



<http://kentarchaeology.org.uk/research/archaeologia-cantiana/>

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382

© 2017 Kent Archaeological Society

BARHAM COURT: HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

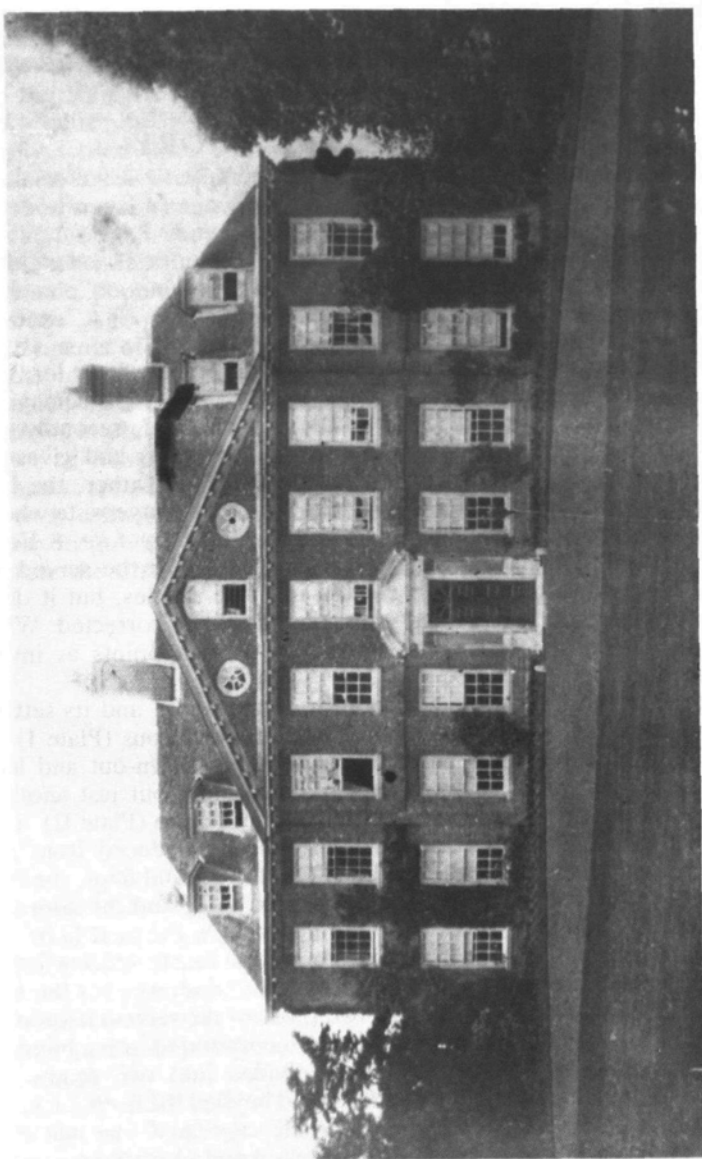
PHILIP H. BLAKE

Barham Court, for around 300 years the seat of the later lords of Barham, has been described in considerable detail first, somewhat carelessly, by Sir Martin (later Lord) Conway and, secondly, by Mrs Lavinia Handley-Read, who fills in many gaps and gives an interesting account of the association between her father, the late Evelyn Stainton, of Barham Court, and Sir Edwin Lutyens, to whose designs the house was remodelled in 1912 (*Country Life*, 8 Feb., 1919, and 30 Sept., 1971). No useful purpose is to be served by repeating architectural details treated in those articles, but it does seem desirable that errors and omissions should be corrected. What follows, therefore, takes into account only such points as invite comment.

The first of these is the appearance of the house and its setting before alteration – simple, dignified and unpretentious (Plate I) — and as it appeared after enlargement – stark, blown-out and lopsided – neither simple manor house nor mansion, but just another fine and compact house ‘improved’ beyond all reason (Plate II). The internal divisions in the original house can be deduced from the curtains and blinds! Going from the left on the ground floor, the first three windows are the dining room; the next three and the doorway are the hall, and the last two are the library. On the next floor the principal bedroom is over the dining room, the fourth window being that of a small dressing room. The next three windows over the hall are the drawing-room and the last two those of the second bedroom.

