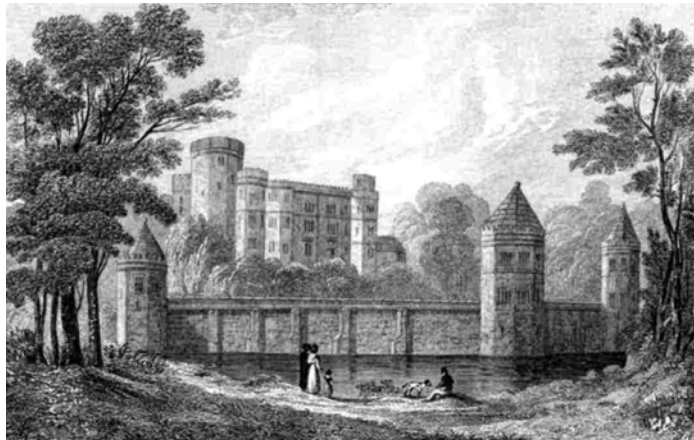


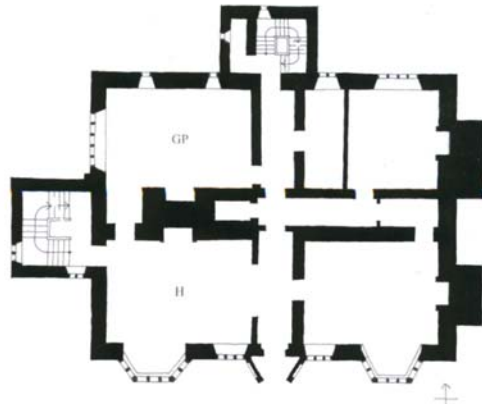
CAVERSWALL AND GAINFORD COMPARED ADAPTED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

THE ARCHITECTURE

Caverswall Castle, built probably some time after 1611 by Mathew Cradock, Mayor of Stafford and later its M.P., is fairly named, for it stands within the enceinte¹ of a medieval castle; and Victorian embellishments made it slightly more castle-like when the crowning classical balustrade was replaced by a parapet with minimal crenels². It may be from a Smythson³ stable: the date makes John rather than Robert the more likely architect.



Caverswall is a slab with a partially split spine, the space between its two walls being used for a short narrow corridor and closets. Since the entry, on the south front, is central and into a transverse passage which (screened from the hall) leads across the house to one of two projecting staircase towers, there is a cruciform pattern of routes on the ground floor, though the western arm of the cross comes quickly to a halt in a massive stack with back-to-back hearths at each level.



A projecting tower at the west end, gives access only to the rooms in the Western half. True, these are the evident rooms of state including an unusually large apartment on the second floor, but four identical and identically divided apartments on the two upper floors in the eastern half of the house must be approached from the great back stair.



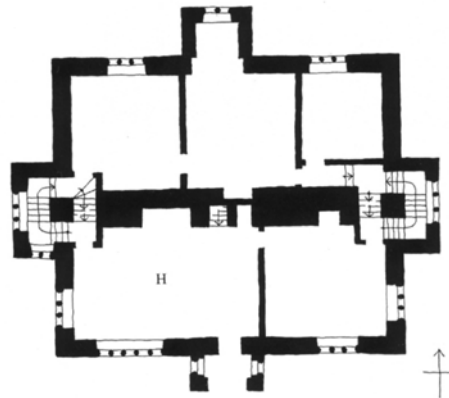
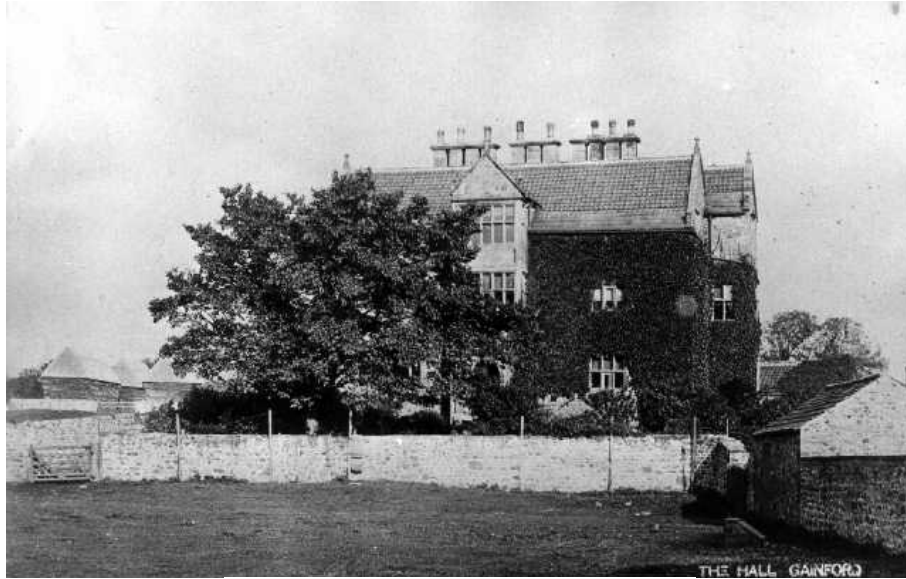
Though it is of the same form as its grander brother, the back stair is unadorned and contains an original hoist and tackle in its central well; so it is very visibly also the service stair, and therefore used for secondary access to the great rooms to the west. The later insertion is of much seventeenth-century woodwork makes it difficult to determine the degree of importance given to rooms east of the centre: their scale and form would certainly suggest high-status use, yet the reservation of the great stair to those using the 'great rooms' enforced by its position at,

