 13 Dec. 1912; Eric Neve, editor, *Bury Post*, to Taylor, 11 Dec.; Taylor to Jennings, 11 Dec.
- 34 Taylor Papers, Taylor to Princess Louise, 9 Dec. 1912. It is not clear whether the letter was actually sent; there is no reply.
- 35 SPAB, Wool Hall file, Mrs Barrett to SPAB, 10 Dec. 1912; Taylor Papers, Oliver to Taylor, 13 Dec. 1912.
- 36 J. Wake, *Princess Louise: Queen Victoria's unconventional daughter* (London, 1988).
- 37 M. Stocker, 'Louise, Princess, duchess of Argyll (1848-1939)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34601>> (accessed 10 April 2012).
- 38 S. W. Soros ed., *E. W. Godwin: aesthetic movement architect and designer* (New Haven and London, 1999), 168, 213-14.
- 39 A. S. Gray, *Edwardian Architecture: a biographical dictionary* (London, 1985), 99-100, 357-8.
- 40 C. Percy and J. Ridley ed., *The Letters of Edwin Lutyens to his wife Lady Emily* (London, 1985), 53, 87-8, 90; Wake, *Princess Louise*, 317-18, 349-50; J. Ridley, *The Architect and his Wife: a life of Edwin Lutyens* (London, 2002), 111-13, 138-9.
- 41 Wake, *Princess Louise*, 357; *London Gazette*, 22 Dec. 1908, 9752.
- 42 SPAB, Wool Hall file, Powys to *Country Life*, 11 Dec. 1912; *Country Life*, 32 (1912), 944.
- 43 Taylor Papers, Basil Oliver to Taylor, 13 Dec. 1912. No letter from Prince Frederick was published in *The Times* on this matter. For Prince Frederick, see R. Visram, 'Duleep Singh, Prince Frederick Victor (1868-1926)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, May 2007; online edn, Oct 2009 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/57412>> (accessed 10 April 2012).

- 44 Taylor Papers, Steed to Taylor, 12–14 Dec. 1912; Wake, *Princess Louise*, 380. Ribsden had been built to designs by C. H. Howell, c. 1876 (*Building News*, 31 (1876), 364; J. Franklin, *The Gentleman's Country House and its Plan 1835–1914* (London, 1981), 8–9, 266).
- 45 SPAB, Wool Hall file, and Taylor Papers, Powys to equerry, 16 Dec. 1912.
- 46 SPAB, Wool Hall file, and Taylor Papers, Powys to equerry, 16 Dec. 1912. The letter would probably not have gone to Probert, who had recently been succeeded as comptroller and equerry by Capt. G. A. O. Lane, and was now an Extra Equerry (*London Gazette*, 26 Nov. 1912, 8947). There is no response to the letter in either collection.
- 47 The poster has been widely reproduced, e.g. in Jennings, *Identity of Suffolk*, 17. I have not located an original copy.
- 48 Taylor Papers, Duleep Singh to Taylor, 16–18 Dec. 1912.
- 49 Taylor Papers, E. James to Taylor, 14–16 December 1912. I have not been able to identify 'James'. He wrote from Hinderclay Rectory, Diss, but the rector of Hinderclay at this date was Edmund Farrer.
- 50 Taylor Papers, Quilter to Taylor, 18–31 Dec. 1912.
- 51 Taylor Papers, Bristol to Taylor, 19 Dec. 1912.
- 52 Taylor Papers, Oliver to Taylor, 11 and 17 Jan. 1913. What *did* happen to Nether Hall I have not been able to establish.
- 53 Taylor Papers, J. S. Lucas to Taylor, 14 Dec. 1912.
- 54 *Country Life*, 35 (1914), 215; SPAB, *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the Committee* (1914), 30.
- 55 Taylor Papers, Taylor to J. S. Lucas, 17 Dec. 1912.
- 56 G. Murphy, 'Rawnsley, Hardwicke Drummond (1851–1920)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2011 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37884>> (accessed 10 April 2012).
- 57 J. Fawcett (ed.), *The Future of the Past: attitudes to conservation 1174–1974* (London, 1976), 19; Harris, *Moving Rooms*, 108. Tattershall Castle was saved by Lord Curzon, restored by William Weir and acquired by the National Trust in 1925. The Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act was passed in 1913.
- 58 SPAB, Wool Hall file, Turner to Rawnsley, 18 Dec. 1912.
- 59 Taylor Papers, Plymouth to Taylor, 14 Dec. 1912. Basil Oliver wrote to Taylor on 19 December explaining that Earl Ferrers, another member of the SPAB Committee, 'comes in contact with the Earl of Plymouth a good deal (in the House of Lords) concerning the Bill for the Protection of Ancient Monuments etc. now under consideration'.
- 60 Taylor Papers, Rawnsley to Taylor, 23–29 Dec. 1912.
- 61 SPAB, Wool Hall file, Bertha Taylor to Powys, 18 Dec. 1912. It is presumably no coincidence that Rye & Eyre were the solicitors who had already been acting on behalf of Frank Jennings, and who had also acted for Frederick Tibbenham in the matter of the Hawstead-Clacton house.
- 62 *East Anglian Daily Times*, 18 Dec. 1912, 5; *Suffolk and Essex Free Press*, 18 Dec. 1912, 8.
- 63 *East Anglian Daily Times*, 21 Dec. 1912, 3.
- 64 *Architects' and Builders' Journal* 37 (1913), 106–07 (cutting in Taylor Papers, sent to Taylor by A. Michael Durrant ARIBA, 27 Jan. 1913).
- 65 Taylor Papers, Rye to Taylor, 24 & 28 Dec. 1912
- 66 Taylor Papers, Taylor to Rye, 26 Dec. 1912.
- 67 Taylor Papers, Rye to Taylor, 28 Dec. 1912.
