

Helmingham Hall Historical Development

REVISION: P1

November 2022



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Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION
1.1	LOCATION
1.2	ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES
1.3	HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
1.4	PRINCIPAL BUILDING
1.5	LISTING TEXT
1.6	GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS
1.7	PARK
1.8	REFERENCES
1.9	HISTORIC ANALYSIS
2.0	ARCHIVAL RESEARCH
2.1	NORTH FRONT
2.2	SOUTH FRONT
2.3	WEST FRONT
3.0	PRESENT DAY
4.0	HISTORIC EVOLUTION

Helmingham Hall

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Helmingham Hall is a substantial Tudor manor house, arranged around a central courtyard and surrounded by a moat. It was built for Lionel Tollemache from c1510 onwards. Since then it has been the subject of three major phases of remodelling:

c.1745-1760 for the 4th Earl Dysart

c.1800 by John Nash for the 6th Earl

c.1841, probably by Anthony Salvin, for John (later 1st Lord) Tollemache.

In around 1900 the Tollemache family moved out Helmingham, preferring to base themselves at their Cheshire Seat of Peckforton Castle, which was also built by Salvin. It was not until the 1950's that the family moved back into Helmingham. At this time, the hall was restored, wired for electricity and plumbing was added. The present Lord Tollemache commissioned David Mlinaric to restore and redecorate the formal rooms of the house whereas the North-East wing has remained largely untouched since its utilitarian conversion the 1950s.

1.1 LOCATION

Helmingham Hall is located beside the village of Helmingham, c 14km north of Ipswich on the B1077. The park is roughly triangular in shape, covers an area of c 160ha and lies to the north-west of the village. Helmingham village street and the B1077 form the south-east boundary with South Park Farm at the south tip. Agricultural land and Paris Farm lie to the west, Valley Farm to the east, and North Park Farm to the north. The park boundary is open in some places and enclosed by scattered woodland in others. It is more enclosed to the north and east and more open to the west. The whole area has a gently rolling topography, undulating down to a stream which runs across the southern part of the park before rising steeply in the south-east corner to the church. North of the Hall the land is flat, then dips down to another stream before rising again to the boundary of the park. Together this provides a rural setting of mainly agricultural land, dotted with farm settlements and punctuated by small villages. The Hall and park can be seen from the village and the main view from the Hall is south-east down the oak-lined main drive. The Mount is located in the western section of park and from its summit fine views are enjoyed back towards the Hall and in all directions across the park and wider landscape.

1.2 ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main approach drive enters the park from Helmingham village in the south-east and runs directly to the front of the Hall. The drive was extended to its present length in 1729 and planted with a double avenue of oak, many of which survive today (1998) (Tollemache survey). Twin red-brick lodges (listed grade II*) with crow-stepped gables are linked to red-brick gate piers by ornamental wrought-iron fencing and central gates (listed grade II*). A branch off the drive turns north-east to skirt the gardens and fishponds before entering the stable block located off the north-east corner of the Hall. A second drive, created c 1820, enters from the eastern boundary, past the gate lodge (Keeper's Cottage), (listed grade II), a two-storey, red-brick and pantile building in Tudor-Revival style, and runs west to the stable block, with a branch off to the south to connect with the front drive. In the garden of the Keeper's Cottage, 20m south of the Hall, stands a thatched and timber-framed Game Larder (listed grade II). This building dates from c 1800 and is constructed in the Gothic style with weatherboarding to the sides and a pyramidal roof.

1.3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Prior to the C15 a house known as Creke Hall, the home of the Joyce family, stood on the site of the present Helmingham Hall. In 1487 John Tollemache married Elizabeth Joyce of Helmingham and in 1509 their son Lionel married Elizabeth's niece Edith. Edith succeeded to the estate and together they pulled down the old hall and in 1510 erected the present Helmingham Hall together with a moated garden enclosure and a deer park (Williamson 1995). The garden was developed on the site of an earlier enclosure, originally protected by a wooden palisade. In 1729 Richard Tollemache, a talented surveyor, completed a survey of the Tollemache lands at Helmingham and his map of the same date shows that the old deer park of c 47ha to the north-west of the Hall had been extended to include the 'New Parke' of c 14ha surrounding the Hall. By this time the Tollemaches had become the earls of Dysart and between 1745 and 1760 the fourth Earl made alterations to the exterior of the Hall, added the present stable block and built a wall around the moated garden. In 1800 John Nash (1752-1835) was commissioned to make further alterations to the exterior and an estate map of 1802, together with some late C18 watercolours of the park (private collection), show that by this time the park had been further extended to both north and south to its present size. These paintings depict for the first time The Mount, topped by a summerhouse and surrounded on its slopes by a wilderness. The architect Anthony Salvin (1799-1881) was called in by John Tollemache, later the first Lord Tollemache, in 1840 to make alterations to the garden front of the Hall, whilst in the park the summerhouse on The Mount was replaced by an Obelisk in 1860 (guidebook). During the middle of the C20 the fourth Lord Tollemache was responsible for the renovation and rejuvenation of the Hall and grounds whilst in the 1980s the present Lady Tollemache added two new garden enclosures to the east of the Hall. The site remains (1998) in private ownership.