but outside, the west end of the main block of the house - appears to register and indeed compel a clear social divide along the line of the cross-passage. If the spine were split through its whole length, the great stair could open into a lateral corridor, but in the western half this is blocked by the main stack. Since there is no stair or external door at the eastern end of the corridor there would seem no reason in principle why a second internal stack should not have mirrored the existing one; but the eastern apartments are heated by fireplaces in the end wall, creating two turret-like chimney breasts 'balancing' the stair tower at the other end.

Caverswall is quite a showy house and also quite an extravagant one - made for a new man on an upward climb. It may be more than a coincidence that it was the Reverend John Cradock, a relative of Mathew's¹, who, a number of years earlier (1600-3), had built Gainford Hall, admittedly far away in County Durham but on a plan which relates significantly to that of Caverswall.

Gainford is not at all showy, but it does have two projecting staircase towers this time one at each end, and once again they are used to articulate a clear social, or here perhaps functional, division between family and service sides. The layout demonstrates the distinction between the two with unusual clarity, for the house is split from top to bottom by a lateral spine more than five feet thick, which is pierced only once, where stairs from the kitchen enter what must be interpreted as the lower end of the hall even though it is next to the parlour; and furthermore the floor levels never coincide on the two sides of the spine.

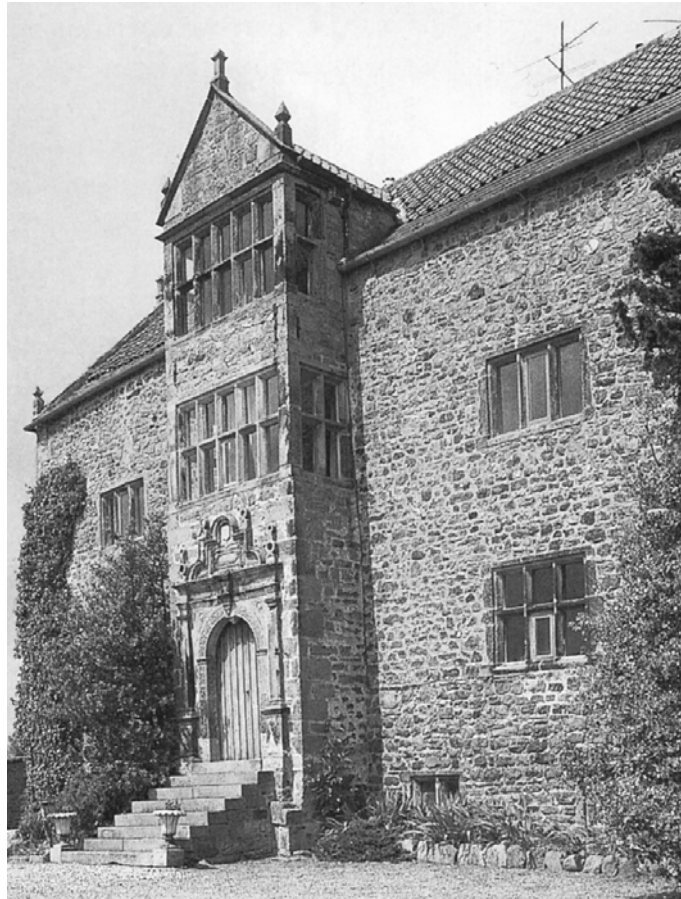
¹ This claim of a relationship between Matthew and John is that of the authors and is based on a claim that has been much repeated but never substantiated.



Plan 17. Gainford Hall, County Durham, 1600-3.