Under Lutyens the dressing room was incorporated into a boudoir created when the drawing-room was divided into two rooms. A glimpse of the new arrangement can be had beyond the fireplace in an illustration to Sir Martin Conway’s article captioned ‘the hall fireplace’, which is in reality the boudoir fireplace and a Lutyens creation. It replaces the old drawing-room fireplace, which was considered too

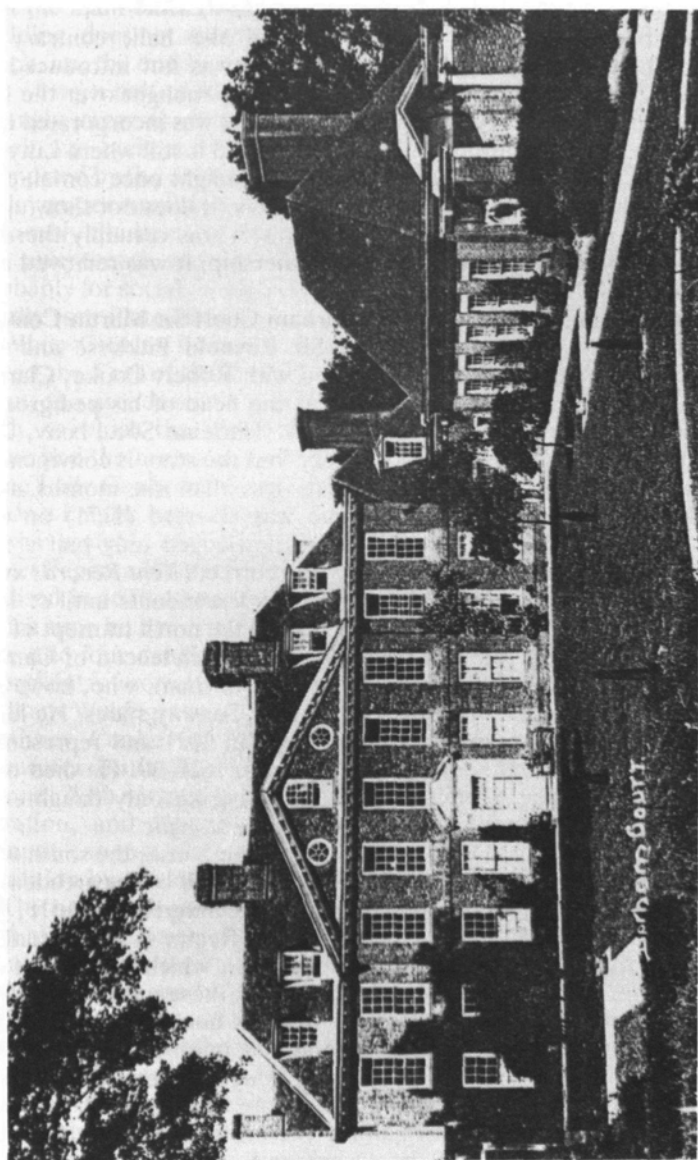
PLATE I



Barham Court, c. 1865.

BARHAM COURT

PLATE II



Barham Court, c. 1930.

big for the smaller room. The fireplace in the other room is likewise new and a Lutyens design. It did not previously exist.

The black and white marble floor of the hall, contrary to Mrs Handley-Read's belief, is original and was not introduced by Lutyens, nor did he modify the fireplace. The fanlight over the hall door, although removed from its proper place, was incorporated into a division of the bathroom on the first floor and is still where Lutyens placed it. The broken pediment above the fanlight once contained a carving of the arms of Dering. Unfortunately, it does not show up in the photograph of the original house, but it was certainly there in 1911. Not being relevant to the new ownership, it was removed and has now vanished.