I.4 PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Helmingham Hall (listed grade I), which sits in the south-east quarter of the park, was completed in 1510 for Lionel Tollemache, the High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk. It is one of the largest moated houses in Suffolk. Built in a courtyard plan, it is completely surrounded by a broad C16 moat and is reached by two working drawbridges. The Hall is constructed of red brick with red-tile roofs and much of the original two-storey, timber-framed house remains beneath exterior reworking of a number of phases. It has embattled parapets and crow-stepped gables on all sides and many circular or octagonal chimneys, arranged singly and in groups of four. The south-east or gateway front retains the remodelling undertaken during the Georgian period, with a four-window range and gothic hood moulds on either side of the round-arched gateway all added by Nash c 1800. The original terminal gables on each corner formed the model for the redesign of the south-west (or garden) front by Anthony Salvin in 1840 which also incorporates diaper patterning in the brickwork. The moat has C18 red-brick revetments (listed grade II) and an obelisk at each corner, surmounting a square pier. In the centre of the south-east side is a cast-iron bridge by Nash, with octagonal brick piers and open arcaded balustrade. A second near-identical bridge spans the north-east arm near its northern end, with octagonal terminal piers also by Nash.

I.5 LISTING TEXT

A large country mansion, built round a courtyard, for Lionel Tollemache (High Sheriff of Suffolk and Norfolk 1512 and 1530; ob. ante 1553). Three major phases of remodelling: c.1745-1760 for the 4th Earl Dysart; c.1800 by John Nash for the 6th Earl; and c.1841, probably by A. Salvin, for John (later 1st Lord) Tollemache. The north, south and east ranges retain substantial parts of the original timber-framed house of which small sections of close-studded and jettied framing are exposed. The exterior is almost entirely encased or rebuilt in C18 and C19 red brick, apart from the upper floor of the south range which is hung with C18 red mathematical tiles above a narrow jetty. Embattled parapets and crow-stepped gables. Plain-tiled roofs: a number of late C16 and early C17 axial chimneys of red brick with circular and octagonal shafts in groups of 2 or 4. Courtyard plan: a central late C16 gatehouse has a 4-window range at either flank, terminated by set-forward gables.

To rear of the courtyard are parallel hall and kitchen ranges; on the east is a C16 range of lodgings; and to west a parlour wing rebuilt in 1841. Windows on the south elevation by Nash have Gothic hood moulds and small-pane casements, those at ground storey with transomes. The terminal gables of c.1600 have 2-storey splayed bays with plastered mullions and transomes and leaded glazing, a broad moulded plaster cornice at 1st and attic floors, and octagonal corner pilasters capped by finials of carved brick which are repeated at the gable apex. These gables form the model for the design of the west front of 1841, the entire motif being repeated, with the introduction of diaper patterning in burnt headers. The mid or late C16 front gatehouse is in narrow bricks with splayed buttresses and a round-arched gateway, which until c.1800 had an entablature with pediment. At that time the corbelled oriel and crow-stepped gable were added. An original gateway of c.1530 behind: timber-framed, with a depressed 4-centred arched head with carved spandrels and buttress shafts; a pair of large oak doors with ribbed panels and fine tracery at the head may be a little earlier. The courtyard face, remodelled by Nash, has reinstated a carved timber cill from an oriel window of c.1530. The great hall remains open, with queen post trusses: the arch braces are filled with trefoils, and beneath the tie beams and wall pieces are pendant bosses. Although the details are probably by Nash, the roof may have a C16 core. Much fine interior remodelling in particular the Boudoir of c.1745-60. The house is surrounded by a broad C16 moat with possibly medieval origins; the revetments with low parapets are of C18 red brick. For full details of the house and its history, *Country Life: Helmingham Hall, Suffolk*: Arthur Oswald; five issues August-October 1956.

I.6 GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens and pleasure grounds at Helmingham cover c 3ha, of which 0.75ha is kitchen garden. They lie to the north-east and south-west of the Hall, the main garden front being to the south-west. The south-west garden is moated and is reached by a wide grass causeway. The garden is walled on three sides (north-west, south-west and south-east) but open to the north-east; some enclosure is however provided by a cross wall running north/south through the centre of the garden, behind which lies the kitchen garden. The moated enclosure is thought to pre-date the Hall and may therefore have been associated with the earlier Creke Hall (guidebook), but the walls (listed grade II) were added in 1749 by Robert Rodwell, bricklayer to the fourth Earl Dysart. The open north-east end of the garden faces the Hall and is newly planted (1990s) with elaborate box knots cut into the lawn and filled with santolina. The deep borders against the cross wall contain musk roses and old quince and mulberry trees. The knots are decorated with two early C19 urns (listed grade II) and a bronze C19 sundial on a limestone plinth (listed grade II) sits at the entrance to the garden, the dial being intricately inscribed to include the Tollemache arms. The grass walk dividing the Hall moat from the garden moat is terminated in the south-east by a female statue carved in limestone. This is paired in the north-west by a male statue holding a wolf's head in his left hand (both listed grade II). Along the inner banks of the moat is a spring border to the south-east and a summer border to the south-west, whilst the north-west, south-west and south-east banks contain large, dome-clipped yews. Mature cedar of Lebanon grace the outer banks. Beyond the moat to the north-west is an apple walk of early C20 origins, and to the south-west is a hard tennis court, beyond which lies a wild-flower meadow beneath the remains of orchard trees. This area was shown as orchard on the 1729 Tollemache survey. Beyond the south-east bank of the moat lies the Shrubbery Walk, an area of mixed ornamental tree and shrub planting, with walks lined by mature yew and box.

