

THE RESTORATION OF GORHAMBURY

by the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Verulam, M.A., F.S.A., J.P.

A paper read at the Annual General Meeting of the Ancient Monuments Society held at Gorhambury on Saturday, May 17th, 1958.

IN welcoming you to Gorhambury this afternoon, I want to try to tell you what we, as a family, have been doing (mainly during this twentieth century), in our efforts to ensure that the skeins of history, of tradition, of culture and of worldly possession, which the Bacon and the Grimston families have successively spun here, on the outskirts of St. Albans, for centuries past, may yet survive as a loosely woven, but nevertheless precious and recognisable fabric. It is of the nature of our times that that fabric must be accessible to outside scholarship and popular appreciation; I believe that the tissue of such a fabric will be seen to be more valuable, now and in years to come, if the descendants of the same family can continue to wear it.

Preservation of a building, or of a work of art, or of a collection, is not of itself enough, unless they can be used, seen or appreciated, where possible for the purposes for which they were intended, by people and not only by curators (I am not suggesting that curators are not people, but you will know that I mean, what Hilaire Belloc meant, when he wrote of "The Dodo"—

'Yet may you see his bones and beak
All in the Mu-se-um.'

and I believe you will understand my implied aspersions on a hard-working, highly skilled, most laudable profession).

Restoration of a building, or of an object, however skilfully carried out, does not—in the eyes of most sensitive people—make the thing restored "as good or better than new", to use a popular expression. Restoration is necessary, to use that horrid word in the sense I want to give it throughout this essay, when neglect or accident or *anno Domini* demand action, either to restore the *status quo*, or to prevent total

disintegration, or to rescue or replace that which was lost. I believe such restoration to be justified, provided that it is directed and carried out by the most skilled available brains and hands. That is the kind of restoration we have tried to employ, in our efforts to keep Gorhambury together. That—and only that—is the kind of restoration which, I believe, this Society wishes to sponsor.

In the hope that these words may help to fertilise kindred action in other minds, in other families, in other places where moth and rust and damp and penury have corrupted, I propose to tell you of our failures as well as of those achievements we count successful.

The site that is now called Gorhambury goes back through all recorded history and beyond. Verulamium itself, the third city of Roman Britain, is today by far the most important Roman site in the Realm because (at the beginning of the fourth century A.D.) one Alban, a Roman soldier and this country's protomartyr, was taken outside the city walls to his execution; around the traditional scene of that splendid and sordid act arose the Shrine, the Abbey, the School, a great monastic centre of Learning, and the modern St. Albans.

The whole of Verulamium lay under green fields within the Gorhambury Estate until a few years ago; most of it is still there, unexplored, only guessed at, unknown. One of Francis Bacon's unachieved ambitions was to rebuild the Roman City as it had been; fortunately for archaeology, he never tried. In the 1930's it was my mother and father who arranged for Dr. Mortimer Wheeler, Keeper and Secretary of the London Museum (as he then was), and the late Mrs. Tessa Verney Wheeler, to excavate the Roman Theatre of Verulamium, near the entrance to Gorhambury Drive. The results of that excavation were so outstanding that we have kept them open to visitors ever since; the Theatre is the only one of its kind to be seen in Britain, although one of similar type was found beneath the blitzed ruins of Canterbury. A more important consequence of the successful Theatre Excavation was that a further series of excavations followed, sponsored partly by the St. Albans City Council, on Gorhambury land which my father made over to the Council on condition that, after excavation, it was retained as a public open space for ever. Those excavations continue, and if the finances are available should do so for many years to come, under the direction of a small Committee, of which Mr. Sheppard S. Frere is the Director and I the Chairman. (Mr. Frere has assumed the mantle of the Mortimer Wheelers but Sir Mortimer is still a most valued member of our Committee.) As you leave Gorhambury this evening, it will not be too late—if you so wish—

to visit the Theatre, Verulamium Park with its Hypocaust, and the Verulamium Museum—they are all part of an unique heritage.

I mention Verulamium in the context of Gorhambury, for several reasons. First of all it was sited on the Watling Street, which runs through Gorhambury lands and has been part of the history of Britain from the time of Boadicea onwards (I refuse to call her "Boudicca"), being rebuilt by the great Thomas Telford in the early years of the Nineteenth Century. Secondly, Verulamium was not only the name from which Francis Bacon took his Barony and my family its Earldom, it was also the quarry from which Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper, drew his building materials when he built the Tudor Gorhambury in 1563/8. Thirdly, excavations at present in hand in Gorhambury Park, only a few hundred yards from where we are now sitting, under the direction of Dr. Ilid Anthony, Director of Museums to the St. Albans City Council, may be on the point of revealing that there were at least two well-to-do Roman villas, near where Gorhambury now stands, meaning that the site has been occupied for perhaps sixteen centuries, more or less continuously.