In his account of the history of Barham Court Sir Martin Conway repeats the hoary-headed fable of Sir Reynold FitzUrse and the murder of Becket. This tale originated with Robert Cooke, Clarenceux King of Arms, who hints at it at the head of his pedigree of Barham in the *Visitation of Kent, 1574* (Harleian Soc., lxxiv, 26). What his source was remains a mystery, but the story is convincingly disproved by the recorded fact that, less than six months after Becket's death, Lambert de Berham was assessed (1171) on one knight's fee in Barham, though he acknowledged only half a fee, which later assessments confirm as being correct (*Kent Records* xviii, 27). The manor remained with Lambert's descendants until c. 1597 when it was conveyed with the lordship and the north transept of the church to the Ven. Charles Fotherby, then Archdeacon of Canterbury and Rector of Aldington, by Thomas Barham, who, however, was not the last of his family, as Sir Martin Conway states. He left a son, Anthony, who emigrated to Virginia in 1621 and represented Mulberry Island in the House of Burgesses, 1629-30. He died on a visit to England in September, 1641, leaving an only daughter in Virginia, of whom nothing further has come to light.

It seems probable that the oldest part of the house, the south-west wing, now called Anne Court (Plate III), was built by the archdeacon who, even before he was appointed Dean of Canterbury in 1615, was a rich cleric. Besides being Archdeacon and Rector of Aldington, he was also from 1600 Rector of Bishopsbourne, which was one of the best livings in the archbishop's gift, and all these appointments he retained with that of dean. Whether the new house was built on the site of an older building may be doubted inasmuch as what was clearly the manor house when Fotherby bought the estate survives in the 'Wealden'-type house near the lychgate of the church and now divided into two dwellings. In all the circumstances a date about the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century would seem to apply best to the beginnings of the present house.

What happened next is not easy to determine, but it is significant that the main block, which lies roughly at right angles to the original building, does not appear to be 'all of a piece'. If the south end of the block, i.e. the end facing the church, is examined it will be found that the western half of the wall is not bonded to the eastern half, which strongly suggests, if it does not positively indicate, that the main block was built in two pieces at different times. This inference is supported by the existence of two parallel roofs above the wall, with a valley gutter running between them. The front, or eastern, portion is obviously the later, so that the rear portion must have been built in the seventeenth century. The most likely time was about 1630 and probably for social reasons, combined with the needs of an expanding family (see Plate III).

When Charles Fotherby was still archdeacon, Avis Lady Cooke asked the Earl of Salisbury to favour an offer of marriage made by John, the archdeacon's son and heir, to her eldest daughter, Elizabeth, to which the archdeacon objected. His opposition was overcome and the marriage took place, but within seven months of it the same Lady Cooke was begging that her son-in-law Fotherby might be made a knight, her 'daughter's worth and birth being much disgraced by that match' (J.M. Cowper, *The Deans of Canterbury*, 68, quoting State Papers, Domestic). Her hopes and desires were eventually realised in 1628 when John Fotherby was knighted at Whitehall, by which time he had a considerable family that finally amounted to five sons and four daughters. Lady Cooke had some justification for her complaint of social inequality. She herself was the daughter of Sir William Waldegrave, of Smallbridge, Suffolk, and her husband, Sir Anthony Cooke, of Gidea Hall, Essex, was a nephew of Lord Treasurer Burleigh and a first cousin of Lord Keeper Sir Francis Bacon. With such connections Sir John's uncle, a bishop of two years' duration, and his grand-father, a mayor of Grimsby, could not compete, so that he had good reason on two counts for improving his condition by enlarging his house.

The next enlargement was the addition of the formal front, and it was almost certainly due to marriage. Its remarkable similarity to Bourne House, Bishopsbourne, needs no emphasis and suggests the same architect or builder and a date near the beginning of the eighteenth century. At that time the owner of Barham Court was Captain Charles Fotherby, R.N., M.P. for Queenborough, 1713-15, who on 13th December, 1706, married Mary, the eldest daughter and co-heir of George Elcocke, of Madekin, in Barham, who brought him that estate and others. In 1711, his mother-in-law, his wife's surviving parent, died, which put an end to any demands upon his wife that her mother may have had and released her full inheritance. Thus, a



Barham Court: Original Jacobean wing on left; Carolean addition, with Lutyens doorway, on right.



Barham Court: Bedroom in Lutyens' kitchen wing.

first-class opportunity arose to modernise and improve their house by making a major addition. Since Captain Fotherby died in 1720 leaving a widow and two children not yet in their teens, the front block must have been constructed in the previous decade, but whether before or after his membership of Parliament, it is not easy to say. It was at that time, also, that the splendid trees of the park were planted, although the hurricane of October 1987, played havoc with nearly half of them.

