

THE KEEPER'S LODGE IN HARDINGTON PARK

Historical Background by Michael McGarvie

Hardington Bampfylde is a small and depopulated parish consisting of 860 acres between Frome in Somerset and Radstock in the county of Avon. A remote spot set in a hollow and surrounded by rolling downs and distant woodland, Hardington has been annexed to the neighbouring parish of Hemington since 1733. It now consists of two farmhouses and some cottages. The whole parish has been owned since about 1890 by the Radstock Co-operative Society. The Society's large farm with its numerous buildings surrounds and almost hides from the casual view the chief archaeological feature of the parish, St. Mary's Church, now vested in the Redundant Churches Fund.

The parish has a long but obscure history. At the time of the compilation of Domesday Book in 1086, Hardington was one of the many manors of the Bishop of Coutances. In the following century it passed into the great Honour of Gloucester and in the Middle Ages was held by members of the Le Sor, Torny and Pederton families before Agnes de Pederton took it to the Bampfylde by her marriage to John Bampfylde, of Poltimore in Devon early in the 15th century. By a fine or conveyance of 1439/40¹ John and Agnes settled Hardington on their younger son Peter, while Poltimore went to his elder brother, William. Peter Bampfylde's descendants lived at Hardington until the death of Colonel Warwick Bampfylde in 1694 when the estate reverted by will to the senior line, created baronets in 1641 and raised to the peerage as Barons Poltimore in 1831. The second Lord Poltimore sold Hardington in 1859.²

Peter Bampfylde, who died in 1499, does not appear to have made his home at Hardington. His *inquisition post mortem*, the survey of his property taken after his death, mentions that Hardington was leased to William Carent and John Attewater. It was Peter's son, John, 'thirty or more' in 1499, who came to live on the estate and who may have built the manor house at Hardington. This was described in the early 18th century as giving 'a tolerable idea of Gentlemens' Houses built before the beginning of the sixteenth century'.⁴ The remains of this mansion survived as late as 1802, the main structure having been destroyed by fire during the previous century. The ruins were drawn, rather imprecisely, by Philip Crocker, a Frome antiquary. Crocker's picture shows the broken walls of a castellated house with a Jacobean wing at the back. There are plenty of pointed arches to indicate antiquity, although these look more like the Strawberry Hill variety than the genuine 15th-century work Crocker intended to portray.

Information about Hardington and the Bampfylde in the 16th century is extremely sparse. John Bampfylde left a splendid will in 1528 after which facts are hard to come by. However, the broad



One of the architectural curiosities of Somerset: **The Keeper's Lodge at Hardington**, near Frome, now much dilapidated. A view from the south-west. Reproduced by kind permission of the Mendip Society.

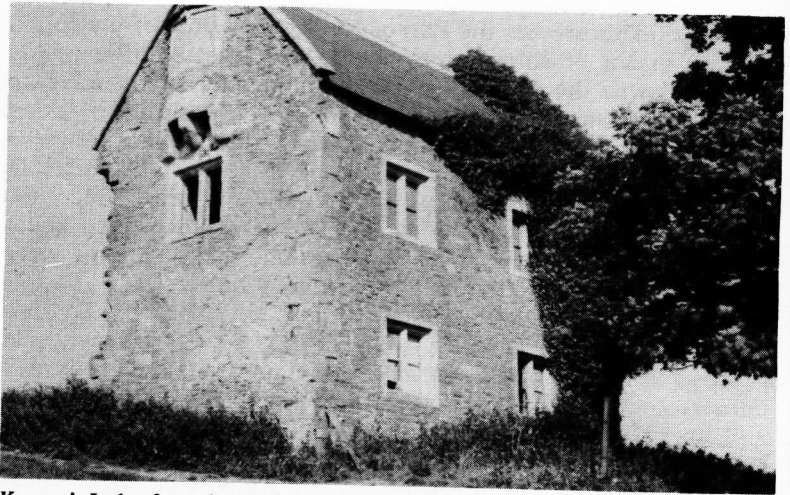
outlines of a modest success story can be glimpsed, represented by the purchase of new lands and the improvement of the estate. There are indications that Thomas Bampfylde II, the grandson of John of 1528, was actively improving his demesne towards the end of the 16th century. We know from a letter written by Sir Francis