In Saxon times Gorhambury was known as the Manor of Westwick, a name that survives to this day in Westwick Hall, an adjoining farm. In A.D. 996 the property came into the possession of the Abbey of St. Alban, being granted by King Ethelred to Abbot Aelfric, once his chancellor. The name "Gorhambury" derives from Geoffrey de Gorham, the sixteenth Abbot of St. Albans. Geoffrey de Gorham built the first recorded house, about A.D. 1130, in the south-east corner of the present Park. Nothing remains above ground of this building. It was in an effort to find its foundations that Dr. Anthony's excavations, just mentioned, are apparently revealing the basement of two Roman villas and perhaps the remains of some mediaeval outhouses as well. We hope to continue with this work, and that we shall be enabled thereby to close an important gap in our knowledge of the local history of Gorhambury. We already know, from a contemporary survey, that the original twelfth century Gorhambury consisted of:

"a hall with chambers; a chapel with a certain chamber, a storied edifice beyond the gate with a chamber; a kitchen, a bakehouse, dairy and a larder, with a certain chamber; a granary with a chamber for the bayliff; a dwelling for the servants of the manor, two cow houses, two sheep houses, a pig sty and gardens."

We hope that Dr. Anthony is going to find the bases of some of these buildings, even though they were probably less soundly constructed than the earlier remains of Roman date.

According to Matthew Paris, the manor of Westwick, now Gorhambury, was illegally conveyed to the relatives of Abbot Geoffrey de Gorham and remained in the de Gorham family until 1307, when it passed to the de Veres. Upon the attainder of Robert de Vere, 9th Earl of Oxford, in 1388, the property escheated to the Crown, returning to the Abbey by purchase seven years later, and then remaining in the possession of the Abbey until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in December 1539. In 1541 Henry VIII granted the manor to Ralph Rowlett, merchant of the staple at Calais. Descending through his sons it was purchased in 1561 by a relative by marriage, Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal.

You will see an indifferent portrait of Sir Nicholas in the Ball Room (there is a much better one at Raveningham in Norfolk) and some very remarkable contemporary painted terra-cotta busts of Sir Nicholas, his second wife Ann Cooke, and their son Francis, above the bookshelves in the Library. These busts are unique of their kind. They have recently been cleaned in Dr. Plenderleith's department at the British Museum, and limited restoration has been carried out on the face of Ann Cooke, where the "skin" was peeling off.

The real story of Gorhambury, so far as we know it at present, begins here. In an age of great constructional activity, Sir Nicholas Bacon was a builder of experience. He had built himself a house at Redgrave, north of Bury St. Edmunds, before he came to Hertfordshire. It is known that other surviving East Anglian houses owed their creation or extension to him. As Treasurer of Gray's Inn he had supervised the rebuilding of the Hall there, between 1553 and 1560. We have relatively little information about the actual construction of Gorhambury, except for one document that has survived in the Lambeth Palace Library amongst the papers of his elder son by his second marriage, Anthony Bacon; nothing has survived amongst the Gorhambury documents.

Traditionally the Queen, on her first visit to Gorhambury in 1570 or 1572, remarked to Sir Nicholas: "My Lord Keeper, what a little house you have gotten" to which her portly host replied: "My house is well, Madam, but you have made me too great for my house". In time for her next visit, accordingly, the House was extended and the long cloister built, with a gallery over, visible in all the surviving drawings.

Today, unfortunately, only a ruin stands in the Park, about a quarter-of-a-mile from the existing Gorhambury. It is, however, one of the few surviving examples of the earliest English domestic Renaissance architecture. As such, the Ministry of Works has agreed to take the ruin over and to save it from further collapse; I am now waiting for

them to start work. As you sit here, however, in the Gorhambury that succeeded the Tudor Gorhambury of Sir Nicholas, you are surrounded by several reminders of its splendour, most of which have some bearing on my subject of "Restoration":

