

Chapter 11

Normanton

Sheila Sleath and Robert Ovens



Normanton Park, looking south from Sykes Spinney in 1820 (Mary Grylls)

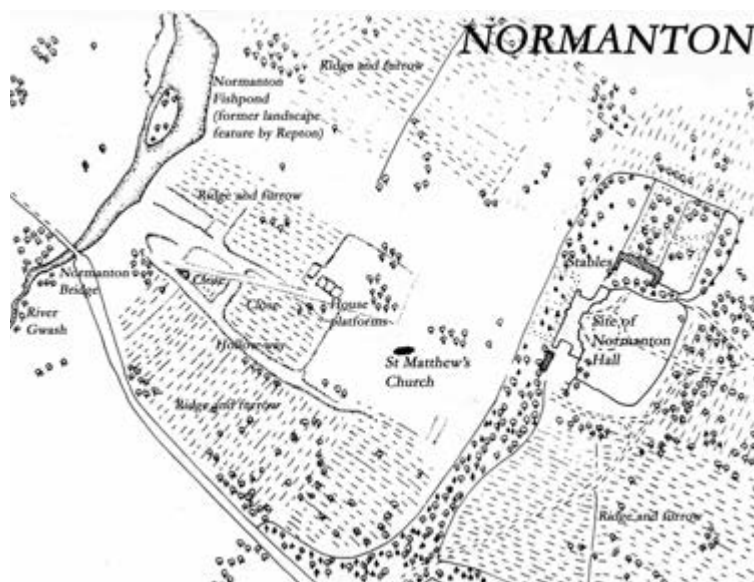
The Heathcote family acquired the Normanton Estate about 1729 and, by the end of the eighteenth century, had created a park in the small parish of Normanton. Within the bounds of the park were Normanton House, the parsonage, and a few houses. There were no other habitations in the parish outside the park. The house, now referred to as Normanton Hall, eventually became, by succession, the seat of the Earls of Ancaster.

In 1924-25, the bulk of the Normanton Estate was sold and the mansion was demolished in 1926. The Gwash valley, home to Normanton Park for two centuries, might have continued as fertile farmland for perpetuity had not Royal Assent been given in 1970 for a large reservoir to be built there. Little remains of the former park, but the church, now Normanton Church Museum, stands at the edge of the water as a very visible and treasured memorial to the past.

The Early Village of Normanton

Before Rutland Water was created, surviving earthworks identified the location of the medieval village of Normanton (after Hartley)

For many centuries before the creation of Rutland Water, there was a village at Normanton. Evidence existed in the form of earthworks to the north-west of the present church consisting of a hollow way, closes and building platforms. Records show that there were 29 taxpayers in 1377 giving an estimated village population of 150. The Military Survey of 1522 suggests a population of about 90.



The Military Survey of Normanton in 1522

King Henry VIII ordered his chancellor, Cardinal Wolsey, to devise a survey that would discover people's wealth. The ostensible purpose of the survey was to muster and ready the King's subjects for war against France. However, there was also a fiscal reason behind the survey and it formed the basis of loans demanded later in 1522 and early 1523, and also the basis of the Lay Subsidy of 1524-25.

In 1522 Commissioners were sent out, ordering a survey of landowners' wealth and possessions and also of armour and arms. Everyone, whether clerical or lay, was required to state on oath the value of his goods and, where appropriate, the annual value of his lands, benefice or stipend. All males over the age of 16 were listed.

Many of these documents survive and they are acknowledged to be a valuable source of economic and social history. The following names are taken from the return for Normanton. From this list, historians can deduce that the population of Normanton in 1522 was about 90.

George Mackworth Esquire is chief lord of the Town *
 William Ouerton is Steward of the Town *
 Thomas Walker is parson of the Town
 Peter Stevyn is parish priest of the Town
 Thomas Greneham the younger, gent and farmer to the parson

Bill man John Naillour husbandman ♦
 William Sherwood husbandman ♦
 Richard Smyth husbandman ♦

Bill man George Swetbon husbandman ♦
 Thomas Hoston husbandman ♦
 Thomas Meryll husbandman ♦
 Issabell Sherwood widow ♦
 Thomas Tilton husbandman ♦
 Simon Swaffeld gentleman has land at Normanton *
 Thomas Sherrard Esquire has land at Normanton *
 John Smyth labourer and tenant to Simon Swaffeld
 William Sherwood the younger labourer

Archer Robert Walker servant, young man & poor
 Bill man John Taillor labourer, young man & poor
 Bill man John Meryll labourer, young man & poor
 Bill man John Sherwood servant, young man & poor

* non-residents ♦ tenants of George Mackworth

It is possible to trace the manor of Normanton back to the twelfth century when it was held by the Umfravilles. It later passed to the Normanville family, then to William de Basing in 1315 and eventually to the Mackworth family of Derbyshire in the fifteenth century. On inheriting the estate, Thomas Mackworth made Normanton his main residence.

Archbishops' Visitations at the end of the sixteenth and in the early part of the seventeenth centuries show that there were problems in the parish of Normanton. The low morals of Henry Tampion, Rector from 1572 to 1629, and his curate led to their respective suspensions in 1590 and 1591. Tampion also frequently declined to wear his surplice and failed to hold regular prayers and services.

Normanton Visitations

Visitations were regular and formal visits by an Archbishop, Bishop or Archdeacon to the parishes under his control, or to a convenient central meeting place, usually in conjunction with a fact-finding exercise. The records of many visitations have survived and they provide a unique insight into the condition of the church and the behaviour of those connected with the church.

The visitations to Normanton at the end of the sixteenth century show the church was neglected and in poor condition, much of it, no doubt, being due to the attitude of the incumbent, Henry Tampion, who was Rector from 1572 to 1629:

- 1589: Tampion was reported as being a common gamester and haunter of alehouses.
- 1590: Tampion had not received the Communion for more than twelve months; his maidservant was a lewd woman and not fit to be in his house; he had allowed the chancel windows to fall into decay.
- 1593: There was brawling in the church, and a Thomas Pope was presented for being a common swearer and a notorious sleeper during divine service.
- 1604: Instead of reading prayers one Sunday Tampion played at the tables with the schoolmaster at Hambleton.
- 1605: The church windows were daubed up with mortar; the pulpit was unfit to use, the communion table in a very bad condition and the seats broken and out of repair.

Several descendants of the Mackworth family became sheriffs and Members of Parliament for Rutland. In the second quarter of the seventeenth century, Sir Henry Mackworth rebuilt the manor house and this is illustrated in Wright's *Rutland*, published in 1684. In 1723 Sir Thomas Mackworth sold the manor of Empingham with Normanton and his other estates in Rutland to Charles Tryon of Bulwick, Northamptonshire. Within six years Gilbert Heathcote, the eldest son of an alderman of Chesterfield, had become the new owner.



The Heathcote coat of arms. Ermine three roundels vert each charged with a cross or (RO)

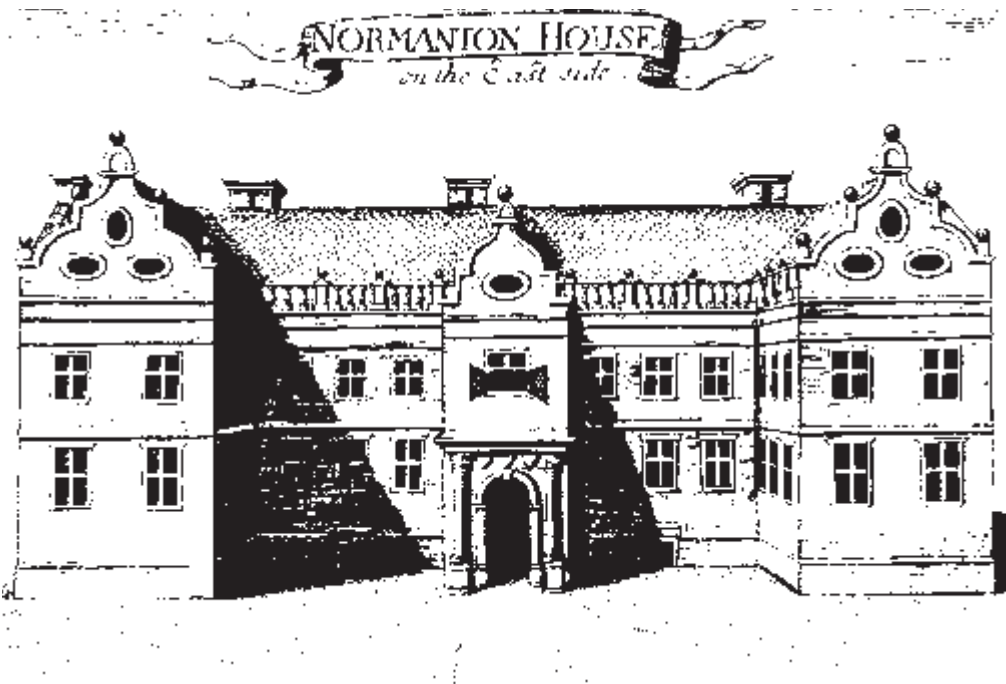
Normanton Hearth Tax Return, 1665

The tax on hearths was introduced in 1662 to help pay off the huge national debt inherited from the Commonwealth period (1649-60). All householders were liable to pay two shillings per year for every hearth, but some were exempt on grounds of poverty and low rent.

The surviving hearth tax returns can be used to estimate levels of population, prosperity and poverty. In the following, the Lady Hartoppe was responsible for Normanton House which was then in the ownership of Sir Thomas Mackworth. She had to pay for 23 hearths at two shillings, a total of £2 6s.

The Lady Hartoppe	23
Mr. Heaton	4
Edward Malson	2
Peregrine Moles	1
Mary Freere	1
John Harrison	1
John Bloodworth	1
William Woodard	1
Francis Charter	1
Curbert Bridges	1
Abel Vine	1 Not chargeable
Widdow Tailor	1 Not chargeable

Peregrine Moles (Constable)



*Normanton House
from a plate
engraved at the
cost of Sir
Thomas
Mackworth
(Wright 1684, 94)*

The Heathcotes of Normanton

Sir Gilbert Heathcote retired to Normanton after a distinguished career as a merchant. He had been a director of the East India Company, founder and Governor of the Bank of England, Member of Parliament for the City of London on four occasions, and Lord Mayor of London. Without doubt he was a remarkable man. He was knighted by Queen Anne in 1702 and created a baronet just eight days before his death on 25th January 1732. He was reputed to be ‘the richest commoner in England’ and he left a huge fortune (£700,000) including many large estates. He was interred in the crypt at Normanton Church and a memorial by Rysbrack was erected to his memory. The following is an extract from this memorial:

‘A Person of Great Natural Endowments, improved by long Experience, Ready to Apprehend, slow to Determine, Resolute to Act . . . In his Character unblemished, in his *Extensive* Trade without a *Lawsuit*.’



Above left: From a portrait at Grimsthorpe Castle of Sir Gilbert Heathcote, 1st Baronet (Grimsthorpe & Drummond Castle Trust)

Above: Rysbrack's memorial to Sir Gilbert Heathcote. It was removed from Normanton Church and is now in the north aisle of Edith Weston Church. The crossed sword and mace are symbols of the Lord Mayor of London (RO)



Left: The inscriptions on Sir Gilbert Heathcote's memorial (RO)

The Coming of Age of Sir Gilbert Heathcote

The following account from *The Gentleman's Magazine* (vol 64, 949), describes the festivities on Empingham Heath to celebrate the coming of age of Sir Gilbert Heathcote in 1794. He was only 12 years of age when his father, the third baronet, died in 1785:

'Oct. 4. A very elegant fête was given by Sir Gilbert Heathcote, on the occasion of coming of age, to all the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood, and to near 820 of his *Lincoln* and *Rutland* tenantry. The assembled multitude was so great, that it appeared as if the whole of the surrounding country had joined in a general sentiment of congratulation to the heir of the hospitable mansion of Normanton.

'An encampment was formed in a commanding situation on Empingham heath, about seven hundred feet in length and two hundred in breadth. At the top was a pavilion for the ladies in which a table was spread with the most luxurious viands, and elegantly decorated. On each side down the lawn were covered booths, extending the whole length of the encampment, containing a profusion of generous cheer, placed on tables, sufficient for the accommodation of three thousand people.

'On the wings at each end of the pavilion, were the depots of provision. Six oxen, thirty sheep, and eight waggon-loads of bread, formed part of the immense quantity consumed, and these were diluted with forty butts [*sic*] of wine, punch, and old ale. An ox and several sheep were roasted whole before the encampment, and distributed to the populace, with very copious showers of bread. The order of the entertainment was admirably preserved.

'The company began to assemble at twelve o'clock, the carriages entering at the lower end of the encampment, passing up the line, and delivering their bright charge at the pavilion, where they were received by the elegant and accomplished Lady Heathcote. To describe the manly and attentive conduct of the worthy host, and the beauty and courtesy of the fair hostess, might appear to strangers to be the dictate of adulation; but all who were present will allow that the language of panegyric would be only the simple voice of truth.