To the north-east of the Hall are two newly planted garden enclosures, designed by Lady Tollemache and Lady Salisbury in 1982. Arranged around an axial path, they consist of a formal garden of clipped box knots in the Tudor style filled with herbs, and a geometric pattern of borders filled with old roses and bulbs. To the south-east is a small enclosed private garden with pavilion and swimming pool (late C20). The whole is surrounded by fine yew hedges and beyond it to the north-east is a fishpond, known as the Coach-house Pond, set into lawn with some fine mature, early C19 oaks.

1.7 PARK

The park at Helmingham is a gently rolling landscape which today (1998) covers the same area as that shown in the 1802 Johnson survey. It is partially surrounded by tree belts and clearly shows, both in the positions of trees and in the surviving earthworks along the southern and northern boundaries, evidence of having been extended through field boundary removal during the C18. It is filled with oaks of varying ages from veteran trees to newly planted storm damage replacements, scattered across the whole park as individuals, groves and larger groups. The park is grazed by large herds of red and fallow deer. Oak Grove which lies to the north of the Hall is the largest group planting in the park and it is shown on the 1729 Tollemache survey. It contains some fine old trees. Approximately 700m to the west of the Hall and connected to the pleasure grounds by the remains of a Hawthorn Walk lies The Mount, a grass-covered man-made viewing point with a circular pool at its base and a brick Obelisk at its summit. The Mount was in place by the mid C17 and late C18 drawings hanging in the Hall show that it was by that time surmounted by a summerhouse and planted as a wilderness. The Hawthorn Walk is also shown clearly on these drawings by Hodskinson. The summerhouse was removed in the mid C19 and the bricks used to build the Obelisk. Although the early surveys do not show The Mount, they do show a pool in this location and The Mount itself is mentioned in an agreement between Richard Tollemache and his gardener dated 1661. To the south-east of the Hall is the double Oak Avenue, planted in 1730 as proposed on Richard Tollemache's 1729 survey. Also in this quarter are four fishponds. The two largest lie at the base of the rise up to the church and are crossed by a causeway and red-brick bridge by John Nash which date from c 1800 (listed grade II). The eastern part of the park, both north and south of the Hall, contains some very fine old oak pollards of a great age. The age of these trees was already being remarked upon by Neale in 1818, as was the large herd of deer. In the north-west corner, a small brick and flint bridge, described as 'new' in a document dated 1815 (Williamson 1995), crosses the stream at a point known as The Dell. Beside it stands a crooked oak, sketched by Constable in 1801. Beyond the north-east corner of the Hall is the stable block and coach house, built c 1800 (listed grade II) of red brick with a hipped slate roof. It is now used as a tea-room.

1.8 REFERENCES

J P Neale *View of the seats of noblemen and gentlemen...* 4, (1818) F D Morris, *A Series of picturesque views...* 3, (1871), p 21 *Country Life*, 4 (10 December 1898), p 720; 120 (9 August 1956), p 282; (16 August 1956), p 332; 179 (26 June 1986), p 1860 C Holme, *The gardens of England in the southern and western counties* (1907), pp 157-8 N Pevsner and E Radcliffe, *The Buildings of England: Suffolk* (1975), p 259 *Helmingham Hall Gardens*, guidebook, (nd) Tom Williamson, *Report on Helmingham Park*, (UEA c 1995)

Maps Richard Tollemache, *Estate survey, 1729* (private collection) Isaac Johnson, *Estate survey, 1802* (private collection) *Helmingham Tithe map and apportionment, 1840* (P461/123; FDA 123/A1/1a), (East Suffolk Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1905 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1905

Archival items Agreement between Richard Tollemache and William Dimmock, gardener, dated 1661 (private collection) The Helmingham Hall and Tollemache family archives are held in a private collection.

Description written: October 1998 Amended: June 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: December 1999

The house as it appears today owes most to the 19th-century Tudor Gothic work of the Nash and Salvin offices. The early 18th century view of the house (fig.5), taken from the east, shows the south elevation with gate house in the centre and the bay windows, flanked by brick turrets and crowned with crow-stepped gables at each end. These turreted and gabled bays appear to be the only 16th century elements of the facade to survive largely unaltered to the present day. This motif that was reused by Nash and Salvin when remodelling the remaining elevations. The east front is much simpler and Georgian vernacular in style, with sash windows along the first and second floors. A plain Venetian window is clearly visible on the ground floor of the south gable lighting the boudoir. The gable of the kitchen building is visible at the north end, still detached from the rest of the south wing, but linked by an arched and pedimented gateway. Further 18th century elements include the addition of sash windows along the ground floor of the south front and a Classical surround to the entrance of the gatehouse. This 18th century view of the house seems to confirm that, although the 4th Earl made considerable alterations between 1745 and 1760, they were rather ad hoc when it came to the exterior. He seemed more concerned with tidying up and making do rather than embarking on the radical re-imagining that was the hallmark of both Nash and Salvin's work at Helmingham. His interior remodelling was considerable however and many of the rooms retain their mid-Georgian character. Much of the timber framed Tudor structure was retained and simply clad with mathematical tiles to resemble brickwork. Arthur Oswald wrote in his Country Life Article of 1956: *The 4th Earl seems to have had three objectives: to modernise the interior, weather-proof the exterior and give it an up-to-date neat and presentable appearance.* According to the estate accounts 85,850 bricks and 33,250 tiles were used at the Hall in 1757.