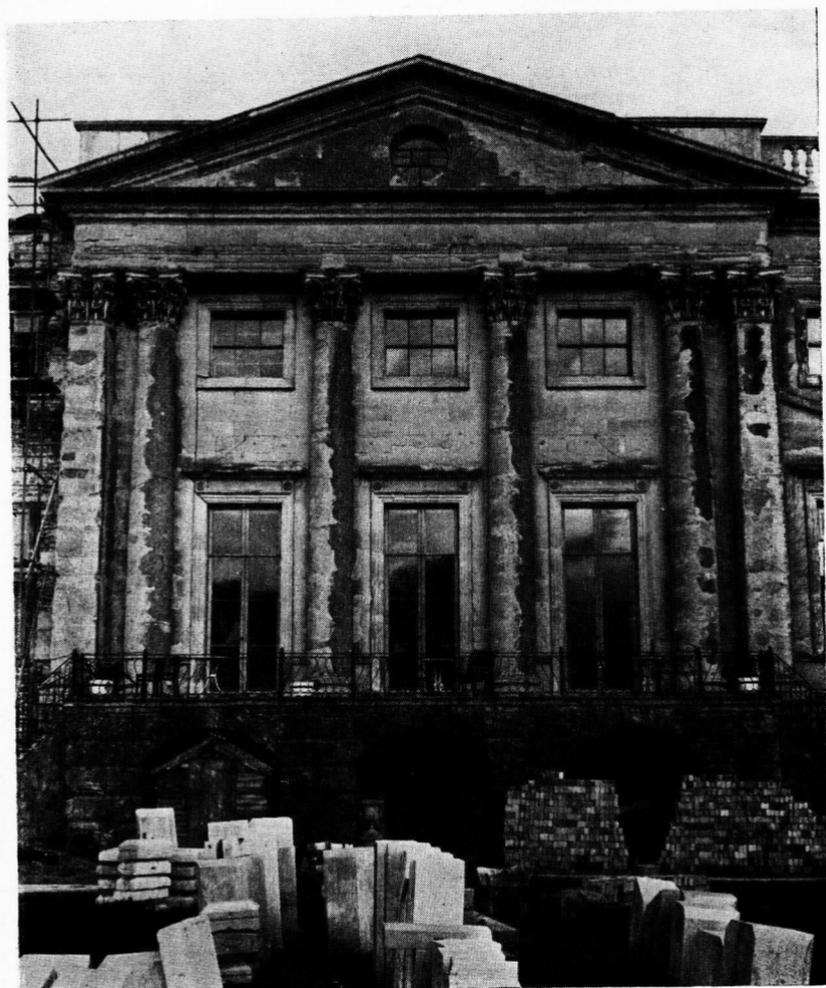
the black-and-white chequered floor beneath you, which extends out under the Corinthian portico of 1784, is made of white Purbeck stone with smaller squares of black marble. We have records of the cost of transporting these stones from the Tudor Gorhambury, in the year 1781.

The marble chimney-piece in this Hall was probably removed from the Tudor Gorhambury by my ancestor, James Bucknall, 3rd Viscount Grimston, when he built this house, and installed (for reasons we do not know) it in a cottage that he built in the Park. There it stood neglected and not used for 170 years, until last year, 1957, when—with general guidance from Sir John Summerson, A.R.I.B.A.—we removed it in badly damaged sections from the Cottage, and had it repaired and reinforced with steel by a monumental mason; the original embellishments were then restored, as accurately as we could trace them, by Mr. Maurice Keevil, who has carried out much similar work for the Ministry of Works at Hampton Court and at Greenwich. The result you see before you, with the Bacon Motto (now the Grimston family motto) in pure Roman letters picked out in gold leaf, as they originally were. This chimney-piece dates from the 16th or early 17th century.

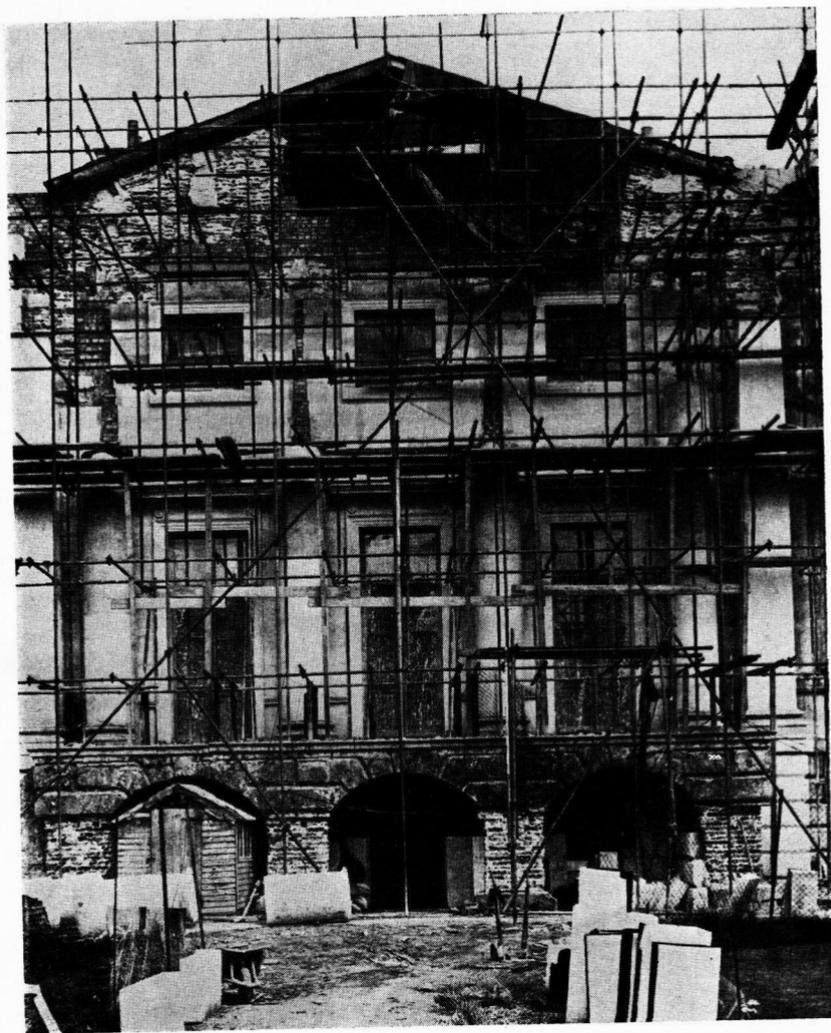
The enamelled glass windows came from the Long Gallery in the Tudor House. They were moved into a conservatory (now dismantled) in the gardens of the present House. In my boyhood the glass was found in sacks in the hay loft in the stables. My mother suspected its value and asked the Victoria & Albert Museum to examine it. They reported that it dated from the late 16th century and was domestic glass now unique of its kind. They mounted it in its present frames and, after being on public exhibition for some years, it returned to Gorhambury in 1939, at the outbreak of War. We are now trying to trace its precise date, history and origin.