Half-buried cellars beneath the front range (to the south) enable the hall and parlour to be several symbolic (but also real) feet above the kitchen to the north, and lower ceiling heights in the north rank of rooms allow four storeys on this side within the space of three and a bit on the other. The two pillar-staircases - identical save that the west one stops at the main first floor level - stand at opposite ends of the house astride the line of the spine: their arrangement of short straight flights allows the levels on each side of the spine to be reached in turn off quarterpaces, which on the best side open into the main rooms through internal porches. On this side the layout is conventional: hall, entered at one corner but evidently without a screens passage, 17° and parlour on the ground floor (where the partition between the two, though renewed, is in its original place); great chamber over the hall and

a potential but never finished long gallery at the top. On the north side what may have been a two room apartment and another single room on each of two principal floors (so that the social division is less marked at upper levels), with presumably a storage run or servants' rooms within the roof, side by side with the upper reaches of the gallery.



All the stacks are within the spine, laid out alternately to allow full depth to the hearths on each side; and unlike Caverswall Gainford manages without any transverse bearing walls, though the spans are no smaller. Like the twin roofs over the two piles the staircase towers are gabled, and so are the prominently projecting porch towers in the middle of each side, which provide large bays in the middle rooms upstairs and help to make an altogether rather excitable silhouette. The four projecting towers create externally an incipient cruciform plan, which is not reflected inside. It occurs again in the north of England on an imposing scale at Kiplin Hall (N.Yorks) and less so at Gaythorne

Hall (Westmorland).

Owing to the insertion of a very large new staircase hall in the 1740s, Kiplin, built for Lord Baltimore c. 1625, is not now easy to interpret; but it is plain that, like Gainford, it depends on a very thick lateral spine. Gaythorne, is a slightly reduced version of Gainford, so similar in conception as to be either a copy or built by the same masons.

A lateral spine must tend to encourage the social layout in which the hierarchical division is between front and back.

The division is especially sharply marked in split-level houses in which the upper side is literally so, several feet above the level of the lower. The most dramatic example is, as we have seen, the Reverend



John Cradock's Gainford Hall (1600-3), in which at each level the higher - status rooms at the front are several feet above those at the back. In any spinal house the spine is bound to be a principal structural feature carrying the inner ends of bridging beams at each level across the two piles; in a split-level house the two piles are asymmetric Siamese twins, almost independent structurally, though united in their common but different use of the same lateral spine, which through out the main storeys at Gainford is over five feet thick.

Though an unobtrusive flight of steps allows direct access from kitchen to hall, the two halves of the house are effectively quite separate, each being a mezzanine to the other and linked only by twin staircases seemingly of equal status; hence there is no need for special means of access to the chambers on the upper floor, and in fact on two floors within the back range a middle room appears to have

been part of an apartment with one or other of its neighbours, entered indifferently from either.

Some Notes from other sources:

GAINFORD HALL.

A quaint many gabled structure at the west end of the village, with red tiled roof and fine projecting entrance porch leading into an oak panelled hall, with a highly decorated frieze, nearly obliterated by numerous coats of whitewash which it has received in the course of the three centuries of its existence, the hall having been erected in 1600 by a former vicar of Gainford, John Cradock. Some of the cupboard doors in the room bear the original iron hinges. The house is now occupied by Mr. George Harrison, a noted cattle breeder, as tenant of Lord Barnard. The old stone pigeon house in front of the hall was also visited.

Mr. Edleston briefly told the history of the place. Over the south door are the initials M.C., J.C., R.C., and over the north door John Cradock, 1600, and a shield [argent] on a chevron [azure] 3 garbs [or]. He was presented to the vicarage on 18th July, 1593, and held it till his death, 28 Dec. 1637, being also archdeacon of Northumberland, spiritual chancellor and prebendary of Durham, vicar of Woodhorn, Heighington, and Northallerton. The property remained in his family till sold by Mr. Christopher Cradock to the Duke of Cleveland about 1866.

After thanking Mrs. Harrison for her kindness and courtesy in permitting the party to ramble at will over the house, and after enjoying the view of the surrounding country from the roof, members, under the guidance of Mr. Edleston, crossed the river Tees by the railway bridge, and made a halt at the old house of the Pudseys - Barford Hall. Extracted from 'From the Proceeding of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle Upon Tynne'. Third Series Vol. 11 (1906-1905).

¹ The 'enceinte' or 'body of the place' is the main enclosure of a fortress.

² An indented parapet at the top of a wall, at first used only in fortified buildings for purposes of defence against assailants, but afterwards in the architectural decoration of ecclesiastical and other edifices. The raised parts are called *cops* or *merlons*, the indentations *embrasures* or *crenelles*.