Hastings⁷ to his brother the Earl of Huntingdon, lord of the neighbouring manor of Kilmersdon, about 1583, that Mr Bampfylde 'pulleth downe the churche' at Hardington. This seems in fact to refer to the chancel which retains two early 17th century windows suggesting that what Mr Bampfylde pulled down he afterwards rebuilt. The nave and tower are of indisputable 14th and 15th century date. It is probable that Thomas Bampfylde added the Jacobean wing to the manor house. This was demolished about 1952,⁸ but photographs show that the window mouldings were similar to those in the chancel of Hardington Church.

Little positive is known about Thomas Bampfylde II. The few straws in the wind, however, suggest that he was a crusty and possessive old gentleman (he lived to be more than 100 and died intestate) who believed that an Englishman's home was his castle and applied the doctrine to the furthest limits of his estate. Hastings says of Hardington that the village 'is wholly enclosed and made pasture' but it is unlikely that Bampfylde was responsible for deliberate enclosure. Hardington looks like a genuine case of a settlement practically destroyed by the Black Death and which did not recover from the effects of the plague. It is significant that there were 16 taxpayers listed for Hardington in the Subsidy Roll of 1327-28 but only three messuages are mentioned in the fine of 1439.

Bampfylde had quietly possessed himself of the glebe lands of Hardington ('where it liyeth wil hardly be founde', reported Hastings to his brother) and although the church was technically a parish one, it had been reduced to the status of a private chapel. 'The Chappell belongeth to Mr Bampfylde' noted Francis Thynne, Lancaster Herald, who visited Hardington in 1583 to look at the heraldic glass in the church windows.⁹ Moreover, as Sir Francis Hastings told his brother: 'Mr Bampfylde denyeth my lorde's officers from coming upon his grounde to sease any strey or other profite for my lorde and denyeth also to come to my lorde's courte and to presente any commoditye to my lorde, saving his common fine only which he payeth'. Other members of the Bampfylde family were equally difficult and in 1608 George Upton, of Wells, left to Thomas Bampfylde '£24 during the lifetime of Elizabeth his daughter, sometime my wife, whose neglect of duty God forgive'.¹⁰

Although no record of the building of the Keeper's Lodge survives, it is permissible to see its erection as part of the general improvement of the Hardington estate by Thomas Bampfylde. Below, Dr Harvey suggests what the purposes of the Lodge may have been. The background so vividly recorded by Sir Francis Hastings in conjunction with the date 1582 carved on the lintel, provide reasons for its grim appearance, the sinister bartizans



Keeper's Lodge from the north-east showing the undefended garden front.



A detail of the machicolations.

reflecting more the turbulence of the Middle Ages than the elegance of the Elizabethan age. The Lodge surveys the whole park and commands a great panorama. Whatever its use for hunting or pleasure, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Lodge was primarily a watch-tower and a guard-house, intimidating would-be intruders by its very presence and allowing Bampfylde's retainers to perceive and take counter measures against any

incursion by poachers, court officials, or others heeding Hastings' advice that 'some speedy care' should be taken to look into the matter of the glebe. In addition, although not equipped to stand a siege, the Lodge may well have served as a temporary refuge for the Bampfylde family, who were cantankerous and invited reprisals, until help could be summoned.

Subsequently, Keeper's Lodge reverted to the prosaic but useful role of providing a home for the Bampfylde's gamekeeper for which in its lonely position in the middle of the park it was ideally situated. It is mentioned in the sale particulars of the estate in 1859. Since the end of the Second World War, it has ceased to be inhabited and is now much dilapidated. The complete destruction of this curious and interesting building has been hastened by the removal of the quoins from the walls.