On this table are also photostats of the Gorhambury First Quartos of seven of the plays of Shakespeare. These are the earliest that have survived and are still in Britain; they are in excellent condition. They are kept on loan at the Bodleian in Oxford, where they are accessible to scholars and can enjoy the skilled care that they require. They were found in the Library here during the last century, bound up with other papers and pamphlets by some industrious ancestor of mine, in a series of false covers, numerically arranged. This series of 108 volumes of sundry papers we are now cataloguing. It is perhaps legitimate to comment that early manuscripts, or printed papers, of this antiquity and importance, are far more likely to be found—as these were—in a library than in a tomb. The popular press, and our kinsmen across the Atlantic, will no doubt continue to look for such documents immured with the mouldering remains of their authors or their patrons, but they will continue to seek in vain.

Most of the portraits that now hang around you used to hang also in the Tudor Gorhambury, and belonged either to Sir Francis Bacon or to my



The West Portico before restoration ; note the crumbling Totternhoe Clunch



Restoration of the West front with Portland stone, in progress

ancestor, Sir Harbottle Grimston, Second Baronet, Master of the Rolls and Speaker of the House of Commons, who bought the property from Bacon's executors in 1652. Although not the most important portraits in the House, they represent important figures of the Stuart period, many of whom were contemporaries of both Sir Francis Bacon and Sir Harbottle Grimston.

The picture of Charles II over the door behind you is ascribed on the label to Adriaen Hanneman; during the 1920s, on expert advice, it was banished, amongst some of our less worthy canvases, to hang in the St. Albans Town Hall. It was cleaned and restored a couple of years ago, for the first time for many years, revealing the superb reds and blues of Sir Peter Lely. It is possibly the finest version of this portrait of England's most popular king to survive in this country. His childless queen, Catherine of Braganza, painted by Jacob Huysmans, hangs beside him. I may perhaps mention here that Sir Harbottle Grimston was sent to Breda in 1660 to bring back the King, after England's only experiment in dictatorship, having been elected Speaker of the Convention or "restoration" Parliament.

The carpet on the wall opposite is the earliest known English pile carpet. It was still on the floor, unrecognised for what it was, when I was a boy. It is dated 1570, with the Royal Arms in the centre. On the left are the arms of the Borough of Ipswich, where it was probably made by immigrant craftsmen; on the right are the arms of Harbottle. My Mother had the carpet restored by the Victoria & Albert Museum, and it was returned to Gorhambury in the late 1930s. Although not a Bacon possession, it was certainly used by the Grimstons in the Tudor House.

In other parts of the house, as you tour it presently, you will find other possessions which came from the earlier Gorhambury, in particular the best surviving portrait of Francis Bacon, which you will find in the dining-room, with his secretary, Sir Thomas Meautys, beside him—in neither case is the name of the artist known with certainty. On the table here are pictures of the Tudor House; a raised plaque of the head of Julius Caesar from one of the walls; and a coloured floor tile, showing the Bacon boar. We hope perhaps to find more of these tiles, when the Ministry of Works' excavations begin.

I come late in my talk to the present Gorhambury, late only because it is difficult to comment on the maintenance and restoration of what is now here, without giving you first something of the background. The Grimstons have lived at Gorhambury since 1652; they came here from Bradfield, near Manningtree, in Essex, where Sir Harbottle's ghost is still said to drive through the churchyard on windy nights in winter, on his way to the House of Commons. Their home, Bradfield Hall, or what remained of it, was unfortunately pulled down at the end of the last War, without warning and without (so far as I know) precise records having been made of any Elizabethan features that remained. The tombs of the Grimstons were and are in

the chancel of the Church of St. Lawrence at Bradfield. A Victorian organist, Dr. L. G. Hayne, composer of the tunes of "Thy Kingdom come, O God" and "Loving Shepherd of Thy Sheep", caused the tombstones to be removed and inaccessibly dumped under a new organ, which was the apple of his eye. With the help of the Chelmsford Diocese and Mr. Laurence King, F.R.I.B.A., I am planning shortly to restore the tombstones to their original positions and the Chancel to its pristine form. As a by-product of this operation, it will be possible to check the dates of various members of the family, whose pictures are at Gorhambury but whose tombstones lie underneath Dr. Hayne's abominable mid-Victorian organ.