'When the ladies were assembled, the pavilion displayed a most captivating scene of fashion and of grace. On a sudden was descried, on the road from Empingham, a long line of cavalry, as far as the eye could reach: they were the patriot bands of Lincoln and Rutland Yeomanry, in complete uniform, except their arms; those were useless at a festival of peace. The compliment of precedence was politely yielded to the former by Lord Winchelsea, and a most animating spectacle it was to see them enter; preceded by their regimental bands, they marched up the encampment in double files, parading in front of the pavilion, and saluting as they passed, the Stamford band receiving them with "Britons strike home."

'Having disposed of their horses at pickets, provided for the purpose, they marched back on foot to the encampment, and took their seats at tables, the Lincoln on the right, and the Rutland on the left of the pavilion. The tenantry were seated next to them, accompanied by their numerous families and friends; and the glass and brown jug had a brisk circulation, and powerful effect. When the dinner was over, a circle of vast size was formed by the Yeomanry, linking their arms together, and surrounded by the tenants.

'Within the circle the ladies and gentlemen assembled, with the different bands of music and bugle horns. Several excellent songs, in allusion to the families of Rutland and Heathcote, and complimentary to the corps, were sung on the occasion. Various races, and other sports to which prizes were affixed, were proclaimed for the entertainment of the company; but the day was too short for the performance of them all. At sun-set, magnificent fire-works were displayed, and a vast bonfire closed the whole of this noble and delightful entertainment.'

Sir Gilbert Heathcote's son, Sir John Heathcote, was also a director of the East India Company and a trustee of the British Museum. Sir John was succeeded by his son, Gilbert, in 1759 and by his grandson, another Gilbert, in 1785. This latter Gilbert, the fourth baronet, administered Normanton until 1851, a period of sixty-six years. During this time many changes were made to the Hall and the estate. He was Member of Parliament for Rutland in nine Parliaments between 1812 and 1841. This Sir Gilbert was a great sporting man; he was a patron of the turf and maintained a large racing establishment purely for the love of racing. He ran for fame, not money. When he won, his prize was always shared with those less fortunate than himself. He was also Master of the Cottesmore Hunt from 1802 to 1806.

In succeeding years the heirs to Normanton acquired the titles of Baron Aveland (1856), Lord Willoughby de Eresby (1888) and Earl of Ancaster (1892). All these titles related to their Lincolnshire estates. The barony of Willoughby de Eresby is an ancient title brought to the family by marriage, and, unusually, is inherited through the female line. The other titles are elevations of the family.

Although Grimsthorpe Castle, near Bourne, Lincolnshire, was inherited in 1892, the 1st Earl of Ancaster used Normanton as his main country residence until the marriage in 1905 of his son, Lord Willoughby de Eresby, who became the 2nd Earl. It was then that Normanton became the latter's home, and the 1st Earl resided at Grimsthorpe Castle. The 2nd Earl of Ancaster sold the bulk of the Normanton Estate in 1924-25. However, the site of the demolished Normanton Hall, along with some adjoining land and buildings, was not sold until the early 1950s.



*From a portrait at
Grimsthorpe Castle of
the 1st Earl of Ancaster
(Grimsthorpe &
Drummond Castle Trust)*

The Death of the 1st Earl of Ancaster

The 1st Earl's death (24th December 1910) was announced in the 30th December's edition of the *Stamford Mercury*.

'As a landlord, he was always generous and considerate, and extremely popular with his tenantry. It is not yet forgotten how, in the agricultural hard times of 1904, the Earl made his tenants a welcome Christmas present by remitting a considerable portion of their rent.'

His funeral held at Edenham Church, near to Grimsthorpe, Lincolnshire, was fully reported in the following edition. Also reported:

'At Empingham a memorial service was held at the parish church . . . while the funeral was taking place at Edenham. The service was conducted by the Rev. T. W. Owen (Rector) and was most impressive. In the evening a half-muffled peal was rung on the church bells and after the evening's service on Sunday the "Dead March" in Saul was played by the organist, Miss Dawson.'

*From a portrait at
Grimsthorpe Castle
of the 2nd Earl of
Ancaster
(Grimsthorpe &
Drummond Castle
Trust)*



Family Tree of the Heathcotes of Normanton Hall

Gilbert Heathcote (1625-1690) of Chesterfield

= **Ann Dickins**

Eight sons, all but one being merchant adventurers.

He was succeeded by his eldest son:

Sir Gilbert Heathcote (1651-1732) 1st Baronet

= **Hester Rayner** (died 1714)

Governor of the Bank of England, Mayor of London and MP.

Purchased the estate of Empingham with Normanton from Charles Tryon of Bulwick *circa* 1729.

He was succeeded by his eldest son:

Sir John Heathcote (1689-1759) 2nd Baronet

= **Bridget White** (died 1772)

He was succeeded by his eldest son:

Sir Gilbert Heathcote (1722-1785) 3rd Baronet

= (1) **Marguerite Yorke** (died 1796)

= (2) **Elizabeth Hudson** (died 1813)

He was succeeded by his eldest son:

Sir Gilbert Heathcote (1773-1851) 4th Baronet

= (1) **Katherine Sophia Manners** (died 1825)

= (2) **Mrs Eldon** (died 1842)

He was succeeded by his eldest son:

Sir Gilbert John Heathcote (1795-1867) 1st Baron Aveland of Aveland, 5th Baronet

= **Clementina Elizabeth Drummond-Burrell**

Baroness Willoughby de Eresby (died 1888)

He was succeeded by:

Sir Gilbert Henry Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby (1830-1910)

1st Earl of Ancaster, 25th Lord Willoughby de Eresby, 2nd Lord Aveland of Aveland, 6th Baronet

= **Evelyn Elizabeth Gordon** (died 1921)

He was succeeded by:

Sir Gilbert Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby (1867-1951)

2nd Earl of Ancaster, 26th Lord Willoughby de Eresby, 3rd Lord Aveland of Aveland, 7th Baronet

= **Eloise Breese** (died 1953)

Following the death of the Dowager Countess of Ancaster, the bulk of the Normanton Estate was sold and by 1926 the house had been demolished. Grimsthorpe Castle, Lincolnshire, then became the family home.

He was succeeded by:

Sir Gilbert James Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby (1907-1983)

3rd Earl of Ancaster, 27th Lord Willoughby de Eresby, 4th Lord Aveland of Aveland, 8th Baronet

= **Nancy Phyllis Louise Astor** (died 1975)

Normanton Hall in the 1901 Census

The Census Return of 1901 for Normanton includes Normanton Hall. It shows that Gilbert Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby, 1st Earl of Ancaster, and his wife Evelyn, had a household of 27 servants living at the Hall. It is interesting to note that only one of these, Walter Stone, was born in Rutland. Four of the Earl's daughters were still living at home and the family had five visitors on the night of the Census, making the total occupancy 39. A further fourteen of the Earl's staff, mainly grooms and gardeners, were living in the stables and elsewhere in the Hall grounds. The total number of people in the parish on the night of the Census was 80.

NAME	RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD	AGE	OCCUPATION	PLACE OF BIRTH
Ancaster Gilbert H D Willoughby	Head	70	Peer of United Kingdom	Portman Lane, London
Ancaster Evelyn E H D Willoughby	Wife	55		Overton Longville, Hunts
Margaret M H D Willoughby	Daughter	35		Belgrave Lane, London
Nina H D Willoughby	Daughter	31		Belgrave Square, London
Alice H D Willoughby	Daughter	24		Belgrave Square, London
Mary A H D Willoughby	Daughter	22		Belgrave Square, London
Robert Heathcote	Visitor	57	Living on own means	Aix la Chapelle
Edith Heathcote	Visitor	45		Eaton Square, London
Robert E M Heathcote	Visitor	16		Manton, Rutland
Sibyl B W Heathcote	Visitor	22		Queen's Gate Tce, London
George G Aston	Visitor	39	Major, Royal Artillery	Cape Town, Cape Colony
Mary Ross	Servant	36	Laundry Maid (Domestic)	Lesswade, Scotland
Emily Muirhead	Servant	26	Laundry Maid (Domestic)	Edinburgh, Scotland
Caroline Busby	Servant	25	Laundry Maid (Domestic)	Liverpool, Lancs
Alice Mandeville	Servant	22	Laundry Maid (Domestic)	Hungerford, Berks
Jane Dewar	Servant	20	Laundry Maid (Domestic)	Crieff, Scotland
Maria Davies	Servant	44	Housemaid	Bishop's Frome, Hereford
Nora Rolfe	Servant	36	Housemaid	Chelmsford, Essex
Alice Forbes	Servant	22	Housemaid	Chelsea, London, Middlx
Edith Rainbow	Servant	18	Housemaid	Kenilworth, Warwick
Hannah Reeves	Servant	30	Kitchenmaid	East Dean, Sussex
Agnes C S Bussell	Servant	21	Kitchenmaid	Churchstanton, Somerset
Jane Prince	Servant	21	Kitchenmaid	Tarrant Gunville, Dorset
Annie M L Walker	Servant	21	Still-room maid	Edinburgh, Scotland
Agnes French	Servant	40	Housekeeper	Lamington, Scotland
Alexandrina Coghill	Servant	49	Lady's maid	Wick, Scotland
Rose Louisa Canfield	Servant	23	Lady's maid	Knebworth, Herts
Fanny Crouch	Servant	29	Lady's maid	Penshurst, Kent
Selina M Ream	Servant	39	Lady's maid	Caythorpe, Lincs
Edward Gallop	Servant	55	Butler	Blagdon, Somerset
Francis Bessow	Servant	37	Cook	Foreign Subject, France
James Newhaven	Servant	27	Groom of Chamber	Melton Mowbray, Leics
Henry Davies	Servant	25	Footman	Beacon, Brecknockshire
Percy Blow	Servant	20	Footman, Domestic	Milford, Hampshire
George Dennis	Servant	24	Footman, Domestic	Winderton, Norfolk
Arthur Pile	Servant	20	Steward's Roomboy	Newbiggin, Northum
William Laurant	Servant	22	Odd Man	Edenham, Lincs
Walter Stone	Servant	23	Scullion	Edith Weston, Rutland
George Bletchley	Visitor	27	Butler	Sussex

The Village Disappears

Estate records give an excellent picture of Normanton village as it was laid out in the eighteenth century. A map dated 1726, prepared by Tycho Wing (Lincolnshire Archives, 3 ANC 5/104/1), reveals that the estate had been partly enclosed. It also pinpoints the location of the manor house in relation to the village along the main street. This street led down to a bridge over the River Gwash. Other roads are shown along with the names of tenants who rented the fields.

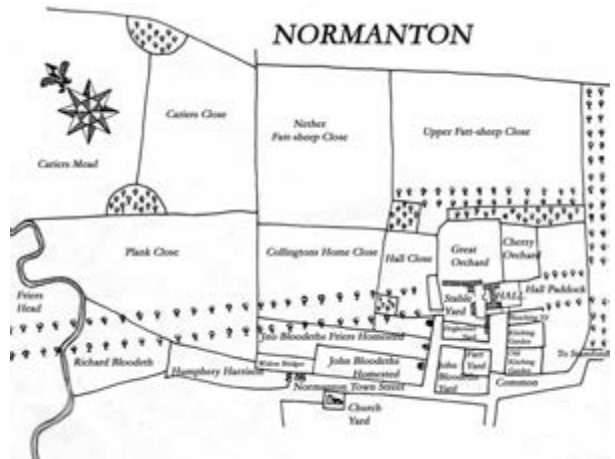


Above: Part of Tycho Wing's map of 1726 showing Normanton village and the surrounding fields. This image has been enhanced to improve clarity (Lincolnshire Archives, 3 ANC 5/104/1)

Right: From a mid-eighteenth century map of Normanton (ROLLR PP400/2)

A mid-eighteenth century map of the village (ROLLR PP400/2) shows some changes, the principal one being that the mansion has been altered to include wings flanking the central block. It is thought that the new house, of which the stone alone is said to have cost £10,000, was completed between 1730 and 1740, and it is known that some re-modelling was carried out between 1763 and 1767. 1764 is often quoted as being the date when Sir Gilbert Heathcote, 3rd Baronet, removed the villagers of Normanton to his model village of Empingham in order to create a park. The relocation must have continued over a long period because records show that the estate was still receiving rents from Normanton tenants thirty years later.

The village was completely depopulated by 1796, the year that



the landscape architect Humphry Repton visited Normanton. The following year he produced one of his Red Books in which there is no mention of the village. His illustrations give an excellent picture of the house and park and he recommended:

‘The elegance and magnificence of the house are not at present sufficiently supported by the original size of the park . . . and therefore its extension or enlargement was a very natural object of improvement.’

He made many suggestions and some of his improvements were carried out. Amongst these were the removal of old fences and the creation of new approaches, terraces and ‘Pleasure Grounds’ with walks. A larger kitchen garden and a lake in the Gwash Valley below the house were also created.

Humphry Repton

Humphry Repton was born in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, in 1752, the son of a tax collector. He was expected to become a merchant but his real interests of botany and gardening eventually dictated his career. When he moved to Essex in 1788 at the age of 36 with four children and no secure income, he had the idea of combining his sketching and gardening skills to become a landscape gardener. By sending circulars round his wealthy contacts he soon obtained his first paid commission at Catton Park, Derbyshire.