NOTES

1. *Feet of Fines, 1399-1485*, Somerset Record Society, 21, pp. 98-99.
2. *Sale catalogue* penes the author. For the full story see *Hardington Bampfylde Church*, by Michael McGarvie, Redundant Churches Fund, 1978.
3. *Calendar of I.P.M., Henry VII, 2*, 273, p. 184.
4. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, 74, 2, p. 80. Lord Hylton on *The Manor Houses of Hardington and Vallis*. The quotation is from 18th-century manuscript in the Horner archives at Mells Manor.
5. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1802, part 2, p. 801.
6. *Somerset Medieval Wills, 1501-1530*, S.R.S., 19, pp. 273-74.
7. *The Letters of Sir Francis Hastings, 1574-1609*, S.R.S., 69, p.30. I am indebted to Dr R. W. Dunning for this reference.
8. 'About 6 or 7 years ago' according to the provisional list of buildings of architectural or historic interest in the Rural District of Frome drawn up by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and issued in 1959.
9. British Library, Cotton Mss., Cleopatra, c.iii.
10. *Somerset Wills*, abstracted by Rev. F. Brown, 1, p. 7.

Architectural Description by John H. Harvey

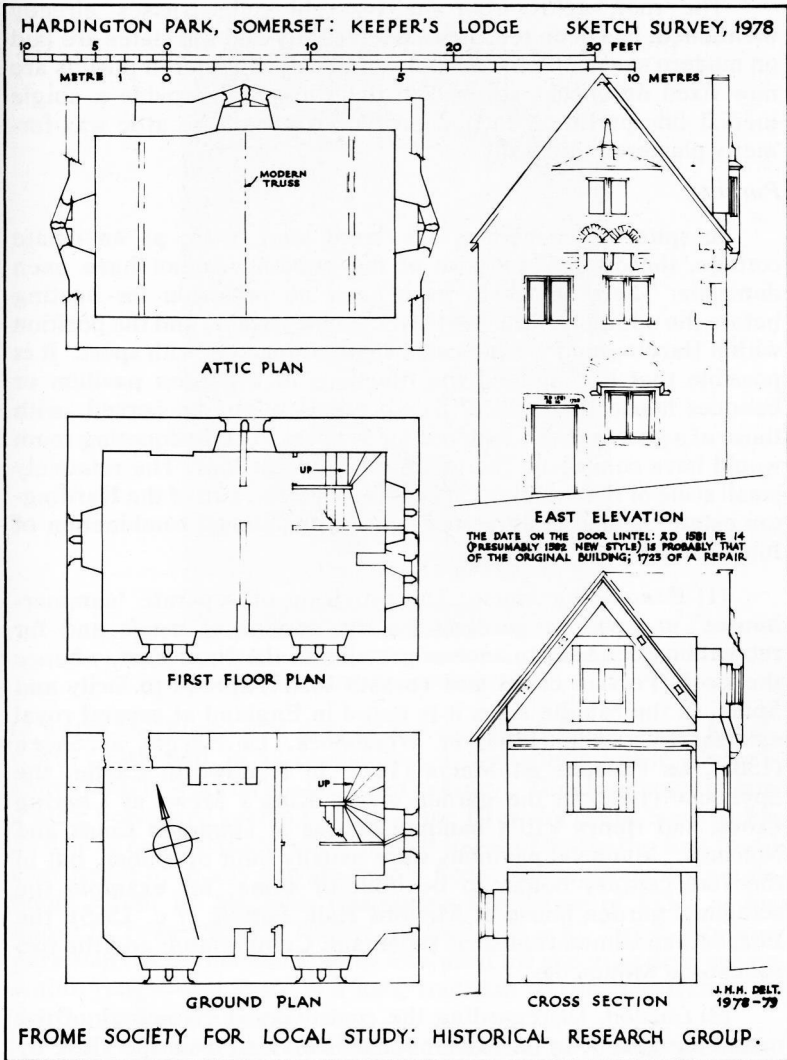
The building is of simple but unusual design, on a rectangular plan 24' 9" long from east to west by 18' 0", of two storeys with an attic in the gabled roof. It is built of local limestone in coursed rubble of small flat pieces, with quoins and dressings of Douling stone. The north, east and west wall are 2' 6" thick; that on the south only 2' 0". The roof is now covered with blue Welsh slate but originally was in all probability of regional stone tiles. The remaining old floor-beams are massive oak timbers about 10" square with hollow chamfers. The surviving old (but not original) trusses of the roof have 11" x 5" oak principals with splay-stopped chamfers and mortices for two side purlins of about 8" x 6".