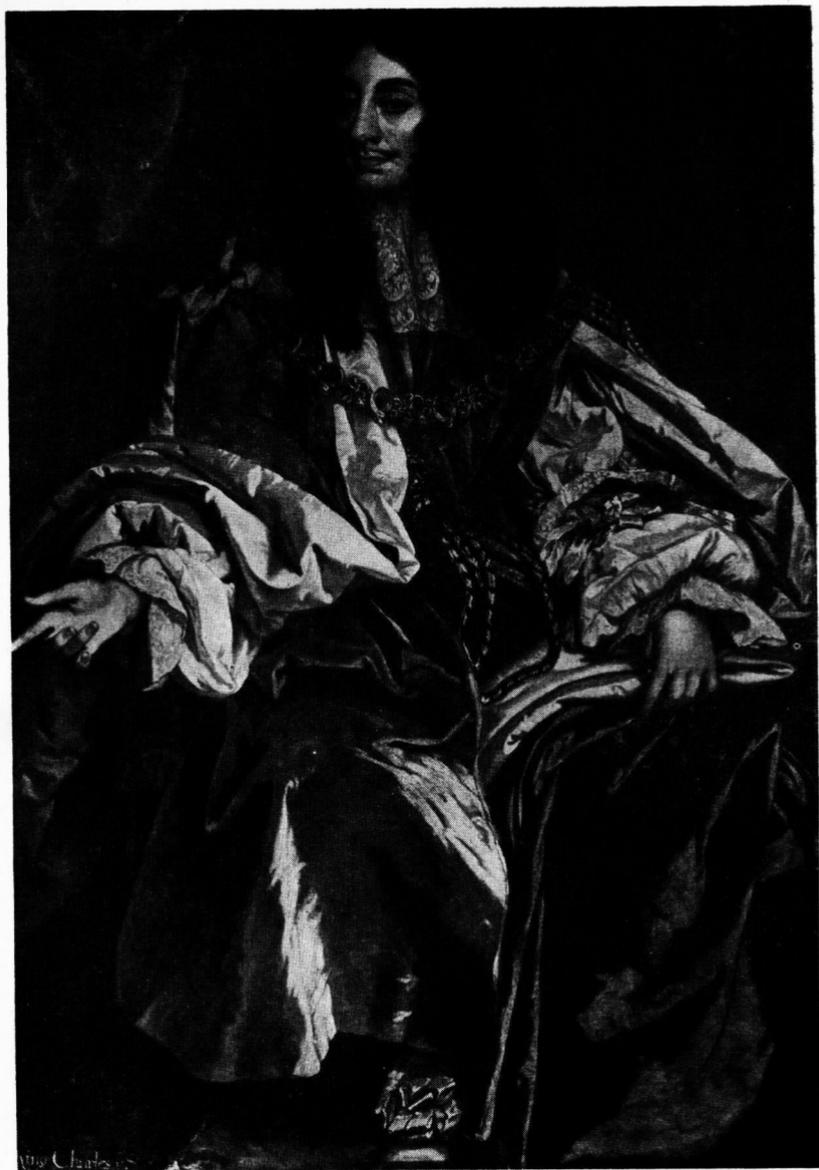
The restoration of Gorhambury and its collections, as they now are, began in earnest in 1909, when my mother married my father; she joined forces with her sister-in-law, Lady Sibyl Grimston (now Lady Sibyl Fraser) and a distant relative, Miss Sybil Reid, who still lives in St. Albans. During the 19th century the family had lost money on horse-racing, a pursuit in which it has not since indulged, but it maintained a possessive, though not perhaps critically appreciative, attitude towards its property. My Aunt Sibyl, Miss Reid and my mother, set to work on a catalogue of the pictures, which was produced in manuscript form in the years before the First World War. After the war Lady Sibyl Fraser was married and living in Scotland, but my mother began (amongst many other duties) to carry on the work on the cataloguing and maintenance of the possessions at Gorhambury, which she had begun at her marriage. There is no doubt that the greater part of what you see intact and restored around you owes its very survival to her work; her premature death, in 1936, at age 49, meant that the work was delayed for at least a decade, because the Battle of Britain was to bring with it, in 1940, the requisitioning of the house as a secret War Office department which, *inter alia*, operated one of the most powerful radio transmitters in Britain on the cricket field in front, and played its part in the planning and operation of the Underground Movements in Poland and Czecho-Slovakia.

During the 1939-1945 War, indeed, much at Gorhambury suffered. All the internal decorations were dirty if not dilapidated. Records, files and papers were disturbed and perhaps lost. One-third of the furniture was burned in a fire in a warehouse. Half the stables were destroyed by fire. The gardens were neglected (and have not yet recovered). Considerable damage was done to many of the pictures, not least by overheating of the rooms (at a time when civilians could not get fuel) and by holly-berries, from successive bureaucratic

Christmases, which were allowed to fall behind the pictures and to lodge between the stretcher and the canvas (you can still see the marks of these berries on many of the pictures, a few inches above the margin of the lower section of the frame). Fortunately, however, we had elected to leave the pictures on the walls and not to have them moved by the Office of Works (as it then was) to some warehouse in Wales, where the damage might have been much worse.