Repton’s ideal was natural beauty enhanced by art, and his success was his vision of a house and how it should be placed in relation to the landscape surrounding it. Repton prepared a book bound in red leather for every client, detailing proposals for changes, maps, plans, drawings, watercolour paintings, and before and after sketches. These became known as his Red Books. In his 30-year career, he undertook over 400 commissions, including Normanton and nearby Burley on the Hill.

In 1811, Repton was involved in a serious carriage accident which left him disabled. He died in 1818 and is buried in the churchyard at Aylsham, Norfolk.



The south-east front of Normanton House as illustrated by Repton (Grimsthorpe & Drummond Castle Trust)



Brewer in *Beauties of England & Wales* (1813) wrote:

‘NORMANTON . . . is now completely depopulated, nothing remaining but its venerable little church which stands separate from all other buildings in the grounds of Normanton House . . . The modern residence of NORMANTON HOUSE stands in a park containing about 400 acres . . . The mansion is an elegant modern edifice of white stone, with a centre of fine elevation and two wings; both fronts being in style of great architectural beauty, and the interior presenting a rich scene of modern elegance throughout. From the *Hall*, which is light and airy . . . we proceed to the *Library*, an elegant room fitted up with sofas, and the books so covered with handsome chintz curtains that it has more the appearance of a dressing room, than an apartment occupied for purposes of study. Passing through the *Small Drawing Room*, which is fitted up with studied elegance, we enter a *Dressing Room*, in a simple style of ornament . . . The *Dining Room* is a very superb apartment, with a vaulted and stuccoed ceiling, in compartments. Over the fire-place is the original painting of the present Lady Heathcote, in the character of Hebe, the engraved copies of which have been so much admired in the London print-shops. The *Drawing Room* is a most brilliant apartment, fitted up with embossed gold paper, with gilt borders and mouldings; the chairs are of light blue satin, with white flowers; and the whole is extremely light and elegant, without being gaudy. The *State Bed Room* is in a style of simple magnificence; the bed of white and gold, with the furniture and ornaments of the walls to correspond; the *Dressing Room* belonging to it is also a handsome specimen of modern taste, and the ceiling in particular is very fine, being elegantly painted in treillage and foliage. The *Back Drawing Room* has a pleasant bow-recess, and is fitted up with spotted Chinese paper, with crimson pannels [*sic*] on which are laughing and sporting Cupids in chiaro scuro, and interspersed with pannel [*sic*] slips of plate-glass. Each suite of apartments, on both floors, has doors which throw open a vista from end to end; and as there are large plate-glass mirrors at each extremity, the reduplicated effect is extremely fine.’

A visionary plan! Repton's plan for improvements in the park included a lake in the Gwash valley (Grimsthorpe & Drummond Castle Trust)

Normanton Park and Estate

White's *Directory* (1846) records:

'NORMANTON . . . has in its parish only 28 inhabitants, and about 2000 acres of land, all the property of *Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Bart.*, of NORMANTON HOUSE, which stands near the Church and Rectory, in a beautiful *Park* of about 500 acres, which was considerably enlarged about sixty years ago, when the village was swept away, and its inhabitants removed to Empingham . . . The gardens are modern; and the grounds are tastefully laid out, and command beautiful prospects. The park is well wooded, and contains many very large timber trees, principally oak, ash, beech, and limes, whose shade and foliage have a very fine effect, especially near the river [Gwash], which crosses it about half a mile west of the house. Among other rare plants found here, is the *Gentiana autumnalis fugax*, or later autumnal Gentian. The woods and plantations in the parish comprise about 200 acres.'

Normanton Park in 1822 from the north-west. The church is the only survivor of the old village of Normanton (RLHRS)



Normanton Gardens

Lord Aveland opened his gardens at Normanton to the public in 1863. It was reported in the *Stamford Mercury* on 2nd October:

'*The Gardens at Normanton.* The mansion stands on the north west declivity of one of those great ridges which intersect Rutland in different directions, and which add so much to the beauty of the county. The site could not have been more happily chosen, commanding as it does several extensive and pleasing prospects into the wooded vale of Catmos. The park here is very picturesque: great taste has been displayed in arranging and planting the different groups and single specimens of trees which now adorn the landscape. The gardens belonging to this interesting place were opened to the public on Sunday last, through the kind permission of Lord Aveland, who is pleased at all times that they may be shown to visitors. On entering the pleasure grounds the first objects to attract the attention are the magnificent Portugal laurels, forming great globes and huge obtuse cones: probably their equal is not to be found in this or any other country. Further on is a stone basket or basin, called Lady Chetwynd's basin, filled with flowers, which has a very pretty effect. We next arrive at the principal parterre, which is now most excellent for its gorgeous display of flora and its beauty of arrangement. The primary colours are those chiefly used here, and when seen over each other from different points of view blend together, and give it a softness which cannot but be pleasing to every eye of taste. The geraniums appear to have flowered extremely well this season. The beds of the dwarf chrysanthemum-flowered aster are very beautiful. Also the beds of *Verbena venosa*, the gem of all the verbenas, and without doubt the best bedding plant in existence for autumn gardening. The mixed borders are also very effective: these are planted according to heights, forming slopes of flowers, with a background of evergreens. We observed, in passing along, a very fine plant of the gigantic "Wellingtonia" from the now called Mammoth Tree Valley in the district of Calaveras, California . . . the ribbon borders in the kitchen garden are all that can be desired, and only require to be seen to be appreciated. Here, again, the *Verbena venosa* shows its qualities to perfection. The gardens in every way exhibited the best of keeping, and we went away highly delighted with one hour's ramble in the grounds at Normanton, as did also many others, who equally seemed to enjoy the scene.'



Normanton House from the south-east in 1822 (RLHRS)

During the nineteenth century there were many changes to the house. Interior decorations were renewed, in the same manner as they were in 1813, in time for the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1881. This Royal visit was fully reported in the *Stamford Mercury*, the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*. In the 15th January 1881 edition of the *Illustrated London News*, correspondent ‘Cuthbert Bede’ described the house in the following way:

‘The whole of the exterior of the mansion is remarkable for the beauty of the stonework and carving, and important additions and improvements have been made by the present noble owner [the 2nd Lord Aveland]. On the first floor, communicating with the spacious hall by a fine double stone staircase, are the suite of three handsome drawing-rooms and other rooms, from which beautiful views are obtained of the park and surrounding country. These rooms, as well as the library and dining-rooms on the ground floor, were originally decorated by Adams. Within the last few years the interior has been entirely redecorated, keeping to the same style, and is furnished with great taste, and with due regard to domestic comfort.’

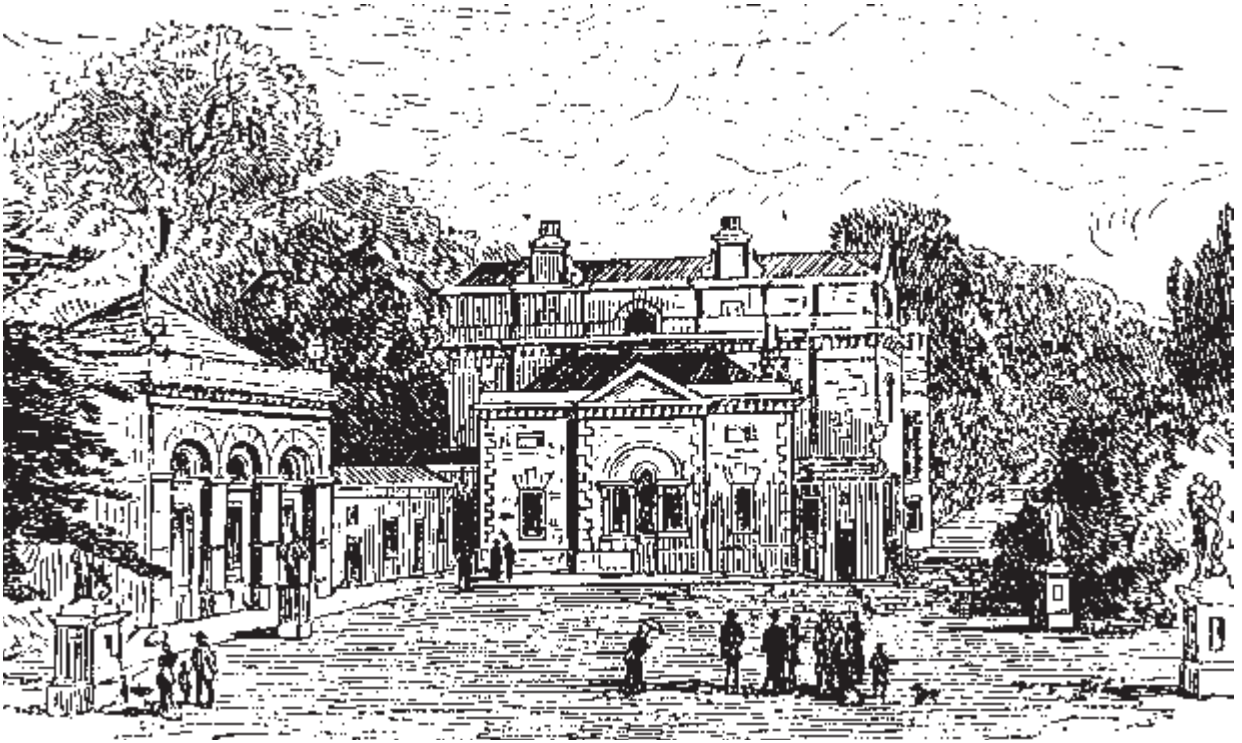
Normanton House from the north-west in 1881 (Illustrated London News). It was drawn by local correspondent the Rev Edward Bradley, incumbent at Stretton (1871-83). He wrote under the name of ‘Cuthbert Bede’



Normanton Park was featured in the 8th February 1913 issue of *Country Life*. By this time, the mansion was more often referred to as Normanton Hall by local people. A ground floor plan and both interior and exterior views of the house were illustrated, along with items of furniture that had been in the house for over a century. Garden ornaments were also shown. The article noted:

‘The main building exhibits the exquisite sense of proportion which marks the best work of the period [eighteenth century]. Ornament is sparingly used, but what there is, is of extreme refinement. The contrast between

the square wings of the west front and the semi-circular bay is charming, and the whole effect is a source of delight to all who appreciate the delicate handling of architecture. The interior decorations, put up when the house was first built, have given place almost everywhere to the “elegance” of the latter years of the century; but several ceilings, as well as the chimney pieces in the state bedroom and in the Chinese room or dressing room are original.’



Above: Another drawing by ‘Cuthbert Bede’ showing ‘a view on the lawn’ at Normanton House in 1881 (Illustrated London News). The dining room at the centre of this picture was a later addition to the house. A ball in honour of the Prince and Princess of Wales was held here in January 1881



Left: Normanton Park from Letts’ map of 1883. Kelly’s Directory of 1877 records that the park ‘was well wooded and stocked with about 200 head of deer’



*Normanton Hall
from the north-
west in 1913
(Country Life
Picture Library)*

*The terracotta
chimney-piece
was a
prominent
feature in the
hall at
Normanton
(Country Life
Picture Library)*





The latticed bookcases in the library at Normanton were divided by narrow grisaille panels which were decorated with goddesses, fauns, animals and scrollwork (Country Life Picture Library)

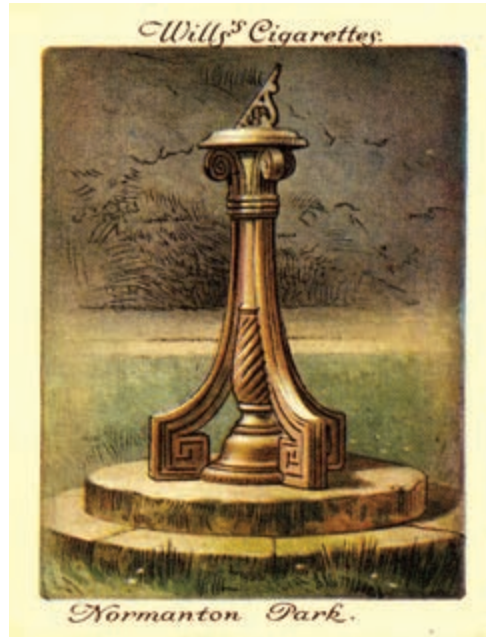
The back drawing-room at Normanton Hall in 1913. The 'spotted Chinese paper' which decorated this room in 1813 had disappeared, but the panels with 'laughing and sporting Cupids in chiaro scuro' still remained. The panels were of crimson and grey, the family racing colours (Country Life Picture Library)



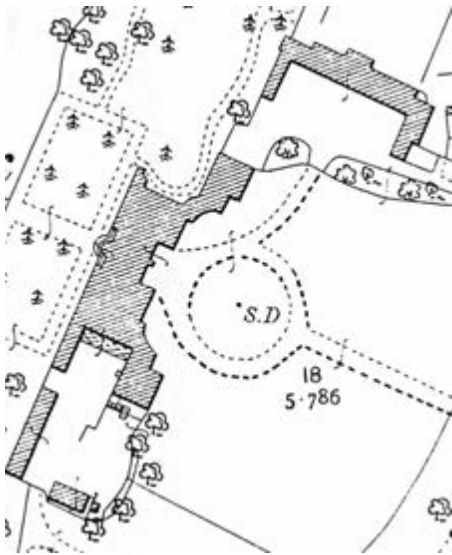
A bedroom at Normanton Hall in 1913 (Country Life Picture Library)



The cost of maintaining Normanton Hall was immense and, by 1924, the 2nd Earl of Ancaster had decided to sell the Normanton Estate and reside at Grimsthorpe Castle. The Heathcote family portraits, some items of furniture, tapestries and various garden ornaments from Normanton Hall were retained by the Earl of Ancaster and transferred to Grimsthorpe Castle. A number of these can be seen by visitors to the Castle today.