On the ground floor the entrance doorway is near the south end of the east wall, and the lintel bears the channel-cut date: AD 1581/FE 14, presumably for 14th February 1581/82. This is in stylistic agreement with the original building. Beside this is the added V-cut year: 1723, which might well be that of a major repair to the lodge, perhaps including the roof of which two trusses and re-used purlins survive.

On the *Ground Floor* there are two two-light windows in the south wall and one in the east wall, which also contains the doorway. All casements and glazing are modern. In both north and west walls are relieving arches which appear to mark the positions of former window openings now blocked. That on the north is behind the large fireplace of what was for long in use as a kitchen, viz. the western two-thirds of the ground floor. In its present state the fireplace appears to belong to the last quarter of the 19th century. At the west end of the north wall is an opening which contained a doorway leading into later outbuildings now demolished.

A wooden winder staircase of 19th-century date at the north-eastern angle leads to the *First Floor*, which has two windows in each of the east and south walls, and a single window on north and west. The floor is divided by a 19th-century partition into two rooms, that to west having a late 19th-century iron fireplace and grate. A nib of modern masonry, continuing the north jamb of the entrance doorway on the *Ground Floor*, is carried up through the *First Floor* and blocks the northern light of the southern window on the east end of the house.

The staircase is carried up to the *Attic Floor*, which has two-light oriel windows to east, west and north, where the window is in a gabled transeptal cross-roof. There can never have been any window on the south side unless it was framed into the old trussing, now replaced. The attic windows are of unusual form, the



two lights being canted out at an angle to meet with a central stone mullion carried on a machicolation with slanted slots to discharge missiles for defensive purposes.¹ Defence was unnecessary on the south side as this was protected by the presumably walled enclosure of the large garden. The oriels are roofed in stone and bear small ornamental finials against the gable walls which sur-

mount the projections.

The roof, apart from the two old collar-trusses already mentioned, has been reconstructed recently and the slates are laid on modern sawn battens. Sections of the old chamfered purlins are now fixed on chocks secured to the trusses to provide a single medial side-purlin on each slope. The whole of the attic was formerly plastered internally.

Purpose

In spite of its modern use, until after 1945, as an estate cottage, the original purpose of the building cannot have been domestic. There seems to have been no provision for heating before the addition of the intrusive chimney-stack, and the position within Hardington Park indicates some connection with sport.² It is possible that it combined the functions of a garden pavilion or banquet house in which *al fresco* meals might be served, with those of a gazebo and a look-out for keepers. The banqueting room would have comprised the whole of the first floor. The relatively small scale of the building, in keeping with the size of the Hardington estate, is also in agreement with this unusual combination of functions.