Our first major post-war preoccupation was to have all the pictures rehabilitated. Under the direction of Mr. Oscar Johnson of Leggatt Brothers, St. James's Street, London, S.W.1, a restorer and a framer worked at Gorhambury on at least one day a week for more than a year. Almost every picture, and there were more than two hundred of them, was examined, washed, stripped, revarnished, or restored, as the case might require, and all the frames were likewise examined, repaired, in some cases re-gilded, and put back into service. The cost of this work done at Gorhambury, on the spot, by turning one room into a temporary studio for the duration of the operation, was vastly less than it would have been had it been carried out in London or elsewhere. A few pictures were, however, sent to London for re-lining, a case in point being my great grandfather, the 2nd Earl of Verulam, by James Swinton; you see him in the gallery above us, behind the door, a mid-Victorian portrait of no great distinction but of family value; the heat and fumes rising from the various improvised methods of space heating, adopted by the War Office occupants, had caused the paint to leave the canvas over large areas of the portrait. Re-lined, the picture should now be safe again for a long time to come.

A few paintings of special merit were restored, on the introduction and recommendation of Mr. Oscar Johnson, by Mr. Horace Buttery of Bond Street, London, W.1. As you tour the house presently, I should like you to note especially the two pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in the Yellow Drawing-Room, and two of the major paintings by Sir Nathaniel Bacon, in the Ball Room; these now shine forth with new lustre, after the removal by Mr. Buttery of the dirt of decades and of the yellow varnish placed on them by Victorian restorers. In the Ball Room here there are, incidentally, four of the eight known paintings by Sir Nathaniel Bacon of Culford, half-nephew of Sir Francis Bacon and grandson of Sir Nicholas Bacon by his first marriage. Sir Nathaniel died in 1627, at the age of 42; his only daughter, Anne, married first her cousin Sir Thomas Meautys (Francis Bacon's friend and executor) and secondly, as his second wife, Sir Harbottle Grimston, Second Baronet, Master of the Rolls, by



Portrait of Charles II, by Sir Peter Lely, recently restored (*see page 44.*)

whom she had no issue (we descend from Sir Harbottle's first wife, Mary Croke). I mention these genealogical details because Anne Bacon, daughter of Sir Nathaniel of Culford, was the only Bacon ever to be châtelaine of Gorhambury, and it is likely that, through her, some of the Bacon possessions, and all her father's remarkable paintings, came into the hands of the Grimston family. Of Sir Nathaniel Bacon, Professor E. K. Waterhouse wrote, in 1953:

"The only truly native English painter of real distinction of the generation before Van Dyck was an amateur, Sir Nathaniel Bacon. He painted only for his own family and his works had no influence on his contemporaries . . . By far the most remarkable is the full-length portrait of himself at Gorhambury, which shows the gifted amateur in his study (rather than his studio) and reveals an interest in painting accessories and still life that is repeated in 'The Cookmaid' in the same collection."

The collection of Grimston family portraits at Gorhambury is the longest in existence in this country, in terms of years. We begin with the earliest fully documented portrait of an Englishman, Edward Grimston, by Petrus Christus, signed and dated 1446, and almost every generation is included up to the present. The Petrus Christus painting hangs on loan in the National Gallery, because it is painted on panel and must be kept in an air-conditioned atmosphere. The Grimston portraits, and many of the other pictures here, are regarded—on the death of the head of the family—as being "of National or Historic interest", and accordingly have been exempted from Estate Duty on the deaths of the three Earls of Verulam who have died since Death Duty in its present form was introduced in 1894. A number of other pictures have however paid duty on each occasion. We regarded it, therefore, as part of our post-war job of "restoration", since my father's death in 1949, to have all the non-family pictures valued by two independent valuers, and to sell all those which neither valuer regarded as being worth £50 or more. Some 30 or 40 pictures were sold in this way; in only one case, so far as we know, was a picture sold which was worth substantially more than the value placed on it by either valuer. By this sale we believe that we have helped to keep the collection together, by leaving—I believe—a lesser financial burden for future generations to bear. One of the minor rewards of this operation was that a small dark Flemish picture, described as a "Landscape with Windmill", by an unknown artist, was given a value of £45 by one valuer and £55 by the other; the latter valuation relieved it from the sale-room and, after restoration in 1956, it proved to be a signed and dated Jan Breughel, 1609. This is the "Velvet" Breughel, and not his more famous father



The interior of one of the Coade stone capitals, taken down during the restoration of the West Portico : the name COADE has been stamped on several of these capitals as shown in the illustration



Sixteenth Century stone medallion, from the walls of the Tudor Gorham-bury, showing the stylised head of C. Julius Caesar, now preserved in the present Gorhambury

Pieter; in terms of value it is however worth many times the value placed on it by the two experts.

At this point I should mention that, as far as we can trace, it has never been the practice of my family to buy or sell pictures as a means of accumulating wealth or raising cash, and one hopes that future generations will continue to respect this tradition. For five centuries it has been the practice for each generation to be painted; we do not know why or at whose instigation this tradition was established. These twin facts, linked with the relatively peaceful and unspectacular careers of most members of the family, account for the wealth of paintings that now surround you, to receive which this House had to be built.