John Nash, ably assisted by John Adley Repton, was responsible for the re-Gothicising of the house. His as built designs for the south, north and west fronts survive. South front: Nash removed the classical door surround from the arch, added an oriel window above and rebuilt the gable with finials and crow steps to match the Tudor ones at each end. He also rationalised the windows, replacing the 18th century sashes with mullioned casement windows topped with gothic hood mouldings. The east front received a similar Gothicising treatment. He rebuilt the south gable to match the Tudor bay window motifs from the ends of the south front.

He then added a crenellated brick parapet and changed all the windows from sashes to cross mullioned windows, with hood mouldings. Some of these windows still retain their 18th century gauged brick lintels. The gable in the centre was also rebuilt in a Tudor gothic style and a brick porch added to the south. The roof cupola was redesigned by Nash and the timber detailing matches the bartizan on the west end of the kitchen. The east bridge was designed by Nash and the kitchen wing received a new parapet, gable and finials as well as cross mullioned windows with gothic hood mouldings. The larger panes of glass in the ground floor windows are likely to be a Victorian addition, as all the windows on Salvin's rebuilt south front have the same horizontal glazing bars and larger panes. It seems likely that the smaller paned windows on the first floor are the original Nash pattern, which were retained possibly to save money during the 1840s phase of work. The infill gate house, between the kitchen and the main range is likely by Salvin as the brick is more modern than the surrounding masonry and the diaper pattern brick in burnt headers is consistent with Salvin's work on the west front. The burnt headers are not true glazed bricks from a wood fired kiln and appear to be a Victorian imitation.

The north elevation is largely as remodelled by Nash and Salvin. Nash added the finialed gables and parapet, replacing the sash windows with mullioned casements. The north front of the kitchen is clad in mathematical tiles from near the top of the first floor windows downwards, possibly suggesting a degree of Tudor timber framing behind. Perhaps Nash's most radical intervention was to clad the whole house in grey render designed to resemble rubble stone. This is shown on his as-built elevations and also in the c.1810 view of the house (fig. 15). The weather tiles on the kitchen appear to be newer than the surrounding fabric, so probably date from the 1840's when Salvin stripped all the render off again. It's also possible that they date from the 1950's restoration works when they were certainly repointed in a cementitious mortar. Nash added the courtyard wall with the arched gateway, to link the kitchen to the west range. This curtain wall screened a deep courtyard approximately 9.5x13m, which was later filled-in with a two storey range designed by Salvin. The yard is clearly visible in the 1803 map by Isaac Johnson (fig. 4).

Nash also adapted the moat wall, adding a recessed gothic arch flanked by a pair of buttresses. Nash's work on the north-west corner was demolished in the 1840s when Salvin rebuilt this end of the house to create a high-ceilinged drawing room, dining room and the Peckforton Staircase hall.

The entire west front was rebuilt by Salvin repeating the Tudor bay window and gable motif that both he and Nash borrowed from the entrance front. The diaper brickwork was a Salvin addition and doesn't appear at the hall pre-1840. Whereas the north end of the west elevation was completely rebuilt by Salvin the central and southern end was re-faced, retaining the fine Georgian rooms behind.

The building which houses the double height kitchen, pantry and larder likely dates from the 16th century, but was remodelled by the 4th Earl in the 18th century and then again by Nash in the early 19th century as described above. The mathematical tiles on the north front are likely from the 1840's or later. A section of timber framing is visible on the north elevation of the red passage, at the larder end. This was exposed during the 1950's work and is referenced by Arthur Oswald in his country life article of 1956: *Although the hall is entered directly from the porch and the screens have disappeared, the arrangements of buttery and pantry immediately to the east survive. The flower-room was the pantry and the buttery will have occupied part of the cloakroom. Between them is the usual passage, which in a mediaeval house normally led to the kitchen. The timber-framed partition between the passage and the pantry was exposed in 1952. This part of the range is wider than the hall, although the existence of the porch where the break occurs disguises this. All these points suggest that the first Lionel Tollemache, in forming a complete courtyard building early in 16c., may have retained the hall range of the Joyce building, which might not have been much more extensive, although there would, no doubt, have been an entrance gateway on the south side.* Arthur Oswald: Country Life, 16 August, 1956

With the exception of the tie beams in the kitchen ceiling and the exposed timber framing mentioned above, the kitchen is largely 19th century. There are two flush beaded internal doors in the kitchen which date from the early 19th century. There's a good brick floor a copper and a partial timber cornice in the prep kitchen which are probably 18th century. The floor in the kitchen is an interesting patchwork of quarry tiles and stone flags of varying age.