³ Smythson, Robert (1534/5-1614), master mason and architect, was aged seventy-nine when he died in 1614, according to his memorial tablet in the parish church at Wollaton, Nottinghamshire, but neither the date nor the place of his birth is known. The memorial carries the arms of the Masons' Company of London suggests that it was in and around London that he served his apprenticeship, acquired experience, and learned to draw.

Smythson's first recorded appearance is at Longleat House, Wiltshire, where he went to work for Sir John Thynne as a master mason in March 1568. He brought with him his own group of masons and a letter of introduction from Humphrey Lovell, the queen's master mason, according to which he had previously been working for Sir Francis Knollys, probably at Caversham House, near Reading. Smythson stayed at Longleat on and off until 1580. Together with a French master mason, Alan Maynard, he was largely responsible for remodelling the exterior of the house, and for much internal detail; in both cases the design, as well as the execution, was probably due to them. In 1576 there is evidence that he was involved with alterations made at Wardour Castle, Wiltshire, for Sir Matthew Arundell. It may have been this connection that took him to Nottinghamshire in 1580, to work for Arundell's brother-in-law Sir Francis Willoughby at Wollaton Hall. His position at Wollaton was that of surveyor of the work, rather than a practising mason. The surviving building accounts and his own drawings make clear that he was responsible for the execution and design of this remarkable house between 1580 and 1588. Smythson stayed on in the service of the Willoughby family, and was employed by them on administrative and financial business, as well as in his capacity as a surveyor. He is described on his monument at Wollaton as 'architector and survayor unto the most worthy house of Wollaton, and diverse others of great account'; this is the first known occasion on which he was called an architect, a term and function then still only in embryo in England.

Some 150 drawings by Robert Smythson and his son John survive in the drawings collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects. They include an interesting group of survey drawings made by Robert on a visit to London in 1611, but also many original designs (some of them drawings of considerable beauty), which supply evidence about several of the 'diverse other' houses mentioned on his monument. They include Worksop Manor, Nottinghamshire (remodelled c.1585), Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire (1590-97), Burton Agnes, Yorkshire (c.1601-1610), and designs, only partially carried out, for remodelling Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire. The stylistic evidence of drawings and documented buildings, supported by patronage links and geographical proximity, enables a number of other houses to be attributed to him, including: Barlborough Hall, Derbyshire; Doddington Hall, Lincolnshire; Worksop Manor Lodge, Nottinghamshire; Fountains Hall, Yorkshire; and Wootton Lodge, Staffordshire. There is no evidence that at any of these houses Smythson was involved on the same day-to-day basis as at Longleat and Wollaton; his contribution must often have been limited to the provision of a set of plans and elevations, which were liable to alteration at the whim of the patron and executive craftsmen.

Even allowing for these limitations, Smythson's is the strongest architectural personality to have survived from the Elizabethan and Jacobean age. This is partly because more is known about him, and

because his drawings and those of his younger contemporary John Thorpe (a high proportion of which are survey drawings) are the only large collections from this period that still exist, but it is also because of the distinctive and remarkable character of the houses with which he can be connected. Both his drawings and the buildings show that he had, for the Elizabethan period, a capable grasp of the language of classical ornament; he knew and used the works of Serlio, possibly of Palladio, and of the Flemish mannerist Vredeman de Vries, whose designs were extensively adapted at Wollaton. But his drawings and buildings also show an interest in the native Gothic tradition. His achievement was to draw on these two strains, and on the contemporary Elizabethan taste for the kind of ingenious conceits known at the time as 'devices', to produce a creative synthesis. In the resulting buildings classical detail and a considerable degree of classical order can be found joined with dramatic combinations of towers, bay windows, and great expanses of glass, derived from the Gothic tradition, and with the complex and ingenious plans which were the architectural expression of the device. At Longleat, where he worked with Maynard, bay windows and lavish glazing were serenely combined with rich classical detail. Wollaton is the most extraordinary of his houses, but it suffers from an over-abundance of motifs. Hardwick, in its combination of high drama, spatial ingenuity, and classical restraint, must be considered his masterpiece.

Nothing is known about Smythson's marriage, but his son John Smythson (d. 1634) was working as a mason at Wollaton in 1588. He subsequently pursued a similar career to his father, but in the service of the Cavendish rather than the Willoughby family. In particular he was closely involved with the rebuilding of Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire, between about 1612 and his death; the riding-school range there, however, may be the work of his son Huntingdon Smythson, who died in 1648. Robert Smythson died in Wollaton on 15 October 1614