As well as the physical work that has been done on the pictures, which have all been rehung in a chronological arrangement, as you will observe, we have started on the preparation of a complete illustrated catalogue, in which I am being most ably assisted by Dr. Pamela Tudor-Craig, who is here today. She is indeed doing the lion's share of the work and we hope to have published the book, fully illustrated, within two years from now, and that it will be more complete and more accurate (and more intelligently critical) than any of the previous four records, which span a period of 170 years approximately.

We have likewise begun on the restoration of the Library, which contains some 8,000 books, and which my mother arranged to have catalogued in the late 1920's. The restoration of books is one of the most difficult and costly of all the operations we have been engaged upon; the first four out of 25 stacks in the Library have now been repaired, rebound where necessary (using the original end-papers and covers), and re-tooled to the original design, where such is still apparent. My mother had likewise undertaken, with skilled assistance, the cataloguing of the great majority of the documents found at Gorhambury, which go back into the Dark Ages. They are now stored, for the most part on loan in the County Archivist's air-conditioned vaults at Hertford, where they are also accessible to scholars. Part of the same work resulted also in the publication of a Catalogue, compiled by the late Dr. Charles Moor, F.S.A., a distant relative, of all the field and place names of all the Gorhambury lands; this work, published in 1927, lists some 1,200 names with all their origins and variations, so far as they can be traced, and with reference to documents dating back to the year 1273 in a few cases, becoming more numerous after the Black Death (1348, when labour became scarce and hedges were planted to contain the cattle), after the Dissolution (1539) and after subsequent Enclosures, each of which added to the continuing record of Gorhambury.

In this context I should like to mention a parallel matter that has bearing on the whole problem of restoration and maintenance. The present and the past two generations of Grimstons have chosen the paths of commerce and of industry, as their life's work, rather than the more comfortable existence of the landed aristocrat (if such still survive). My father, indeed, shocked his contemporaries by serving a five-year apprenticeship in overalls with Beardmore on the Clyde and British Thomson-Houston at Rugby. Without such a policy, of industry rather than agriculture, the Gorhambury collections could not have been kept together in this century, let alone restored from Victorian neglect to the somewhat better condition in which you now see them.

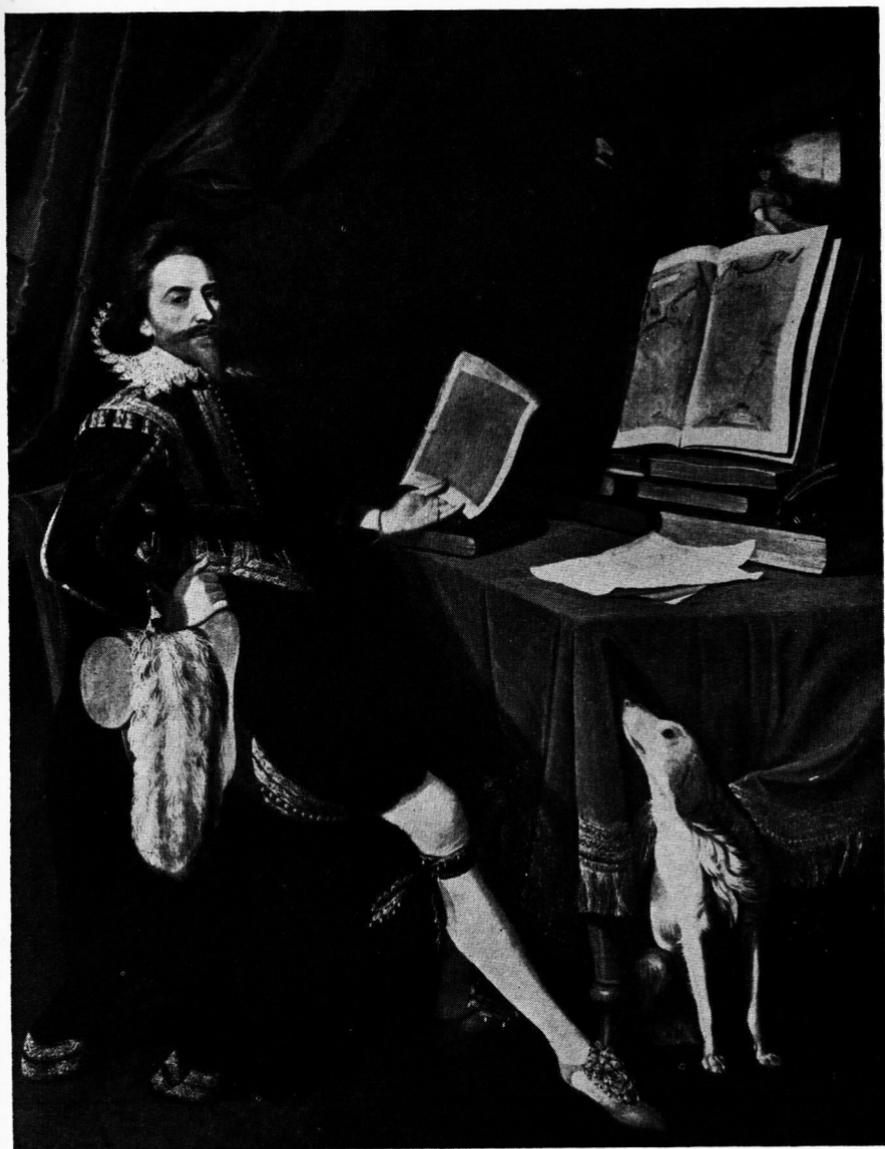
We have not, however, neglected agriculture. In the slump of the early 1930s, my father had to sell a very large part of the Estate, which then measured about 10,000 acres; we were fortunate in that the Crown Lands Commissioners were the buyers, we keeping some 3,000 acres including the land all around the house and the historic sites connected with Verulamium and with Bacon. At the same time, about 25 years ago, we took the whole remaining Estate in hand ourselves, and have worked ever since to keep it together and to improve it. Post-War development of St. Albans has meant that we have lost more acres but the proceeds from these enforced sales have helped with the restorations of which I have already spoken. At the moment the Gorhambury Estate comprises rather more than 2,000 acres, including all the green lands through which you drove as you came here from St. Albans today; it employs nearly 100 people and houses many of them; all the land is in hand and most of it now in good heart; three herds of cattle graze here, we cultivate 400 acres of arable land, and we are replanting all the woodlands—last year 146,000 trees, most of them deciduous, were planted, more probably than at any time since the eighteenth century.