2.0 Archival Research

Fig. 1

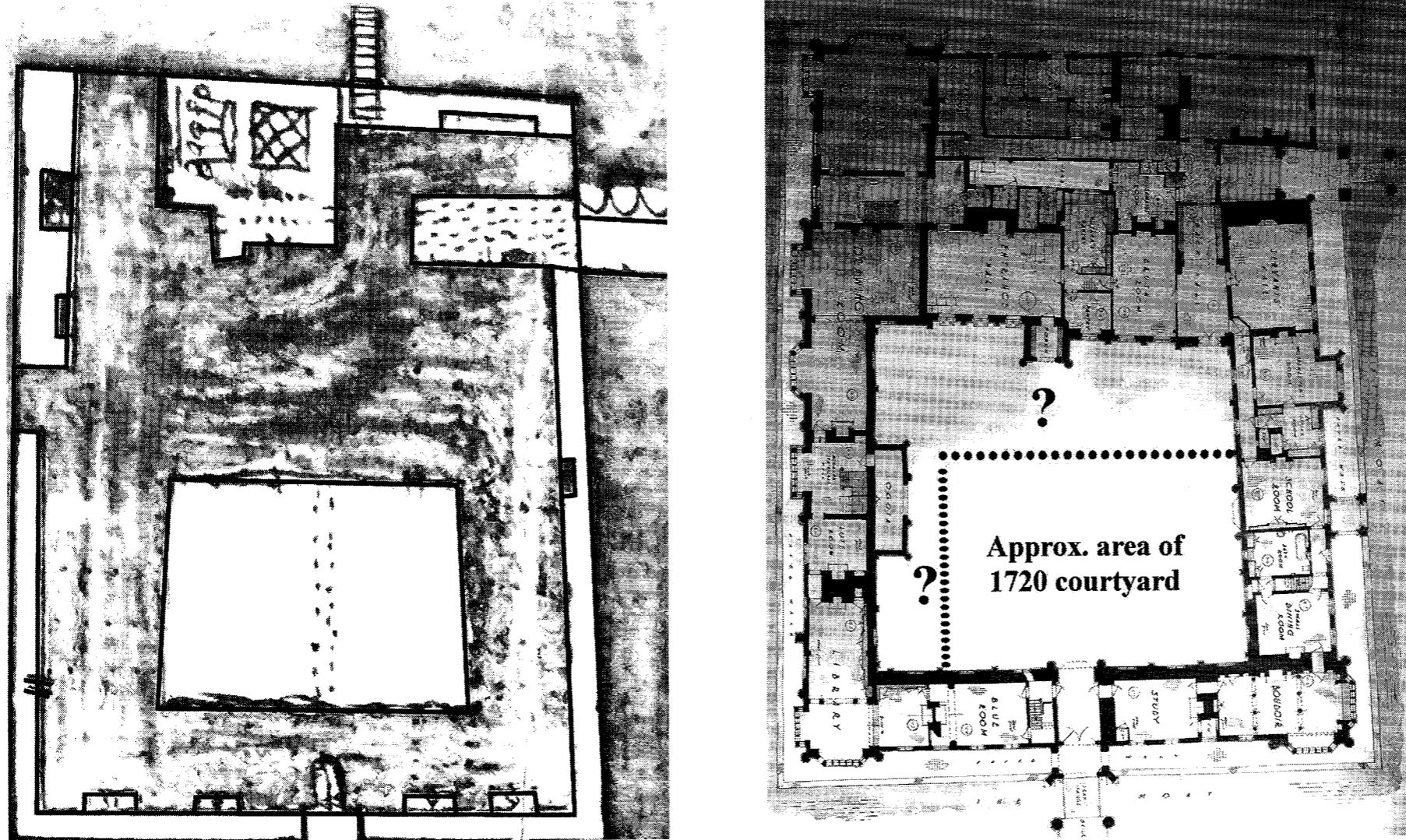
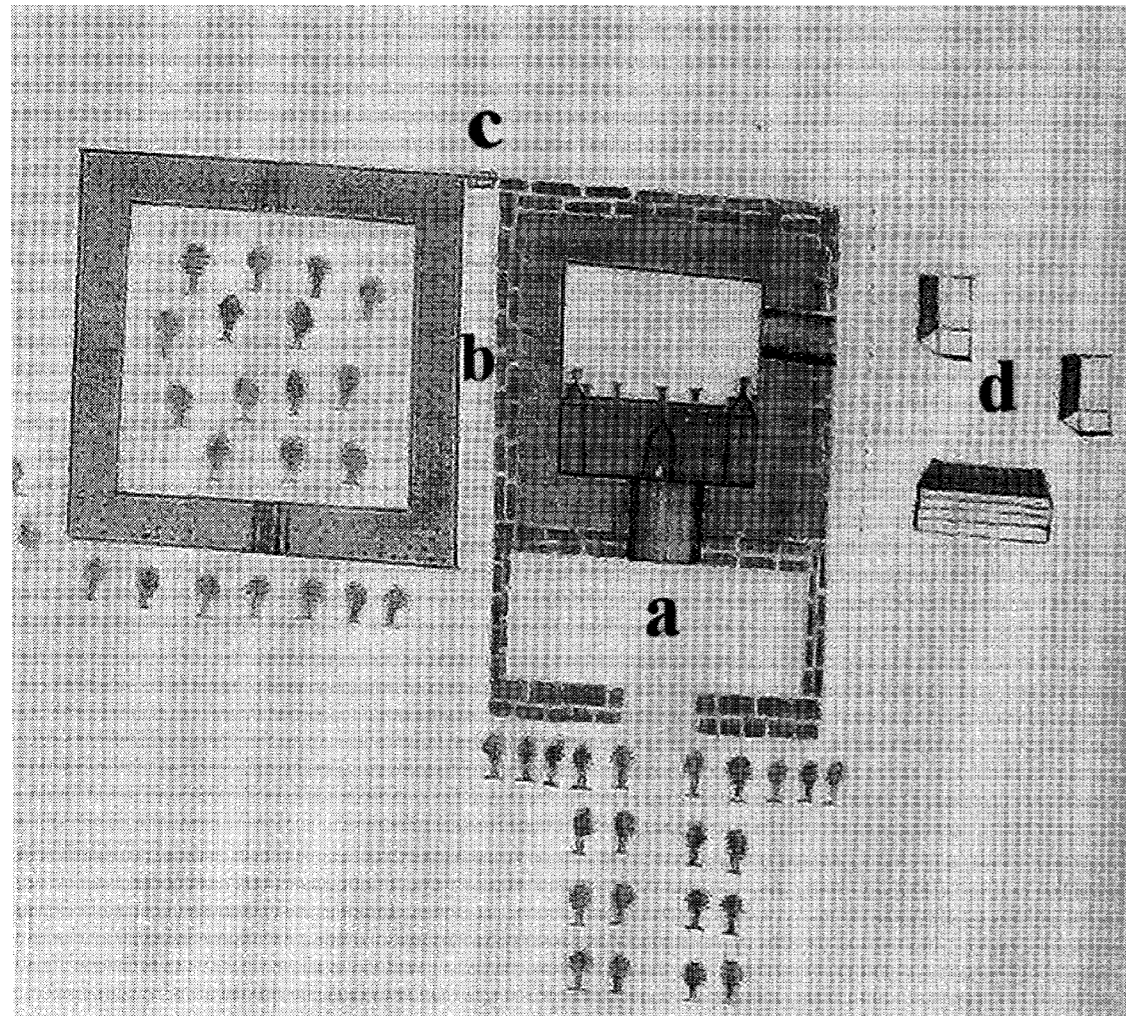