An eighteenth century table sundial stood in the circular lawn at the south front of Normanton Hall. It was illustrated as No 20 in a series of 25 cigarette cards of Old Sundials published by W D & H O Wills in 1928 (RO)



Above: The table sundial (SD) at Normanton Hall is marked on the OS 2nd ed 25" map 1904

The state bedroom in 1913 (Country Life Picture Library). This was hung with yellow decorative tapestry upon which parrots perched upon 'fantastic scrollwork' supporting a vase of flowers. The tapestries can be seen in The Tapestry Room at Grimsthorpe Castle. The white marble mantelpiece, with its white and gilt over-mantel enclosing a flower picture, is in The Gothic Bedroom at Grimsthorpe





Many of the statues removed from Normanton now grace the arcaded courtyard and garden at Grimsthorpe Castle (RO)

A garden urn removed from Normanton Hall to Grimsthorpe Castle (RO)

The Sale of Normanton Estate

An ‘Important notice of sale of the valuable freehold residential, agricultural and sporting estate known as the Normanton Estate’ appeared in the *Stamford Mercury* on 15th August 1924. For sale was the mansion, ‘occupying a beautiful position within its noble Park, and containing hall, 9 reception-rooms, 11 principal bedrooms, ample servants’ accommodation, 5 bathrooms, good domestic offices, excellent Stabling, Garage Accommodation’ and eighteen high class mixed farms varying from 90 to 450 acres, ‘each equipped with exceptionally fine Farmhouses and Buildings’. Also up for auction were numerous smallholdings, accommodation lands, the entire model village of Empingham, part of Edith Weston, building sites and woodlands. The whole area extended to some 6,000 acres.

The peach house from Normanton Hall is now at Grimsthorpe Castle (Grimsthorpe & Drummond Castle Trust)



Top Right: This announcement was published in the Stamford Mercury on 15th August 1924

Bottom Right: The last page of the Normanton Park 'Fixtures and Fittings' auction catalogue showing prices realised (Grimsthorpe & Drummond Castle Trust)

The sale was held at the 'Stamford Hotel,' Stamford, Lincolnshire on 17th and 18th September 1924. The *Stamford Mercury* reported in the following day's issue that 'Bidding was not very brisk, and only a few sales were effected, the majority of the lots offered on Wednesday not reaching the reserve figure. A considerable number of lots had been disposed of previously to the tenants'. Lot 9, Normanton Hall with gardens and grounds, and Lot 10, part of Normanton Park offered as one lot, were withdrawn from the sale. As the mansion could not be sold intact a decision was made to demolish it. Most of the land had been privately sold by 10th April 1925.

An auction for the interior and exterior fixtures and fittings of Normanton Hall and for 'The Remaining Shell of the MANSION' was held over three days from 24th February 1925. This auction also included the kitchen garden, stables, garages, the site of the mansion, 'pleasure grounds' and two cottages. A separate auction sale of the standing timber in Normanton Park and the adjoining Belt Plantations, which included oak, lime, beech, elm, larch and sycamore, had taken place on 20th February.

Interior fittings for sale included: oak and pine flooring, 150 sash and casement windows, store cupboards, dressers, a massive stone double staircase with mahogany hand-rail and brass balustrades, 53 carved marble, stone and wood mantelpieces with polished steel grates, bathroom and lavatory fittings, ranges, hot plates and coppers. Exterior fittings listed in the sale catalogue included: stone paving, stone vases and urns, lead rain-water heads and pipes, fencing and iron gates. The fittings and fixtures were sold at 'excellent prices' and the shell of the building realized a total of

RUTLAND.
Between Stamford and Oakham, about 3 miles from Bamford Station (L. and N.E. Railway) and (L.M. and S. Railway), 2 miles from North Luffield (L.M. and S.R.), and 6 miles from Oakham (L.M. and S. Railway).
IMPORTANT NOTICE of SALE of the VALUABLE FREEHOLD RESIDENTIAL, AGRICULTURAL and SPORTING ESTATE,
known as the
NORMANTON ESTATE,
including
An IMPRESSIVE and HISTORICAL EARLY 18th CENTURY MANSION, occupying a beautiful position within its noble Park and containing hall, 9 reception-rooms, 11 principal bedrooms, ample attractive accommodation, 8 bath-rooms, and domestic offices, excellent Stabling, Garage Accommodation, Also 60 HIGH-CLASS MIXED FARMS, some with possession.
Varying in size from 24 Acres to 250 Acres, each equipped with exceptionally fine Farm-houses and BUILDINGS.
NUMEROUS SMALL HOLDINGS, ACCOMMODATION LANDS.
The ENTIRE MODEL VILLAGE of EMPINGHAM,
including the Valuable Free and Fully-licensed Premises known as THE WHITE HORSE INN; Two Superior Residences.
PART of the Village of LODDINGTON, BUILDING SITES and WOODLANDS, the whole extending to about
6000 ACRES.

64

The Remaining Shell of the MANSION,

As it will stand after the Sale of the FIXTURES and FITTINGS, as Catalogued, which includes:—

The whole of the Roofing Slate, the Roofing Timbers and the Deal Linings to the Roof (all in most excellent order). The whole of the Stone and Brick Work, the Stone Carved Window Frames, and the massive stone pillars in the Hall.

The whole of the Floor Joists, all the Beams and other Timbers in the Mansion, all the Landing Floors, Pitch Pine Ceiling in the Servants' Hall.

The whole of the Valuable Piping in the Building (except any of which may have been sold with the Fittings), including the Heating Pipes, the Hot and Cold Water Supply Pipes, Copper Pipes from Circulating Boiler to Baths, the Lead and Iron Soil and Waste Pipes. Two Stone Staircases.

Also the Enormous Quantity of Lead and Zinc on the Roof, Flats, Ridges, Gutters and Valleys. A quantity of Glass Partitions and Glazed Roofs. Fire Hydrants and Force Pump.

The Enormous Quantity of Bricks and Stone Work in the Cellars. In fact everything in the Mansion and Buildings that has not been Lotted and Sold.

THE EXCELLENT WALLED

KITCHEN GARDEN WITH STABLES AND GARAGES adjoining; together with the

SITE OF THE MANSION AND PLEASURE GROUNDS, With Greenhouses, Vineries, Forcing Pits, Fruit Room, Potting Shed, Heated Frames;

TWO COTTAGES, Bothey and Open Shed; also all Fruit Trees as planted, comprising an area of

22.197 ACRES OR THEREABOUTS

will be offered as a whole AFTER THE SALE OF THE FABRIC OF THE MANSION.

ALL TIMBER, other than Fruit Trees and Ornamental Shrubs, have been Sold, and are not included in the Sale.

A PLAN of the Property may be inspected at the Auctioneers' Offices, and will be produced at the time of Sale.

The Conditions of Sale under which this Property is Sold may be had on application to MESSRS. CLAYHILLS, SOY AND FEETHAM, Darlington, or THE AUCTIONEERS, Bridgnorth.

END OF SALE.

New House Range of Buildings.

£1900.0.0

£460.0.0

£160.0.0

SOLD IN PORTIONS.

PENDING DEMOLITION OF NORMANTON HALL.

A demolition sale took place at Normanton Hall last week. Messrs. Perry and Phillips, of Bridgnorth, being the auctioneers. A large company was present each day, buyers being represented from practically all the large centres in the Midlands, in addition to the local ladies and gentlemen who were anxious to secure some of the items as mementoes of the mansion. Considerably more than 900 lots were catalogued.

The following are the more important items with the prices they made:— Mantelpieces, £45, £40, £37, £31, £25, and several others from £10 to £16; grates, £32, £28, £26, £18 to £10; oak floors, £40 and £20; weather vanes, £19 10s. and £21; stone vases and flower beds, £20, £17 10s., £17 10s.; smaller vases and urns (about 40), £93; open shed, £53; terrace and other walls, £48, £30, £19; pair of iron gates, £30 and £18.

£1,900. The house had to be demolished before March 1926.

A further notice regarding the demolition of Normanton Hall was published in the 24th April 1925 edition of the *Stamford Mercury*. This announced the future sale of 'an enormous quantity of Ketton stone, comprising handsomely carved Cornices, Doorways and Windows, also Ashlar, Quoins, Jambs, copings, etc., all in perfect condition. Practically no re-working required. The whole is a perfect specimen of this beautiful Stone, the quarries of which have been practically worked out. Therefore an exceptional opportunity arises for architects, builders and others to secure this supply at an exceptionally low price'. Also advertised was 'a large quantity of Oak Beams, Joists, Battens, Scantlings, etc., in perfect condition, and in suitable lots'. The sale, to which 'estate owners, building contractors, antique furniture manufacturers and others' were invited, took place on 28th May 1925.



Top Left: A brief account of the auction of the fixtures and fittings at Normanton from the Stamford Mercury of 6th March 1925

Bottom Left: A sketch by Harry Kelham who visited Normanton Hall whilst it was being demolished (Marion Kelham)

Normanton Reclamation

When Normanton Hall was dismantled and sold at auction, many of the lots were purchased by local people. Some examples are given below showing the diverse uses to which the stone, fixtures and fittings were put:

The White House

Much of the stone from the demolished Normanton Hall was purchased by Thomas Henry Crumbie, who owned a printing business in Leicester and who was secretary of the Leicester Tigers Rugby Football Club from 1895 until his death in 1928. The stone was numbered and transported to Scraftoft, Leicestershire, where it remained on the site for nearly three years. Much of it was used to build a family home incorporating many of Normanton Hall's internal features, including panelling and fireplaces.

However, he only enjoyed living in it for a month before he died. For many years after this the house was occupied by the Harrison family who were important seed merchants. Later, the house was purchased by a brewery and now it is known as The White House, a public house and restaurant.



Above: The White House, Scraftoft, Leicestershire (RO)

Below Left: Footpaths in the garden of The White House are made from dressed stones recovered from Normanton Hall (RO)



Below Right: The main entrance to The White House was formerly the porch to the south-east front at Normanton Hall (RO)





Left: This lantern was recovered from Normanton Hall and was for many years in the garden behind Hallstones at Empingham. When the neighbouring surgery was extended it was purchased by a local builder (Sylvia & Michael Leach)



Right: This bungalow in Main Street, Empingham, was built using stone from Normanton Hall. It was built by Mr J J Healey and is known locally as Hallstones. Mr Healey also erected a workshop adjacent to the bungalow, again using stone from Normanton (RO)

Normanton Stone at Knossington

Mr Charles Spence, a Knossington builder, purchased stone, doors and other fittings at the Normanton sale. A cottage conversion in the village is believed to have internal doors and staircases from the former mansion. A detached house to the east of this cottage was built on the site of The Greyhound, a former public house. It was constructed using ironstone from the demolished inn and Normanton stone for the front elevation. Some of the windows were originally in the nursery at Normanton Hall.



Left: Reclaimed stone and windows from Normanton Hall were used when this house at Knossington, Leicestershire, was built (RO)



Left: The southern boundary wall of Empingham cemetery was constructed using stone which came from Normanton. A plaque on the wall records that it was built in 1946 (RO)

Right: Stone balustrading from Normanton was used for an ornamental bridge and a patio surround at Preston Lodge, Withcote, Leicestershire. It was sold in separate lots in the Fixtures and Fittings Sale held in 1925 (RO)



10.0.0

834 THE STONE PALISADING, 75ft., AS FIXED OVER HOUSEKEEPER'S ROOM AND STUDY ON LEFT-HAND SIDE OF THE HOUSE, TOGETHER WITH 16 STONE BALLS

10 0.0

835 A similar lot over smoke room on the right-hand side of the house

6.18.0

836 THREE CARVED STONE VASES OVER NURSERY WING

5.10.0

837 FOUR DITTO OVER ENTRANCE DOOR

4.4.0

838 THE STONE PALISADING, AS FIXED OVER FRONT DOOR, ABOUT 45ft.

Left: Palisading and other stone ornaments included in the Normanton Park fixtures and fittings sale catalogue (Grimsthorpe & Drummond Castle Trust)

A contemporary view of the south-east elevation of Normanton Hall showing the stone balustrading and ornaments included in the auction catalogue (Hart)



Right: The Woodlands in Melton Road, Oakham, as shown on the OS 2nd ed 25" map 1904



Road Improvements

Originally there was a sharp corner near The Woodlands in Melton Road, Oakham. It is now the junction with Pillings Road. In 1926 a decision was made to widen the road and to make the bend less severe. A large quantity of stone was required and this came from the recently demolished Normanton Hall.