If the old house and its collections are to survive, and to keep in step with the times in which they now find themselves, I believe that Gorhambury must not lose touch with the lands that surround it, and that both must be kept in heart together. That, at least, is the policy that we are following.

And now finally, Mr. Chairman, I have not time to record what we have done, and are doing, to save, recover and restore prints, engravings objets d'art, furniture, china, porcelain, and other items that have been collected at Gorhambury through the centuries. In no instance is the collection a rich one, but in every category there are items of particular interest or value.

I must, however, close with a brief mention of the external restoration that is now taking place, to the very fabric of the 1784 House, of which Sir Robert Taylor was the Architect. He used as his main building material a soft chalky "clunch", from Totternhoe in Bedfordshire. This stone is worked in underground quarries and when exposed to the elements begins to flake and spall; this tendency is accelerated by inclusions in the stone of round ironstone balls, laid down in the primeval sea in which the stone was formed; when water creeps through the stone to these iron lumps, samples of which I have here, the iron rusts and expands, bursting the stone outwards. Various experts had given the fabric of Gorhambury 50 or 100 further years of life, when an approach to the Historic Buildings Council for England, three or four years ago, resulted in a grant of £30,000, to be spread over ten years, to make possible the refacing of the whole of Sir Robert Taylor's fabric, retaining the original Coade Stone capitals and the original Portland features, wherever they had survived, as they have indeed done. A condition of the grant was that the family should finance an additional 50 per cent over and above the Ministry of Works grant, should make good the roof with copper, and should redecorate all the main rooms internally as external repairs are completed, opening the rooms to the public for one day a week in Summer.

Under the architectural direction of Mr. G. W. Dixon of Sedgwick, Weall & Beck, Watford, this work is now in hand. Mr. Roy Jenkins, the foreman mason, is here this afternoon to show you what he has done and what he is now doing on the west face of the building. What you cannot see is that large areas of dry rot, and woodworm, and death-watch beetle, have been removed from the roof and elsewhere, that all remaining timbers have been treated with the appropriate chemical fluids recommended by the Forest Products Research Laboratory of D.S.I.R. at Princes Risborough, and that most of the flat roofs and gutters are already resurfaced with copper sheeting, making the House waterproof, in times of snow, thaw and downpour, for the first time in my lifetime. Mr. Jenkins will show you that, with advice from the Ministry of Works, and from the Building Research Station of D.S.I.R. at Garston, near Watford, we are employing a Portland Stone for the whole of the refacing work, which is now about one third complete. Every detail of the original structure has been surveyed and is being copied precisely, even though no original detailed drawings could be found. The effect at the moment is of startling newness, with none of the texture of age. But for the first time in this century the Architect's original detailing is clear again for all to see, and the stone will mellow.



The Self-Portrait of Sir Nathaniel Bacon of Culford, who died in 1627 and is now generally recognised, although an amateur, as the first great English portrait painter

The Coade stone capitals, some of which bear the name COADE stamped upon them internally, can now be seen at ground level on the west side of the House. They will be re-erected on new columns, for their condition is almost perfect.

This refacing of the stonework, by far the largest restoration that we have yet tackled, will ensure for centuries to come an external fabric that will not involve future generations in costs of the same order, and will at the same time safeguard the interior, which is to remain unaltered in all respects except decorations, as both a repository for its contents and, I dare to hope, as a home that will long continue to be lived in by Grimstons.