Plate 18. Comparison of the 1720 sketch plan by Thomas Brereton and the 1950s ground-floor plan by J.C. Dennish. On the 1950s plan question marks draw attention to areas which were apparently filled with structures on the Brereton plan; and the approximate area of the 1720 courtyard is indicated. Based on documents in the Helmingham Archive, T/Hel/1/64, T/Hel(S)/28/1, 2, and reproduced by kind permission of the Lord Tollemache

Fig. 2



Detail from 1729 survey of the Helmingham Estate by Richard Tollemache. The features marked a, b, c and d accompany discussion in Appendix A concerning the areas west, south and east of the hall that were not included in Thomas Brereton's plan of 1720. Helmingham Archive, reproduced by kind permission of the Lord Tollemache

Fig. 3

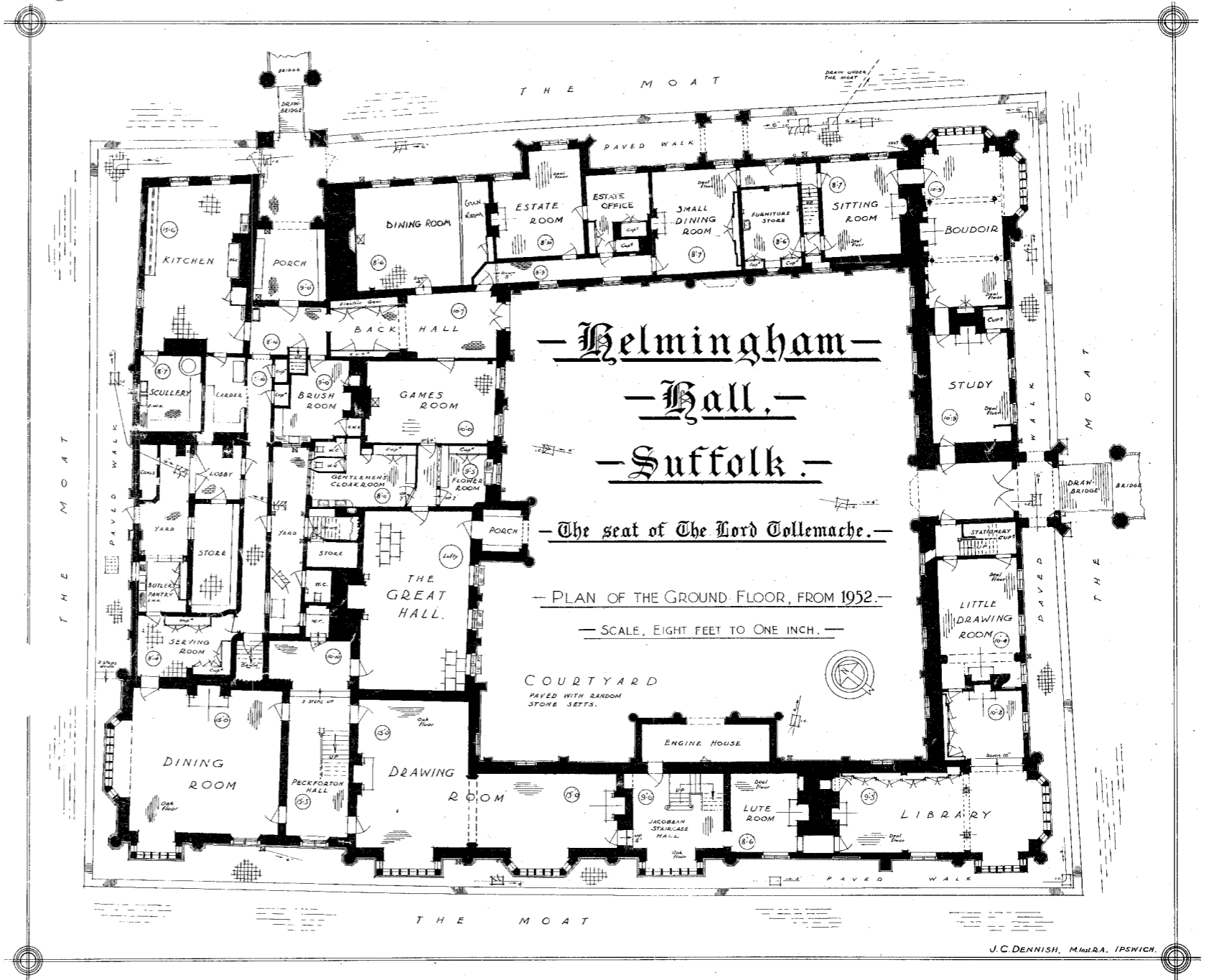


Fig. 4



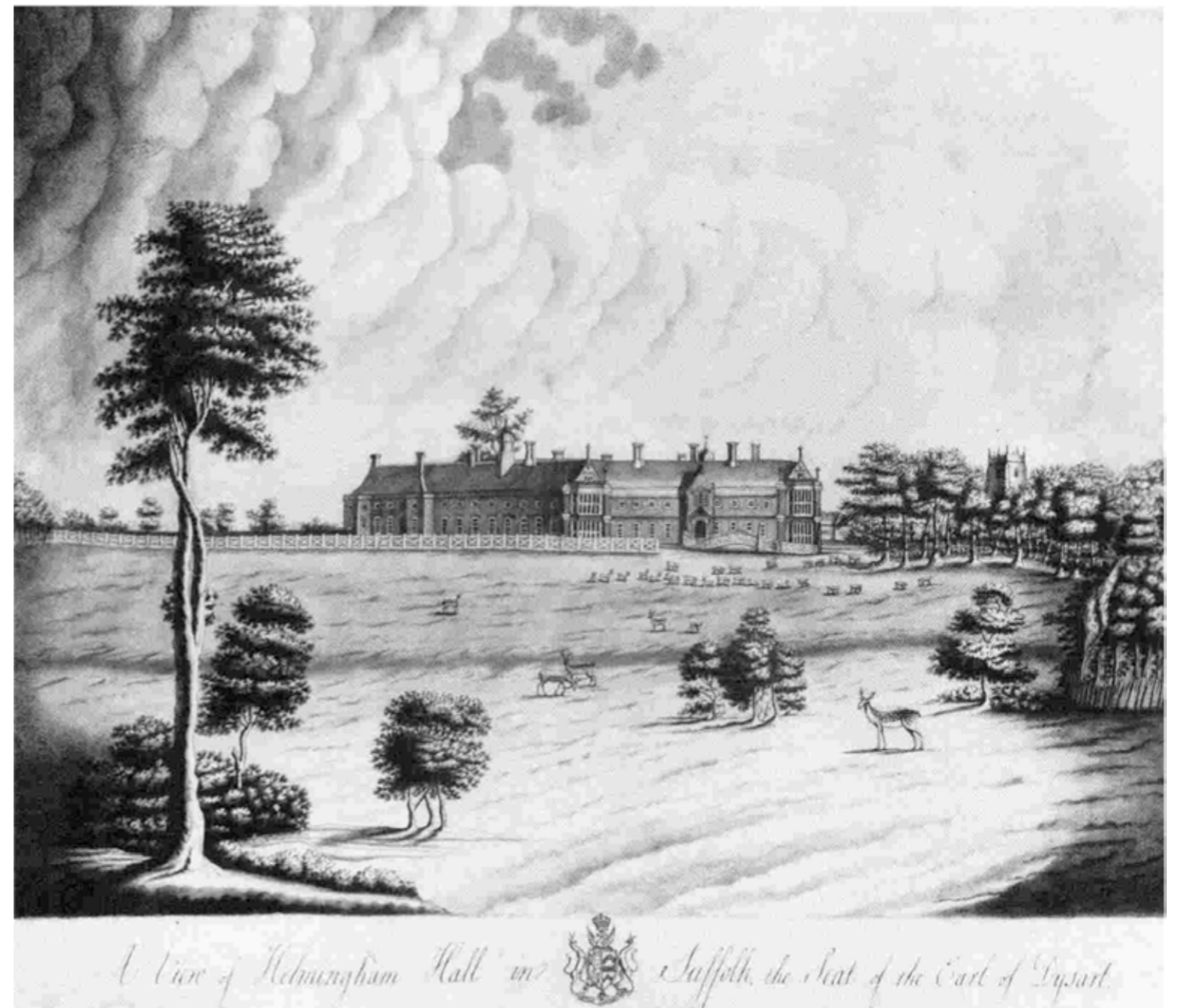
An extract from Isaac Isaac Johnson's Mapbook 1803

Fig. 5



18th century view from the East. Date uncertain

Fig. 6



View of the Hall from the south-west, c. 1760-89. There is probably a degree of artistic licence in this view, as the church is actually some way out of sight to the right. Note the decorative fencing around the moated garden area (front and left of the Hall). The dark line in the foreground is probably one of the streams which feed the fishponds near the church. (Private Collection)

2.1 North Front

Fig. 7



North front of Helmingham Hall, as altered in 1800. Drawn by Humphrey Repton.