Below Left: The west wing of Langham Old Hall (Mike Frisby)

Below: A staircase from Normanton Hall, now at Langham Old Hall (RO)

Bottom Right: The new west wall to Langham Old Hall was built using stone from Normanton (RO)

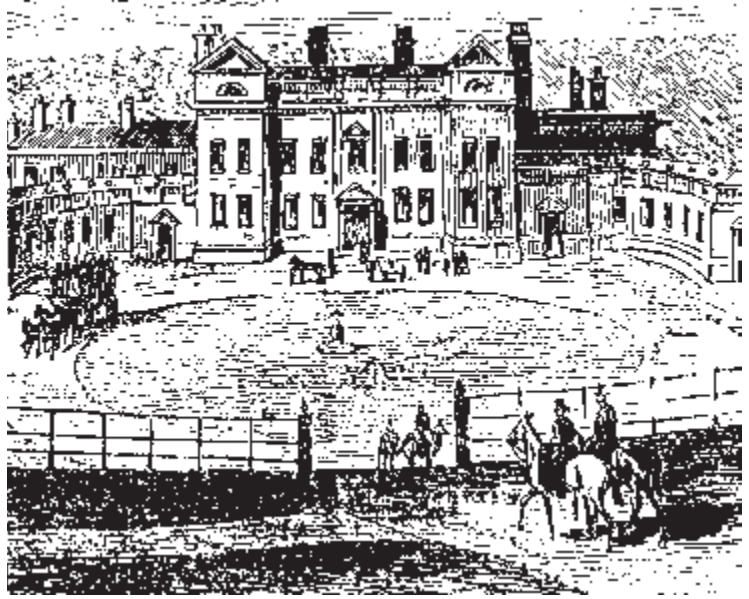
Langham Old Hall

Langham Old Hall has a core of 1665, but it was extensively altered between 1925 and 1930 by Owen Hugh Smith. A new wall to close off the old carriage entrance, a new west wing, a staircase in the main building, and possibly the summer house, were all built using recovered materials from Normanton Hall.



Top Right: The south-east entrance to Normanton Hall in 1881. Note the decorative wrought-iron gate posts (Illustrated London News)

Today there is little to see of the former mansion. The stable block, now Normanton Park Hotel, the gun room and brew house, now Park House, and the kitchen gardens remain on the site. The pasture between the hotel and Park House identifies the site of Normanton Hall and the gate posts to the former south-east entrance can be seen here. Part of the garden terrace wall remains near the Rutland Water perimeter path. Much of the parkland is now under Rutland Water but the former St Matthew's Church, albeit much altered, has been saved as a memorial to the lost village and estate of Normanton.



Above Left: Normanton Hall stables before being converted to an hotel circa 1984 (Richard Adams)

Above Right: The gate posts can still be seen at Normanton today (RO)

Left: The ornamental top to one of the gate posts (RO)

Right: The site of Normanton Hall. To the left is Park House, the former brew house, gun room and store rooms of the mansion (RO)



Park House, Normanton

Mike Griffin talks about his home which was once part of Normanton Hall:

‘My home, Park House, was part of Normanton Hall but was not physically connected to it. It was separated by probably five to ten yards of space. It used to serve the main house as a brew house and part of it was a gun room and various store rooms. I think that was what the building was originally designed for, but in later years the Ancasters used some of the rooms as a sanatorium for when the staff in the hall were ill.

‘In terms of the layout of the house, and starting at the bottom end of the slope, there was a large area which was the brew house and, although you don’t see any remains of it now other than in the loft, on top of the roof there was a fairly large, square structure which, I think, housed a hoist and also provided ventilation. If you then rise up on to the next level up the slope you come to the former gun room which had five very large pinewood cupboards, each of which held three guns.

‘Moving into the top two rooms, these were variously stores, mess rooms and, I think later, one of them was a sanatorium. Outside of the house there is a very large and substantially built barn. In fact, that barn on the old plans is shown as a faggot shed where faggots, being lengths of wood, were stored for providing fuel for the laundry boilers. There are also two fairly large tunnels opposite the house which were coal bunkers for the laundry. On top of these tunnels is a fairly large area about the size of a badminton court which was a drying area for the laundry.

‘There were also some ruins there which were part of some more brewing activity. On the other side of the house, on the reservoir side, there are some trees in the gardens which were there during the time of Normanton Hall. We also have a view across to Normanton Church or what was Normanton Church, now a museum and owned by Anglian Water. You also get a view straight across to Burley on the Hill.

‘In old photographs of Normanton Hall, the cedar tree which is now in the grounds of Normanton Park Hotel can clearly be seen. In one of the small paddocks, you can see evidence of the original road which went down to the back of Normanton Hall and also the gate posts at the entrance to the hall grounds. The road came down and then swept round into a circle which provided access to the back of the house.



‘The hotel used to be the stables which became our farm yard and about 1942 part of it was commandeered to house Italian and later German prisoners of war. They worked on farms, some for my father on the farm here at Normanton, and others worked on farms nearby. They lived at the stables and did their own cooking. There was a guard there with responsibility for looking after them but as far as I know there were never any break-outs.’

Left: Mike Griffin (Marigold Lamin)

Right:
A caricature of
Edward, Prince
of Wales which
appeared in
Vanity Fair in
1878 (RLHRS)

Below:
Luffenham
Station (Hart)

The Prince and Princess of Wales visit Normanton

On Monday 10th January 1881 the Prince [the future Edward VII] and Princess of Wales visited Rutland. They were the guests of Lord and Lady Aveland and the visit was fully reported in the *Stamford Mercury* on 14th January 1881.

On arrival at Luffenham Station, the Royal party were received by Lord Aveland who then accompanied them to his carriage outside the station. On their appearance, loud cheers were sent up by the waiting crowd. They proceeded to Normanton Park, passing under several triumphal arches decorated with evergreens and festooned with flags and banners. One had the message 'Welcome' upon it and 'was made brilliant with lighted lanterns formed of huge Rutland turnips'. The Prince and Princess were received at Normanton Park by Lady





Aveland, members of her family and the company staying in the house.

The estate village of Empingham observed the royal visit ‘with the utmost respect and enthusiasm’, being decorated in the best possible taste, and ‘nowhere was the tawdry element to be met with’. It is reported that the decorations made a wonderful sight both during the day and at night. The local newspaper continued to report:

‘On Tuesday Lord Aveland entertained the Prince and some of his other distinguished guests with a day’s shooting on the Rutland estate. About 11 o’clock his Lordship, driving a four-in-hand, took the party through Empingham village (where a hundred of the school children assembled and sang ‘God bless the Prince of Wales’) on to the Exton road, in the fields skirting which sport was opened with eight guns . . . Returning to Empingham the party worked the fields near the Whitwell road, and then bore down towards the thickets known as Cocked Hat Spinny [*sic*], where

*Left:
A caricature of
the 2nd Lord
Aveland as
featured in
Vanity Fair,
30th July 1881
(RLHRS)*

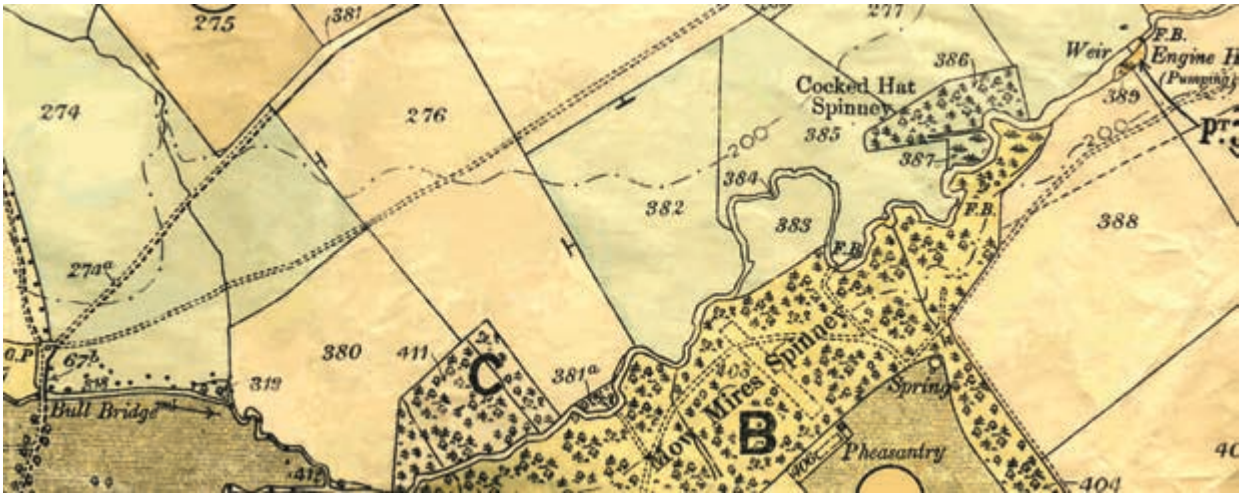


pheasants are generally plentiful. Thence they proceeded to Normanton Park. At 1 o’clock the Princess, accompanied by Lady Aveland and the Hon. Margaret Willoughby, drove to see the shooting at Mowmires, and afterwards with the ladies joined the gentlemen at luncheon, which was laid out in a spacious and comfortable tent near the Lodges. After the repast the battue recommenced. Near the lodge gates the sport was really excellent: guns flashed and crackled, pheasants went up with a whirr-r-r-r and fell with a thud, and hares rolled over in their death throes with the greatest rapidity.’



*The south-east
entrance to
Normanton
Hall in 1881.
This was one of
three sketches
published in
the Illustrated
London News
to accompany
the report on
the Royal Visit*

Above: Lady Evelyn, wife of the 2nd Lord Aveland. From a portrait at Grimsthorpe Castle (Grimsthorpe & Drummond Castle Trust)



On the Wednesday the Prince, with the same shooting party, visited Grimsthorpe Castle, the seat of the Baroness Willoughby de Eresby. More shooting was enjoyed on the Rutland estate on the Thursday whilst a visit was made to Oakham Castle by the Princess. As it was her first visit to Oakham, custom demanded that the Princess should present a horseshoe to the town. At the castle she located a suitable position for the horseshoe to be fixed but it could not be presented to the dignitaries on this occasion. It was being made in the works of Lord Aveland but was not quite finished. A lawn meet of the Cottesmore hounds was arranged on the Friday with luncheon at Burley on the Hill. A ball was held at Normanton Park in the evening and the Royal couple left for Stamford the following day.

The festivities at Normanton were brought to a happy termination on the following Tuesday when Lord Aveland entertained about 400 of his workmen, their families and others employed on the estate. The estate workshops were cleared and a sumptuous supper provided – a band was provided for dancing and the party continued until 4am on Wednesday. Before separating, the company gave ‘three times three’ cheers for Lord and Lady Aveland.



Above: The area to the east of Bull Bridge, near Mow Mires Spinney, which was visited by the Royal shooting party. From the map accompanying the Normanton Estate Sale Catalogue of 1924

Left: One of the workshops at Normanton Works where Lord Aveland entertained his workforce and their families in 1881 (RO)

Normanton Works

White's *Directory* (1877) records:

'... just on the outskirts of [the park] Lord Aveland has established large workshops with wood-working machinery driven by steam. Here upwards of 100 workmen are employed, who, under the able superintendence of Mr. Newman, clerk of the works, execute all the building operations which are undertaken on the extensive estates both in Rutland and Lincolnshire.'



Above:
Normanton Works as illustrated in the 1924 sale catalogue (RCM)

Normanton Works, now known as Normanton Lodge Farm, is located about two kilometres to the north-east of Edith Weston in Normanton Parish. The precise date for the construction of these Victorian workshops is not known, but they were certainly built between 1861 and 1871.

There is no mention of Normanton Works in the 1861 Census but a Joseph Newman was recorded as Clerk of Works in 1871. The return for that year states that he was 48 years of age and born in Norfolk. He was living with his wife Elizabeth, their two sons and two daughters. His eldest son Miles, aged 21 years, was an office clerk.

Below Left:
Normanton Works from the OS 2nd ed 25" map 1904

Joseph was still Clerk of Works in 1881 and he and his wife and four children are recorded as living at The Lodge. His son, Miles, was at this time farm bailiff for the Ancaster Estate. It is understood that The Lodge was built specifically for Joseph Newman, it being located almost opposite the

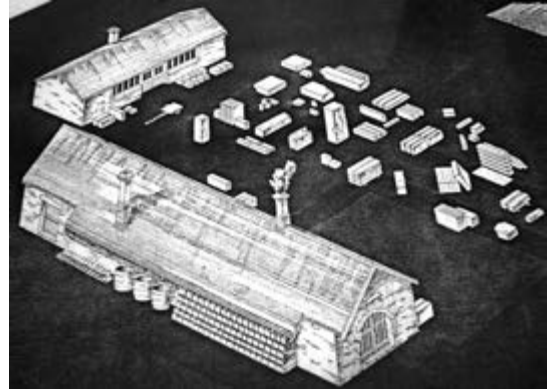
farm and estate works. Joseph continued to be Clerk of Works until at least 1891. At this date he was living with his wife and a servant. A heavy burden must have fallen on the shoulders of Joseph and Miles when they made preparations to host Lord Aveland's festivities for the tenantry at the Normanton Works in January 1881.