- 68 Taylor Papers, Taylor to Rye (draft, on verso of Rye letter of 28 Dec. 1912).
- 69 SPAB, Wool Hall file, Taylor to Powys, 7 Jan. 1913. If he did take out Life Membership (and Powys wrote to him on 14 Feb. 1913 explaining the procedure), he did not get his money's worth: Taylor died on 22 Jan. 1915, aged 43 (Taylor Papers, Conclusion by Hilda Taylor; grave in Hawstead churchyard).
- 70 SPAB, *Forty-Second Annual Report of the Committee* (1919), 23–4.
- 71 SPAB, Wool Hall file, Rye to Powys, 28 Dec. 1912; Powys to Rye, 30 Dec. 1912.
- 72 SPAB Wool Hall file, Powys to Rye, 30 Dec. 1912.
- 73 L. W. Chubb, 'Hunter, Sir Robert (1844–1913)', rev. G. Murphy, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34064>> (accessed 11 April 2012).

- 74 M. Drury, *Wandering Architects: in pursuit of an Arts and Crafts ideal* (Stamford, 2000), 215-32.
- 75 SPAB, Wool Hall file, Weir to Powys, Jan. 1913. The SPAB file also contains Weir's 'Specification of proposed work in finishing the fabric of the building situated at the corner of Water Street and Lady Street', Jan. 1913.
- 76 Taylor Papers, Oliver to Taylor, 11 & 17 Jan. 1913.
- 77 SPAB, Wool Hall file, Hamer to Powys, 23 Jan. 1913.
- 78 Taylor Papers, Powys to Taylor, 14 Feb. 1913. There is no record of the meeting in the archives of the National Trust (information from Darren Beatson, National Trust, 2012).
- 79 Taylor Papers, Oliver to Taylor, 6 Feb. 1913.
- 80 Taylor Papers, Rawnsley to Taylor, undated but between 31 Jan. and 3 Mar. 1913.
- 81 *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 15 (1915), 83.
- 82 *Great Western Railway Magazine* 43 (1931), 77-80; J. L. Salmon, *A Proud Heritage: the story of the Railway Convalescent Homes* (London, 1954; revised reprint, 1962), 72; J. Whitehouse, *The Unfinished History of the Railway Convalescent Homes* (Portsmouth, 1986), 14-15.
- 83 *East Anglian Daily Times*, 24 Nov. 1965, 6; *The Times*, 24 Nov. 1965, 7.
- 84 *Suffolk and Essex Free Press*, 11 Jun. 1913, 8; Taylor Papers, Conclusion by Hilda Taylor.
- 85 *Suffolk and Essex Free Press*, 11 Dec. 1913, 3.
- 86 SPAB, *Forty-Second Annual Report of the Committee* (1919), 23-4.
- 87 *The Times*, 15 Aug. 1933, 14; 16 Aug. 1933, 6.
- 88 *The Times*, 13 Dec. 1939, 6; SPAB, Wool Hall file, 11 Dec. 1939 (Oliver's draft). A version of this story, which has Taylor himself following the lorries on his bicycle and tracing the timbers to Ascot, appeared in the *East Anglian Magazine* 5 (1940), 45.
- 89 Her biographer takes this view, while acknowledging that 'few realized that [the building's] saviour had so nearly been its destroyer' (Wake, *Princess Louise*, 381).
- 90 Taylor Papers, Rawnsley to Taylor, 29 Dec. 1912.
- 91 Ranson, *Lavenham* (1937, 1947, 1950, 1958, 1965).
- 92 Betterton and Dymond, *Lavenham*, 78-9; Dymond, *Walk around Lavenham*.
- 93 Jennings, *Identity of Suffolk*, 13; P. Rushton, *Lavenham... a stroll through history* (Stowmarket, 1993). Jennings' book was published by the Suffolk Preservation Society, which repeats the statement almost verbatim on its website <www.suffolksociety.org/aboutus/history.htm> (accessed 11 Apr. 2012).
- 94 Founded 1929. Col W. G. Carwardine Probert (he changed his name in 1922) was one of the early committee members (Jennings, *Identity of Suffolk*, 25, 136).
- 95 *East Anglian Daily Times*, 19 Jul. 1926, 19; *The Times*, 24 Jul. 1926, 9; Ranson, *Lavenham Panorama*, unnumbered pages, where it is stated that the house was pulled down for re-erection in America. Other examples of houses on the move in Suffolk include Fiddler Simpson's Cottage, Bury Road, Lavenham, moved from Washmere Green south of the village (Ranson, *Lavenham Panorama*, undated 'before' and 'after' photographs); Dunstead House, Bures St Mary (15th-century, listed Grade II 1978), moved from Kersey (1926); 'Old Hadleigh', Chapel St Mary (listed Grade II, 1990), moved for road-widening from George Street, Hadleigh (1934); Nos 11-13 Stowupland Street, Stowmarket, originally on the other side of Gipping Way, taken down for the relief road (1991), rebuilt 1995 (plaque on building); listed barn at Wherstead, dismantled 1978, now the basis of a house in Dunsfold, Surrey (Pevsner, *Suffolk*, 2nd edn, 486; Jennings, *Identity of Suffolk*, 106; information from Peter Barker, Antique Buildings Ltd, 2009); and most famously Ballingdon Hall, Sudbury, large 3-storey house moved on wheels (1972) 180 metres up the hill away from a new industrial estate (Pevsner, *Suffolk*, 2nd edn, 455; *The Times*, 24 Mar. 1972, 3).
- 96 J. S. Michalak, 'A tale of two small towns: conservation, commerce and the property market and their impact on timber framed buildings in the twentieth century' (unpublished MA thesis in Conservation Studies, Department of Archaeology, University of York, 2000).