(1) *Banqueting house*. The provision of separate 'summer-houses' in parks or gardens for the service of meals and for recreation goes back to ancient practice in the Near East, whence the kiosk (Persian *kushk* and Turkish *köshk*) spread to Sicily and Spain. In the Middle Ages it is found in England at several royal estates: Everswell (1165) at Woodstock, La Nayght at Sheen (1385), Le Plaisans en Marys (1417) in Kenilworth Castle, the Spyhouse (1440) in the garden of the King's Mews at Charing Cross, and Henry VIII's banquet-houses at Hampton Court and Nonsuch.³ Medieval pavilions were usually built of timber, but in the 16th century began to be built of stone, for example the octagonal garden house at Melford Hall, Suffolk (? c. 1555); the Elizabethan summerhouse at Dalemain, Cumberland; and the two gazebos at Montacute.

(2) *Gazebo*. Disregarding the controversial etymology of the name, the gazebo in its stricter sense is divided from the kiosk by being essentially a look-out; it may be that the Charing Cross 'Spy-house' was purely a gazebo. During the Middle Ages there grew up a tradition of spectatorship in sport which gave rise to the construction of special buildings. These might take the form of windowed galleries overlooking the lists where tournaments were held, as at Cheapside (London), Kenilworth Castle, and Dartington Hall;⁴ or of a tower giving views over a park or a moat or fishpond,



One of the oriel windows, roofed in stone and completed by an ornamental finial.

to watch the hunting of deer or the catching of fish, as at Kenilworth Castle and, in all probability, at Broughton Castle, Oxfordshire, both in work of the late 14th century.⁵ The development into a pure belvedere seems to have come later, for John Stow in his *Survey of London* remarks on 'a high tower of brick, the first that I ever heard of in any private man's house, to overlook his neighbours', built by Sir John Champneis the mayor of 1534, at his house in Tower Street. Towers, or look-outs with arrow-slits in a park wall (as at Dalemain) were also used for shooting deer driven within range, and there is a long tradition of shooting-stands on the Continent of Europe.

(3) *Defensive look-out.* Banquet-houses, pavilions, galleries, gazebos and belvederes were all purely recreational, though some may also have served as look-outs for keepers engaged to protect deer and other game. At Hardington, however, the provision of machicolations beneath the oriel windows indicates a defensive purpose. This is confirmed by their omission from the south side, with its thinner external wall, and facing the enclosed garden. The lodge stood as a salient at the north-west angle of the enclosure, which may itself have been laid out about 1580, and provided some

defence against armed poachers or other raiders. The known history of Hardington in the later 16th century lends colour to the supposition that such defensive purposes might well have been in mind.⁷

NOTES

1. The slots are too steeply inclined, and visibility through them is far too limited, to permit of their use for shooting game.
2. It was not a Hunting Lodge in the normal sense, as it can never have provided a worthy dwelling for the lord, nor would such a lodge have been needed so close to the Manor.
3. H. M. Colvin, ed., *The History of the King's Works* (1963), I, 245-6, 551; II, 685, 1013-16.
4. See J. Harvey in *Burlington Magazine*, CXIII (1971), 411.
5. J. Harvey in *Archaeological Journal*, CI (1946), 93.
6. A. Emery in *Archaeological Journal*, CXV (1960), 201-2; M. L. Gothein, *A History of Garden Art* (1928), I, 200; for look-out towers see A. Oswald in *Country Life Annual 1957*, 84-7.
7. Archaeological evidence has been recorded for the plan of the earthworks at Hardington, recently bulldozed out of existence: see M. Aston, 'Gardens and Earthworks at Hardington and Low Ham, Somerset', in *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History*, CXXII (1978), 11-28 and plan at p. 15. What seems to have been a very large terraced garden stretched roughly east and west along the hillside, with a long earthwork in line with the south wall of the Lodge and running eastwards. Just beyond the west end of the Lodge a double line of earthworks turned southwards at right-angles, delimiting the west end of the garden. Two rows of low round mounds, probably for planting trees, lay along the north and south sides of the terrace. Some distance to the east of the Lodge, projecting into the Park outside the garden, was a 'pillow-mound' lying north and south. This probably sheltered a warren for rabbits.