It was Captain Fotherby's daughter and heir, Mary, that brought the manor and lordship of Barham to the Derings when she married Sir Edward, of Surrenden-Dering, the fifth baronet, in 1735 as his second wife. It remained in that family until the death in 1911 of George Edward Dering, of Lockleys, Welwyn, Herts., who had inherited it from his uncle in 1880. He never occupied it himself, but he let it furnished for some years to Edward Robert Sworder, a close relation of the senior partner in his firm of solicitors, Messrs Sworder and Longmore, of Hertford, and the Sworder children were born and baptised at Barham. The widow of one of them visited the Court with her daughter, Mrs Clark, of Fresno, California, in September, 1971. It is, therefore, not true to say, as Sir Martin Conway does, that the house had fallen into decay and was uninhabitable. Redecoration and minor repairs would no doubt have been needed, but not major reconstruction and enlargement, since the house was big enough already for any ordinary family, as Mrs Handley-Read points out. When not occupied it was in the continuous charge of a caretaker and the owner visited it annually.

The last owner-occupier was the late Nathaniel Evelyn William Stainton, who bought the house and park, not after 'one or two sales', as Sir Martin Conway states, but direct from Dering's heirs on 12 July, 1911, for £5,100. He immediately proceeded to enlarge it, though it was not really a suitable subject for enlargement, being rendered incapable of extension on one side by the churchyard and seriously restricted on the other by the public road. One wonders why a larger property was not bought in the first place, for the additions, though meritorious, were anything but an improvement. The task of expansion was entrusted to Sir Edwin Lutyens, who had no option but to site his additions at right angles to the main block on the north side. It is generally considered that as seen from the road the additional wings present a formidable and forbidding, if not a downright ugly, aspect.

The observer is faced with an expanse of unrelieved brick, 120 ft. long by about 30 ft. high, broken only by the entrance vestibule, over which is a massive block of stone. A huge chimney stack, 10 ft. 4 in. wide, tops the wall of each wing, adding substantially to the