Fig. 8



North front of Helmingham Hall, 1760-1800. Drawn by Humphrey Repton.

Fig. 9



North front of Helmingham Hall, showing Salvin's filled in courtyard and rebuilt west corner.

2.2 South Front



Fig. 10 The front of Helmingham Hall, date unknown, probably mid 18th century.



Fig. 12 South front of Helmingham Hall, as altered in 1800. Drawn by Humphrey Repton.



Fig. 11 View of South front, between 1800 - 1840 showing Nash's rendered finish.



Fig. 13 South front of Helmingham Hall, 1760- 1800. Drawn by Humphrey Repton.



Fig. 14 South front of Helmingham Hall, present day.

2.3 West Front



Fig. 15 c. 1810 view of the west front showing Nash's alterations along with the grey render resigned to imitate rubble stone



Fig. 17 View of the west front as refaced by Salvin in 1840's. Salvin rebuilt the north end to create a generous Victorian dining room, drawing room and staircase hall. The rest of the facade was refaced and two storey bay windows were added.



Fig. 16 West front of Helmingham Hall, as altered in 1800. Drawn by Humphrey Repton.



Fig. 18 Salvin's west front with Nash's kitchen and courtyard wall in the background.

3.0 Present Day



Fig. 19 Aerial view of the hall from the south-east.



Fig. 21 South-west corner.



Fig. 20 South-east corner.



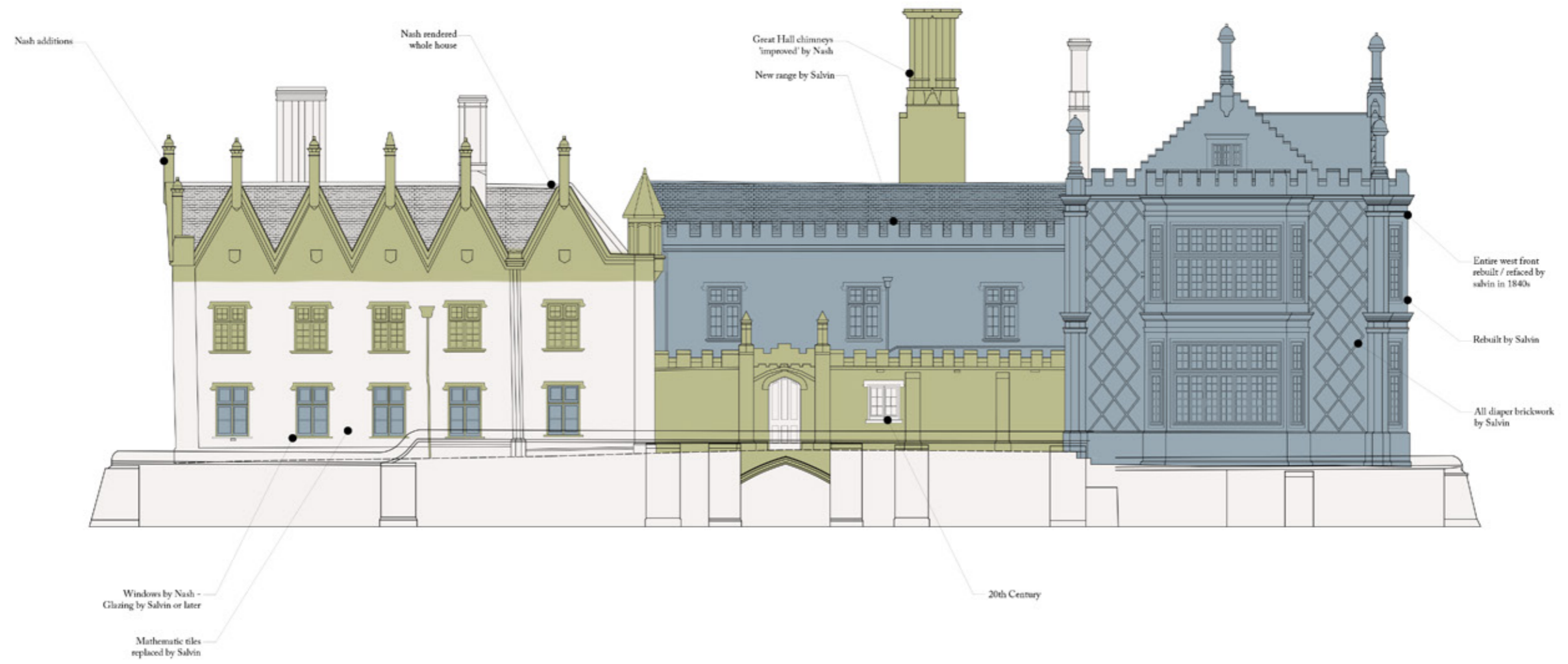
Fig. 22 North-west corner.

4.0 Historic Evolution



- 18TH CENTURY OR EARLIER
- NASH - 1800
- SALVIN OR LATER - 1840

HELMINGHAM HALL
EAST ELEVATION HISTORIC EVOLUTION



- 18TH CENTURY OR EARLIER
- NASH - 1800
- SALVIN OR LATER - 1840

HELMINGHAM HALL
 NORTH ELEVATION HISTORIC EVOLUTION



- NASH - 1800
- SALVIN OR LATER - 1840
- 20TH CENTURY

HELMINGHAM HALL
 HISTORIC EVOLUTION PHASING PLAN