Below Right:
Princess Alexandra's horseshoe in Oakham Castle. It was made in the works of Lord Aveland in 1881



Right: From a drawing of Normanton Works in 1874 showing the blacksmith's and stonemason's workshops (Christopher Renner)

By 1901 Robert Yates had become 'Estate Clerk of the Works'. He was 49 years of age and living with him was his wife Anne, daughter Cecily and a female servant. Kelly's *Directory* (1904) records, under 'Normanton Works Office': 'Edward Brett Binns, agent; Alfred Schofield, sub-agent'. Edward Binns was Agent for three Earls of Ancaster, a highly responsible job. He introduced a distinctive style of architecture, known as 'The Ancaster Style', which is particularly evident in Empingham. In 1904 the workshops employed about 50 hands.



Above Left: Semi-detached Ancaster cottages in Main Street, Empingham. Note that the bedroom windows are placed in the gable ends. Tradition states that this was because Lady Willoughby did not want her tenants to look down on her as she rode by in her carriage (RO)

Above Right: The blacksmith's workshop at Normanton Lodge Farm today (RO)

Right: A late nineteenth century photograph of craftsmen and labourers at Normanton Works (Roger Corby)



A Normanton Works Timesheet

‘An Account of the Time of Workmen employed by the Right Hon LORD AVELAND, on the Normanton Estate for the week ending Friday December 21st 1883.’ (Christopher Renner)

This account, in the form of what would now be called a spreadsheet, lists all 139 workmen employed during the six-day working week starting on Saturday 15th December. Workmen are grouped together according to their trades and details are given of each man’s employment for every day of the week. The last three columns give the employee’s hours worked, his hourly rate of pay and his total pay for this week.

In general, pay rates vary between 10d per hour for senior skilled tradesmen to 3¹/₂d per hour for labourers. The lowest rate of pay is 1¹/₂d per hour and this is assumed to be for young apprentices. Most men worked a 54-hour week. The total wages for the week were £164 6s 10d, including a total of £10 18s 6d for expenses such as accommodation and travelling.

All the men listed on the account were based at Normanton Works, but many were engaged on projects elsewhere on the estates in Rutland and Lincolnshire. Plumbers, painters, joiners, masons and bricklayers, slaters and labourers were busy working on new buildings or carrying out maintenance work on estate property. The carters would be collecting and transporting building materials between the Works, local railway stations, local suppliers, the estate brickworks at Pilton, the estate quarries, and building sites. Other men carried on their trade at the Works. Sawyers converted seasoned timbers for the joiners and carpenters in the sawmill, and the blacksmiths, banker stonemasons and wheelwright all had spacious and well equipped workshops. Motive power for the sawmill and other workshops was provided by a central steam engine which powered a system of rotating shafts throughout the Works. All this machinery was overseen by the engineers.

The following analysis provides examples of the wide variety of work carried out on the Normanton Estate:

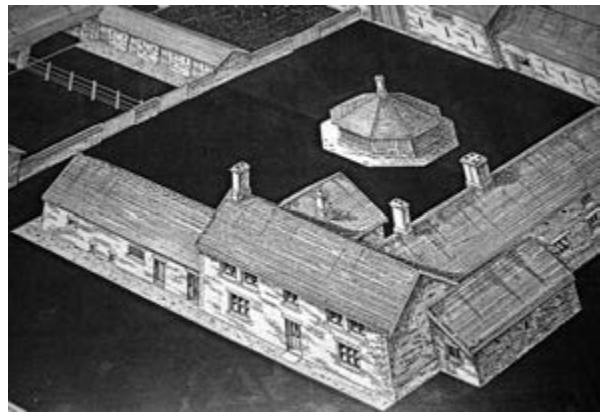
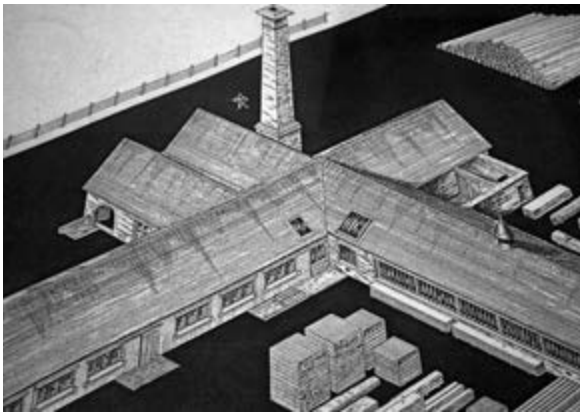
Engineers	4 men	Attending to working of machinery; sharpening saws; driving stationary engine.
Blacksmiths	3 men	Shoeing horses; making and repairing ironwork; assisting other blacksmiths.
Iron Fencer	1 man	Repairs to iron fencing at Stretton.
Plumbers	3 men	Working at the Hall; repairing church window; making lights for mills; glazing at late Bloodworth’s cottage.
Painters	7 men	Painting at Knight’s house and distempering; priming woodwork at late Bloodworth’s cottage.
Joiners	20 men	Making desk for Estate Office; making door frames; repairing pheasant pens; hanging doors.
Carpenters	2 men	Supervising work at sawmill; making gates.
Wheelwright	1 man	Repairing trucks.
Sawyers	4 men	Cleaning machinery; sawing for stock; preparing wood for sawmill.
Masons/Bricklayers	24 men	Superintending masons; brick layout work at Shelton’s house; repairing 2 roofs at Bulby.
Banker Masons	3 men	Making chimney piece for Shelton’s house; working stone for Normanton Hall.
Slaters	2 men	Repairing slating at Empingham School; repairing roof of house in North Luffenham.
Mason Labourers	25 men	Assisting masons at Shelton’s house; working at Knight’s; levelling and excavating drains at Ingoldsby.
Labourers	32 men	Excavating at Works; cleaning up at Works; with traction engine; thatching at Mr Weed’s premises.
Carters	8 men	Carting leaves off Coach road; carting materials from Corby [Glen] Station; to Stretton with Iron Fencer.

Left: The fowl house at Normanton Lodge Farm today (RO)



When the Normanton Estate was offered for sale in September 1924, Normanton Park Works was divided into two lots: Lot 29, Normanton Lodge Farm with a house, buildings, a pair of bungalow cottages and another pair of cottages, and Lot 30, Normanton Home Farm with a house, buildings, foreman's cottage and four bungalow cottages. Details of these buildings, which had 'originally formed part of Normanton Park Works', were included in the sale catalogue.

Above: Former 'Normanton Park Works' from the south in 2005 (RO)



Above: From a drawing of 1874 showing the sawmills and associated workshops at Normanton Works (Christopher Renner)

Above Right: From a drawing of 1874 showing the fowl house behind 'Home Farm' at Normanton Works (Christopher Renner)

Right: Normanton Lodge Farm from the Normanton Estate Sale Catalogue of 1924 (RCM)



NORMANTON LODGE

is pleasantly situate overlooking Normanton Park, and is in excellent condition and order. It is of stone and tile construction, and the accommodation, which is exceptionally well planned, includes :—

On the Ground Floor: Entrance Hall, Dining Room, Drawing Room, with bay windows, Breakfast Room, Kitchen with range and copper, Pantry, Cellars, Cloak Room and W.C.

On the Upper Floor: Five Bedrooms, Bathroom, fitted Bath (h. & c.).

Outside: Gardener's Hovel and E.C.

Pretty Gardens with Lawn, Kitchen Garden with Flower Beds and Borders, etc.

The Farm Buildings

which comprise part of Normanton Park Works, include :—Loose Box, Blacksmith's Shop, with two Forges, Shoeing Yard, Elaborate Implement Shed, Tractor & Threshing Machine House, newly-erected Brick and Tile Piggery, with sixteen pens opening on to large yard, two-bay open Cart Shed, Men's Room, three-bay Covered Implement Shed, Small Dutch Barn, four-bay Waggon Shed, Foldyard, having two-bay Shelters at either end, six Piggeries, six Large Boxes with tying for nineteen Cows, Trap House, ten-bay lean-to Implement Shed, Cart Horse Stable for twelve, two Chaff Houses, Harness Room, Large Enclosed Stackyard with ten double-bay Dutch Barn, with slate roof, match lined with iron supports, three-bay Shed with concrete floor used for Shearing and Lambing Pens, Barn, Large Partly Covered Foldyard with tying for twenty Cows, five-bay Large lean-to Implement Shed with corrugated roof.

Above: From the sale details for Lot 29, the sale of Normanton Lodge Farm. It is described as an 'Excellent Agricultural Holding', the lands being 'in the very highest state of cultivation, and the Farm Buildings . . . described as being probably the finest and best equipped in the County of Rutland' (RCM)

Right: William Wakefield was the first family farmer at Normanton Lodge Farm (Christopher Renner)

Normanton Bailiffs

The Normanton Estate was evidently very well managed. Census Returns and Directories provide names of the farm bailiffs who helped to accomplish this:

1851	John Clementson
1861	John Healey
1871	John Stacey
1881	Miles Newman
1891	George Culpin
1901	Joseph Harris
1904-25	Edwin Nichols

Both lots were withdrawn from the sale and although Normanton Works ceased to exist both units continued to function as one compact farm, known as Normanton Lodge Farm. Edwin Nichols continued as farm bailiff until the farm was taken over by W Robertson in 1927. W G Wakefield took over Normanton Lodge in 1928. Mr Irvine Renner began farming with his father-in-law, William Wakefield, in 1947 and took over the farm of 850 acres in 1961. Today, the farm continues to be run by his son and grandson, Christopher and George Renner.



NORMANTON HOME FARM

Situate about one mile from the Village of Empingham, being about two miles from North Luffham Station (L.M. & S. Rly.), and convenient for Stamford and Oakham. It is well wooded, and the land is farmed by the late owner, the Right Hon. the Earl of Ancaster, in conjunction with Normanton Lodge Farm (Lot 29). The Buildings are extensive and in the finest state of repair.

The Farm Residence

is in excellent condition, is of stone and tile construction, and contains :—Seven Bedrooms, two Sitting Rooms, two Kitchens, Pantry, Scullery, Larder and Cellar. *Outside:* Wash House fitted Copper, Coal House, Stick House, and two E.C.s. Adjoining is a well-fitted Dairy. The House is at present used as two Cottages, but could be readily converted into an excellent Farm House.

The Farm Buildings

which originally formed part of Normanton Park Works, include

A Group of Stone and Tile Buildings

Comprising :—Joiners' Shop, two Large Store Rooms and Offices, Garage with sliding door and fireplace, communicating with Saddle Room, two-stall Stable and Loose Box, Garage with sliding door, Paint Shop fitted cupboards and drawers, Trap House having cemented floor and communicating by sliding door with Store Room, 20ft. by 18ft., having fireplace. Adjoining is a range of similarly constructed buildings, consisting of Forge Room, Granary, 30ft. by 16ft., with stone floor and loft over, Brick and Tile Carpenter's Shed, 30ft. by 24ft., Brick and Tile Large Implement Shed, range of Stone Store and Tile Buildings, comprising Cake House with loft over, and Barn.

No. 1 FOLDYARD

is of Brick and Tile, with three-bay Shelter and Pigstye.

No. 2 FOLDYARD

of Brick and Tile, with four Pigstyes, Hay Store, four-stall Cow House, ditto for six, ditto for six, with feeding passage, and twelve-stall Cow House, also with feeding passage.

No. 3 FOLDYARD

having three-bay Cattle Shelter and Incubator House.

No. 4 FOLDYARD

with two-bay Cattle Shelter and Open Boxes, Cart Horse Stabling for twelve, and Harness Room, Tool Shed, Barn with Loft over, three Bull Boxes, opening on to Small Yard, Engine Room communicating with Cake House, measuring 24ft. by 48ft., and having water laid on.

Above Right: From the sale details for Lot 30, 'The Exceedingly Valuable Mixed Farm' known as Normanton Home Farm. The land was farmed in conjunction with Normanton Lodge Farm (Lot 29), the buildings of which were 'extensive and in the finest state of repair' (RCM)

Working at Normanton Lodge Farm

Kemmel Freestone (see Chapter 21 – Lost Homes) and his stepfather, Mr Bert West, worked for William Wakefield from about 1938. They lived in an Ancaster style semi-detached cottage on the Normanton to Ketton road. Kemmel lived here later with his wife, Margaret and their two daughters. He has fond memories of working at Normanton Lodge Farm:

'I went there as a labourer. There were about six or seven lads working on the farm; we took more looking after than a cart load of monkeys. When the tractor driver, who used to

live next door to us, left Lodge Farm, Mr Wakefield, the boss, asked me if I would like to take over his job. I said that I would; at that time we had one tractor for 1000 acres. During the war we had more than three tractors; they had no cover on them so they were open to the elements . . . I used to be out there ploughing when they were bombing Coventry. I could see the flashes from the bombs. When ploughing at night I had a bicycle torch to show me where to go. I used to shine the torch down, hope and pray, and then lock the wheels into the furrow; you can do if you're good enough at it . . . we'd be ploughing the fields until 10 or 11 o'clock at night . . . Mr Wakefield was a good boss but if he caught you in the farm buildings smoking he'd say, "If the Good Lord wanted you to smoke he'd have put a chimney on your head". Every Christmas the boss used to kill two pigs and give everybody on the farm a pig's fry and a bit of pork; the pig's fry was a bit of liver, a bit of skirt [animal membrane], a bit of kidney and a chop.'