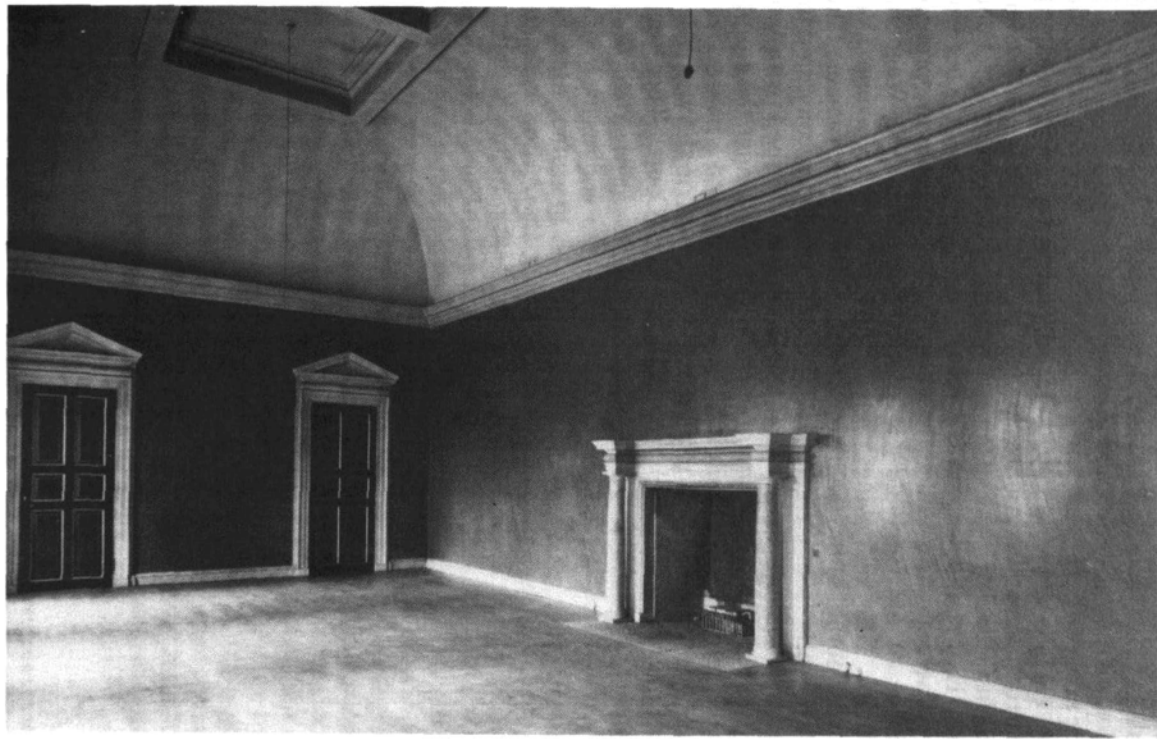
BARHAM COURT

ponderous and overpowering effect. The architect, however, is not wholly to be blamed for this result, for he was following his instructions to ensure absolute privacy. The difficulties of his task are further accentuated by the fact that communication between the upper floors of the old west wing and the new necessitated building a bridge! Then again, lack of space made it impossible to balance the new east, or drawing-room, wing, which was at right angles to the main block at the north end, with a compensating wing at the south end. Lutyens dealt with this problem by building a massive and high, though not unattractive, brick wall, about 50 ft. long, with a stone niche, which, however, serves no other useful purpose. And what was the end result of this extensive and expensive building? A new kitchen wing and domestic offices, with two bedrooms above (Plate IV), and on the ground floor a new drawing-room and no less than four halls and an entrance vestibule! Despite all this there is no disguising the fact that one is entering the side of the house. During World War II it was used as an E.N.S.A. hostel, and it was then that it was visited by Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of the American President. During the Napoleonic War it was the residence of General Sir Charles Grey (later Earl Grey) when Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Districts. It was during that time, in August 1797, that the Duke of York, then Head of the Army, breakfasted with Sir Charles at Barham Court after reviewing the troops on Barham Downs. He again visited Grey at Barham Court, accompanied by Pitt and Henry Dundas, Secretary of War and Treasurer of the Navy, on 5 September, 1799, before embarking for the Continent at Deal the following day. It is worth observing that in its old form Barham Court proved satisfactory to its owners for two centuries, but in its new form it was discarded after little more than 35 years.

It was about 1947 that Mr Stainton's widow sold the house and gave the family chancel to the church. The buyer was Robert Comyn Boucher, an extensive fruit farmer, of Newlands, in Teynham, who had intended to open it as a school for mentally backward boys. His scheme fell through and he sold out in 1950 to Hugh Victor Henshaw, a property developer, who divided his interest with his partner, Denis Hamlin, the latter having the two back wings as part of his share. The main block was divided into three flats and, although it was quite unnecessary to mutilate the staircase, which was a special feature of the house, the bannisters and newel post of the landing on the first floor were removed by Mr Henshaw for insertion in a building he was converting at Petham. At the same time he removed the Chinese paper in the principal bedroom (Plate V), described by Mrs Handley-Read, and also the fire grates, except the duck's nest grate in the back



Barham Court: Principal bedroom, showing Chinese paper.



Barham Court: The Lutyens drawing-room wing.

bedroom on the first floor. The wood and composition floor of the hall inside the vestibule, which had decayed in recent years, has been replaced by an attractive and appropriate floor in black and white marble by Mr Simon Lait, the present owner of this flat. Otherwise the floors are of tongued and grooved oak boards, $1\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick.

The new drawing-room wing, a 20 ft. double cube, i.e. 40 ft. long (Plate VI), was converted by Mr Henshaw into a separate dwelling of sitting-room, two bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom, with a false ceiling inserted below the cornice. The Lutyens fireplace was retained and his 'East Hall' approach is used as a hall-dining room. This wing, now named Stainton Lodge, has been for many years the principal residence of Sir Reginald Goodall, the distinguished Wagnerian conductor. The rear wings, now called respectively Anne Court (from the period of the main house) and Anton House (a name taken by Mr Hamlin from a cigar box!) have likewise been converted into separate dwellings, but, since this was accomplished with little significant modification, no comment is needed. Under the Lutyens scheme the original outbuildings were removed and a new series of garages, storerooms, outhouses, etc., was erected on the west side of Church Lane beside the medieval Barham Court. These were eventually converted into two bungalows.