Above Left: William Wakefield and his daughter Mary with Kemmel Freestone at Normanton in 1946. Mary married Irvine Renner who continued to run the farm (Christopher Renner)

Left: Kemmel Freestone, on the tractor, talking to William Wakefield during the beet harvest in February 1946 (Christopher Renner)



St Matthew's Church

*Normanton Church
Museum on a
stormy day*
(Tim Hawkins)

Perhaps the most prominent landmark at Rutland Water is the former church of St Matthew at Normanton. Its style is distinctive, looking more like a city church, its position at the edge of the reservoir giving the appearance, at a distance, of a moored ship. It seemed likely that this building would be demolished with the birth of the new reservoir but fortunately it was saved and Normanton Church Museum, as it is now known, is enhanced by its new surroundings.

The first permanent church at Normanton was probably built towards the end of the fourteenth century. Nothing is known of an earlier building. The earliest recorded Rector is Hugo de Novo Castro (1227-35). In 1579 the church was described as being in a very ruinous condition and 50 years later the chancel 'much decayed'. Sir Gilbert Heathcote, the 3rd baronet, rebuilt the church in 1764 as a plain building with a square chancel and aisleless nave, but the existing tower was left intact.



Above: The plaque in Normanton Tower recording that the church was rebuilt in 1764 (RO)



Left: A view of Normanton Church based on Repton's illustration of 1796 (Canon John R H Prophet)

Below: Normanton Church about 1839 with its new tower. Normanton House can be seen in the background (Uppingham School Archives)

Throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century the church was used less as a village church and more as a private chapel for the occupants of Normanton House. Brewer in *Beauties of England & Wales* (1813) describes it as a 'venerable little church, which stands separate from all other buildings in the grounds of *Normanton House*. Its appearance is interesting, its little Gothic turret peeping out from a shrubbery'.

In 1826 the fourth baronet commissioned a new tower featuring a portico. It had a vestibule forming the entrance and contained a double staircase which led to a gallery at the west end of the nave. This new work was designed by Thomas Cundy of London, architect to the Grosvenor estates, and the tower is said to be modelled on that of St John's Church, in Smith Square, Westminster.



The Funeral of the 1st Lord Aveland

The 1st Lord Aveland died at his London home on 6th September 1867 and his funeral was reported in detail by the *Stamford Mercury* on 20th September:

‘The mortal remains of Gilbert John, 1st Lord Aveland, Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of the county of Lincoln, Honorary Colonel of the South Lincoln militia, F.S.A. etc who died at his town residence, 12, Belgrave-square, were interred at Normanton church on Friday last.

‘The corpse as stated last week, arrived at Normanton Park on the previous Tuesday, having been conveyed by the Great Northern Railway to Stamford. It was deposited in a lower room of the north wing of the mansion, which had been draped with black cloth . . .’

The hearse left the house on the Friday followed by six coaches carrying the chief mourners, the private carriage of the deceased and that of the newly created Lord Aveland, and four of the head servants.

‘Next came 200 of the tenantry, two-and-two, wearing rich silk scarves and hatbands and gloves . . .

The cortège slowly proceeded for some distance along the serpentine carriage road in an easterly direction, and before the mutes and lid of feathers had reached the screen of noble trees it had an imposing but unostentatious appearance, the effect being heightened by a brilliant meridian sun. On arriving at the semi-circular Grecian portico . . . the corpse was met by the Rev. T. B. Brown, Rector of the parish, and domestic chaplain to the deceased.



A baron's coronet ornament removed from the coffin of the 1st Lord Aveland (RCM)

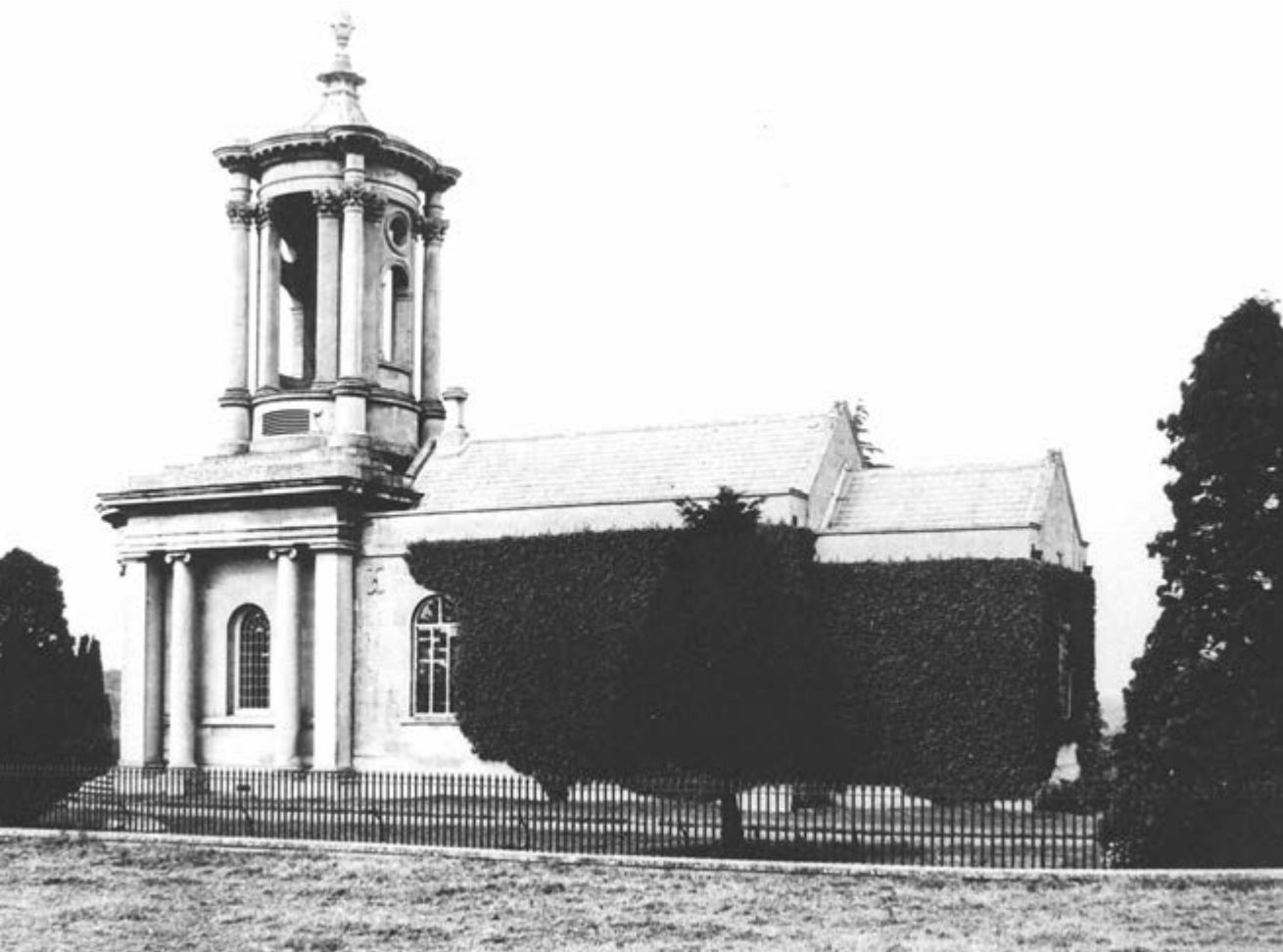
‘It was carried to the nave and placed on a bier, immediately after which the burial service was commenced, and after the lesson . . . the body was taken to the vestibule and deposited in a vault, where the burial service was concluded . . . The coffin was covered with rich Genoa crimson velvet, and studded with gilt nails, with four pair of handsome massive handles, and near each handle a baron's coronet. On the lid was a beautifully engraved plate with the family arms, and this inscription: “The Right Hon. Gilbert John, Baron Aveland, eldest son of Sir Gilbert Heathcote, 4th Baronet. Born 16th January, 1795. Died 6th September, 1867”.

‘There was a very large attendance of the inhabitants of Empingham and other adjacent villages, who lined the palisades enclosing the small church and cemetery until the return of the cortège, when they were admitted to take a farewell look at the coffin. Their behaviour throughout was becoming the solemn occasion. Mr Mitchell, chief constable, and several of the constabulary assisted to prevent any interruption to the arrangements. A hatchment was placed over the entrance to the mansion immediately after the funeral . . .’

In 1911 the nave and chancel were rebuilt in a similar style to the tower of 1826 as a memorial to the 1st Earl of Ancaster. The staircase and gallery were removed and replaced by a wide archway on coupled Doric columns.

When Normanton Hall was demolished in 1926 the church, although left isolated in a field, was still used. Surviving Parish Registers are held at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. The living was eventually amalgamated with Edith Weston and the Rectory became a private dwelling known as Bracknell House.

*Below:
Normanton
Church before
being rebuilt in
1911 (RLHRS)*



*Near Right:
Normanton Church
after being rebuilt
in 1911 (© Crown
Copyright.NMR)
Far Right:
Normanton Church
interior before
1911, showing the
gallery (RLHRS)*





Normanton Rectory, now Bracknell House. It became the home of Lady Alice, the daughter of the 1st Earl of Ancaster (Hart)

When the decision was made to construct a reservoir in the Gwash Valley, plans revealed that St Matthew's Church stood below the eventual high water line. The church was destined to be demolished and in 1970 it was deconsecrated by the Bishop of Peterborough.

Alex Watt, assistant sidesman at Normanton Church for a few years prior to its closure, remembers:

'My mother [Ella Watt] was the last person buried in the churchyard and that was in December 1966. Our eldest son Stephen . . . I think was one of the last christened in the church before it was closed. Services were held in the church once a month in the Summer months only. It was too cold in the winter. There was no heating and lighting was by oil lamps. Electricity wasn't put in until after the reservoir was there when it was made into a tourist attraction.'

After deconsecration, all the memorials, glass, fittings, graves and gravestones were removed from the church and churchyard. The altar slab and memorial tablets to the Heathcote family from inside the church were placed in the north aisle of Edith Weston Church. Other tablets went to Grimsthorpe Castle and Edenham Church. In 1972 two vaults were discovered beneath the church floor. The larger vault contained seventeen coffins. These were dated from 1710 to 1829 and belonged to thirteen adults and four children, all members of the Heathcote family. Four of these, dated 1710, 1714, 1719 and 1727, had been transferred in 1734 from the church at Low Leyton, now Leytonstone, Essex. Forest House, Low Leyton, was the home of Sir Gilbert Heathcote before he moved to Normanton *circa* 1729. In every case the inner lead coffins were exposed, the outer timber having decayed. The smaller of the vaults contained four coffins in much better condition. They dated from 1842 to 1888. The contents of both vaults were removed and the remains cremated along with those of 107 bodies exhumed from the churchyard. Two caskets of ashes from the churchyard were also removed for re-burial.



Above: The nave at Normanton Church after 1911, viewed from the altar (© Crown Copyright.NMR)



Above Left: The brass pulpit from Normanton Church was presented to Emmanuel Church, Weston Favell, Northampton, when it was built in 1973. It has now been returned and is displayed in Normanton Church Museum (© Crown Copyright.NMR)

Above Right: The altar from Normanton Church, now in the north aisle of Edith Weston Church (RO)

Left: Memorial to John, the son of the first Sir Gilbert Heathcote. This is one of six memorial tablets to the Heathcote family now in the north aisle of Edith Weston Church (RO)

The tablet in the north aisle of Edith Weston Church to the memory of those who were buried at Normanton (RO)

In memory of all those buried in the Church and Churchyard of St. Matthew, Normanton, whose bodies were removed for cremation in 1971, when work started on the Empingham Dam. The names of those whose gravestones were removed

1875 Richard Coverley	1900 Jane Studdert	1948 Elizabeth Southam
1887 Mary Ann Culpin	1910 William Hill	1952 Emma Salina Harvison
1894 Ellen Brown	Mary Hill	1954 John Henry Poole
1894 Marion Tilley	1911 George Declare Studdert (Rector)	1954 Christian Elizabeth Twiddy
1895 Joseph Jonathan Newman	1929 Mary Elizabeth Stokes	1960 Lloyd Gilbert Schwab
Elizabeth Newman	1934 Charles Stokes	1961 William George Wakefield
1897 Thomas Bentley Brown (Rector)	1945 Charles W. Stokes	1966 Ella Watt
	1910 Charles J. Cossham	

This tablet was erected by the Anglian Water Authority in 1979, the year in which Rutland Water was first filled.



Above: Some of the headstones from Normanton in the churchyard at Edith Weston (RO)

Margaret Plumb, the last bride to be married in the church, recalled:

‘I can remember when they were taking everything from the church . . . they had to remove all the coffins and the tombstones . . . they found a lot of coffins in the crypt that were made of solid lead. It really wasn’t a very nice job for anyone but all the tombstones were moved to Edith Weston Church and they are now standing in the churchyard propped up against the wall.’

In 1972 a group of volunteers, known as the Normanton Tower Trust, began to raise money to preserve this local landmark. The final scheme adopted was to raise the internal floor level and to build a surrounding bank and a causeway to give protection and access. The main west door was sealed and a new door was inserted in place of a window on the north side. In 1983 it became a museum in the care of Anglian Water. It houses a fascinating display portraying the construction of Rutland Water.



Left: The bell and window glass from Normanton Church were installed in the new church of St Jude’s in Peterborough. Following the installation of three other bells in a new tower in 1984, this bell is again redundant. The bell is dated 1766 and was cast by Joseph Eayre of St Neots (RO)



Above: Normanton Church in the process of being saved (Anglian Water)

Below Right: An early internal picture of Normanton Church Museum (Anglian Water)

Below: Sylvia Leach who has fond memories of Normanton Church (RO)



Sylvia Leach (*née* Demaid), who was born and brought up in Empingham, has fond memories of the church: ‘We always called it the Pineapple Chapel because of the pineapple at the top . . . we liked to walk down Sykes Lane, where the water is now, over to Edith Weston and you could see it. It was just part of our landscape really and we wanted it to be saved.’

Below: Normanton Church waits for Rutland Water like a ship in dry dock (Anglian Water)



A Remarkable Discovery

The efforts of the Normanton Tower Trust secured the preservation of Normanton Church. This building is now considered to be one of Rutland Water's most dominant and important landscape features.

When the Heathcote family vault was opened on 6th September 1972 in order to remove the coffins, this presented an opportunity to examine and photograph the only known fully documented Chippendale coffin.

Although many eighteenth century cabinet-makers were also undertakers, it is understood that the most eminent firms seldom performed funerals. There was therefore a great deal of interest shown when a bill, submitted to 'Sir Gilbert Heathcote Bart' from 'Chippendale Haig & Co' was discovered in Lincoln Record Office in the late 1960s (Lincolnshire Archives, 2 Anc 12/D/29). The bill, dated 12th May 1772, was Thomas Chippendale's account for furnishing and directing the Dowager Lady Bridget Heathcote's funeral. She was the widow of John Heathcote, the second baronet. The bill, which was for £121 15s 11d, was presented to her son and it clearly reveals that Lady Bridget's body had been brought from London to be buried at Normanton.

Alex Watt, former sidesman at Normanton Church recalls:

'When the church was deconsecrated all of the bodies were removed from the graveyard and the vaults. There were two vaults under the church.

Access was gained through a stone man-hole in the floor of the church building and in the square shaped vault, on each of the four walls, there were recesses and in these recesses coffins were placed . . . I can't remember exactly how many . . . but they were very ornate. Most of the other coffins in the second chamber were lead-lined and all the timber on the outside of the coffins had rotted away. When I say lead-lined, they were actually sealed lead boxes and the names were engraved in lead on the top of the boxes. Some of them you could just read and make out the names . . . it upset me a little bit because in this chamber there were two tiny coffins, obviously children, and I thought that was very sad. All these coffins were removed from the vaults.'



Alex Watt with his wife Barbara. Alex was a sidesman at Normanton Church (Alex Watt)

Normanton Church Vaults

Before his ordination, the Rev Brian Nicholls and his wife Liz were professional photographers, and they were appointed by the water authority as official photographers for the construction of Rutland Water. In 2005 Brian recalled ‘a very interesting experience’ when he entered the Heathcote family vault:



Top Left: The entrance to the Heathcote vaults at Normanton Church (Alex Watt)

match up with this burial invoice from Chippendale. This was totally secret – the opening up – because being nobility they thought that there’d be the possibility of people coming to try and break in, in case there was any valuable jewellery. In the event there were only wedding rings and, with the permission of the Ancaster family, the remains were then put into common wood coffins and taken off to the crematorium.’

‘Liz didn’t come down with me, but they took up one flagstone from the floor of the church and put a ladder down where we discovered there were two crypts. The one facing what is now the Water, which would probably be the west end, was more modern, in fact, and the coffins were on shelves and the woodwork was intact and they all were of the Ancaster ancestors. But going into the main crypt there were – I couldn’t guess how many now because it was such a long time ago, but it was absolutely full of coffins that had been made of wood or coated with wood, but the wood had disappeared and left the lead inner lining which regrettably had leaked over the years and so before I was allowed to go in they had to put down powdered disinfectant and so on. Fortunately for me, there was the curator of Temple Newsam House in Leeds who’d found an account from Chippendale for a burial at Normanton and he came down when they said they were opening it up. We went down together and we found the particular coffin he was interested in. It was good for me as he was able to hold the torch while I focused on the coffin plate with the name and then gave him the flash instead of the torch and reproduced the photograph. I understand that he was allowed to take out the coffin furniture – the handles and so forth back to

Below Left: Heathcote family coffins in the smaller of the vaults beneath Normanton Church. It was possible to remove these through the ceiling of the vault (Brian & Elizabeth Nicholls Photography)

Below Right: Heathcote family coffins in the larger vault beneath Normanton Church. These coffins had to be removed through a hole cut through the wall of the vault below ground level (Brian & Elizabeth Nicholls Photography)



A description of the Heathcote coffins and details of Lady Bridget's funeral are recorded in *Thomas Chippendale as Undertaker* by Christopher Gilbert:

'The chamber contained sixteen [seventeen recorded by Anglian Water] coffins, all dating from the Georgian period: the lead caskets, lined inside with timber, were well preserved, but the outer elm cases covered with black velvet enriched with nail patterns, fine brass handles, plaques and inscription tablets were in a decrepit state. The boards of the Chippendale coffin had unluckily completely decayed, although the woodwork of several ranged along the opposite wall was reasonably sound – conveying an impression of their original splendour.

'Chippendale's bill included charges for "a large strong Lead Coffin and soldering up with Inscription", the boldly incised legend ensured correct identification, confirmed by the presence of a second tablet resting on the lid itemized as "A Brass plate of Inscription with the Coat of Arms neatly Engrav'd and Gilt £4". This elegant plaque had, of course, originally graced the outer coffin, described in the invoice as ". . . cover'd with black velvett & finish'd with 2 rows best brass nails & 4 pair of large strong chas'd brass handles gilt". The handles – three on either side and one at each end – were found where they had fallen, buried in decomposed wood. Chippendale also supplied "a large Atchivement of Arms painted in oil, the outer frame cover'd with Cloath & fixing £5", but this hatchment, presumably subcontracted to a professional heraldic painter, has not been traced.

'The partner's account shows that Thomas Haig accompanied the cortège on its journey from London to the family's country seat at Normanton, suggesting that the Heathcotes were respected customers . . . Chippendale provided cloaks, scarves, silk hatbands and gloves for the mourners; ostrich feathers and velvet drapes for the hearse and paid all incidental expenses. One entry "the best Pall the journey £2.2" implies that this item was available for hire.

'It is difficult to assess what proportion of the furnishings Chippendale actually made for the funeral – his joiners and upholsterers were obviously competent to produce the outside coffin, cover it and add the brasses, but the lead casket and decorative features could well have come from the stock of specialist tradesmen. His main responsibility was apparently ensuring that the coffin was elegantly styled and the funeral performed with dignity. The detailed schedule indicates the complexity of the undertaking and if, as appears increasingly likely, administrative flair was not one of Chippendale's assets he displayed prudence in leaving the arrangements to his partner.'

*The Hon^l. S^r Gilbert Heathcote
Knight & Baronett Member of Parli^{mt}
& Senior Alderman of the City of London
President of S^t Thomas Hospitall & of
the Artillery Company one of the
Directors of the Bank of England
Governor of the Eastland Company
& Collo^l of the Blen Regiment of
trained Bands in the City of London
Departed this Life January the 25th
1732
In the 82^d Year of his Age*

*From the coffin
plate of the Hon
Sir Gilbert
Heathcote, 1st
Baronet (RCM)*



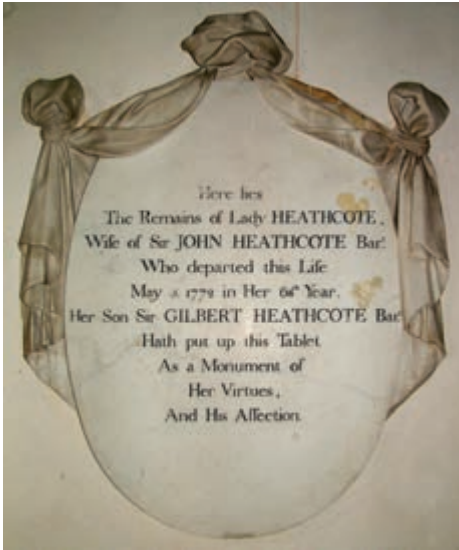
Far Left: Inside the larger of the two vaults at Normanton Church. Lady Bridget's coffin is at the centre of the rear row (Brian & Elizabeth Nicholls Photography)

Left: Lady Bridget Heathcote's coffin plate (RCM)

Chippendale's Account

Selected extracts from Chippendale's account for directing and furnishing the funeral of the Dowager Lady Bridget Heathcote in 1772 (Lincolnshire Archives, 2 Anc 12/D/29):

						£	s	d
To 26 Silk Hatbands for Tennat as under @ 8/-						10	8	0
viz.	1st	Messrs Bunning	10th	Christian	19	Wyles		
	2d	Fancourt	11	Broadsworth	20	Parker		
	3	Springthorp	12	Mathw Stubbs	21	Burchnell		
	4	Collington Senr	13	Henry Stubbs	22	Allen		
	5	Do Junr	14	Jno Skillington	23	Grant		
	6	Sutton Senr	15	Storey Senr	24	Ward		
	7	Do Junr	16	Do Junr	25	Chamberlain		
	8	Stephens Senr	17	Saxton	26	Stephen Skillington		
	9	Do Junr	18	Hill				
26 pair Gloves for Ditto @ 2/-						2	12	0
6 Silk Hatbands as under @ 8/-						2	8	0
	1st	the Gardener	4	Thos Cotton				
	2d	the Keeper	5	Christn Barrett				
	3d	Thos Blutworth	6	Sam'1 Allen				
6 pair Gloves for Do @ 2/-						2	12	0
11 Silk Hatbands for the under Bearers including the Clerk at Normanton @ 8/-						4	8	0
11 pair Gloves for Ditto						1	2	0
1 Pair Lac'd Gloves Mrs Smith							5	0
3 pair of Kid for the Servants at Stoker							6	9
2 pair ditto for Servants at Normanton @ 2/3						4	6	
8 pair do for Tennants Wives that were present							18	0
21 pr of Women's Gloves for the Servants in Town								
& at Fulham including 3 Women at Wicherley Warren								
& 2 pair Extra: for the Women who Travelled @ 2/3						2	7	3
A Crape Hatband & Gloves, the Buttlar							6	3



*Above Left:
The memorial
to Lady Bridget
Heathcote,
removed from
Normanton
Church, is now
in Edith Weston
Church (RO)*

*Above Right:
The lane
leading down to
St Matthews
Church,
Normanton in
1954 (© Crown
Copyright.
NMR)*



The Last Wedding at Normanton

Margaret Hart and her parents moved to Rutland in February 1946. They lived at Park House, near Normanton Church. Margaret has happy memories of her time there:

‘Living at Park House was very pleasant. My bedroom looked out over the fields down to the river and in the middle of the river there was a little island. There were lovely trees on this island and you could tell the passing seasons by the different colours of the trees. It was really a beautiful view along the valley to Oakham . . .’

Margaret and Laurence Plumb were married at Normanton in 1954. It was to be the last wedding at the church:

‘We had a service at Normanton Church every Sunday afternoon at half past three. My mother played the organ and my father was a sidesman and we had a short service lasting about half an hour. The Rev Beaumont from Edith Weston took the service. We usually had a congregation of ten people. I can remember we used to walk down the path from home to the church which was surrounded with an iron railing . . . It was always very cold in the church, there was no heating of any description except a small round paraffin heater in the winter. When we got married there . . . the church was quite full . . . I walked down to the church. I can remember it was very, very windy. When I walked in the church my mother was playing the organ and I saw Laurence standing at the end. Although it wasn’t a very long church it seemed a long walk up to the altar. After the wedding we stood outside to take photographs in the doorway which now faces the water . . . and I can remember the photographer saying, “I can’t take it yet”, because the wind was blowing my veil up in the air. Then we walked and ran up from the church to a taxi that was waiting at the top of the path. We had the reception at Edith Weston Village Hall.’

*The bride and
groom, Margaret
and Laurence
Plumb, were the
last couple to be
married at
Normanton Church
(Margaret &
Laurence Plumb)*

