



The History of Herstmonceux Castle

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Model showing local coastline as it may have looked from before Roman Times until after the Norman Conquest

1 Before there was a Castle

Changes in the Landscape

If you stand outside Herstmonceux Castle to the south you may easily imagine yourself back in the fifteenth century, as the outside walls have changed very little since they were built; yet man lived in this area for thousands of years before there was a Castle. As you might expect, the land and the people living here have changed greatly over the centuries.

Consider the landscape itself. Behind you as you look northwards at the Castle is a gentle rise, then a fall down to the marshes which extend to the sea, four miles away. But the sea has not always been so far away; until the Middle Ages the marshes were flooded and an inlet of the sea came up almost to the site of the Castle. During the thirteenth century a series of great storms, recorded by many contemporary chroniclers, accelerated the gradual silting up of the area. This, combined with increased artificial draining of the marshes, began to form the landscape as it is today.

Early inhabitants

Between the coast and the margins of the great forests that once covered most of the Weald of Kent and Sussex, traces have been found of the activities of prehistoric man from as far back as the Mesolithic period, perhaps 8,000 years ago. The two very fine flint arrowheads in the photograph were unearthed less than half a mile from the Castle, near the Wartling road. One is a Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead, about 5,000 years old. The other is barbed and tanged, an almost perfect example from

the Bronze Age. Some finely worked flint scrapers, also from the Bronze Age, have been found at nearby Windmill Hill.

A Hurried Burial

On the hill to the east of the Castle, close to the telescope domes, a group of men were buried in strange circumstances, in the first century A.D. Their graves were found by workmen digging a drain to the



Two flint arrow heads found in the area. Top: A Barbed and Tanged Arrowhead of the Bronze Age. Bottom: A Neolithic Leaf Shaped Arrowhead.



A broken Roman Cinerary Urn can be seen, just left of centre, in this photograph taken at the time of the discovery, October 1953

west of the telescope buildings, in 1953, when they came across some urns containing human ashes. Investigators found that the remains were not completely burned and, moreover, they were not arranged carefully, with one body to each urn. Traces of a thirty-foot-long communal burning pit were visible. The graves contained only a very small number of personal belongings and this, together with other evidence, suggests that the bodies were those of Roman soldiers.

During the Claudian invasion of 43 A.D., the General Vespasian (later the Emperor) was given the task of clearing out pockets of resistance along the south coast. The hasty and austere burials at Herstmonceux may well have resulted from an engagement between the troops and local tribesmen. The Roman soldiers, ambushed perhaps, would have been obliged to bury their dead quickly and move on. The incomplete state of the burials would in this way be explained.

Roman Building

As resistance was overcome the Romans settled down to build. The Roman fort of Anderida (now known as Pevensey Castle) is only four miles from Herstmonceux and we might therefore expect to find signs of Roman activity in the area. A number of suspected Roman tiles are built into the masonry of the twelfth century tower of All Saints Church, on the hill just outside the west gate of the Castle. These tiles may be all that remains of a Roman building, possibly on the site of the Castle which is typical of the sites of Roman villas in England.

Some Roman pottery was found in 1894 to the east of the church by the Rector, Robert Wild. Unfortunately, his finds have since disappeared. Further afield Roman pottery, including examples of the bright red glazed "samian" ware, have been found at Boreham Street and near Ashburnham.

The Saxon "Herste" without the Norman "Monceux"

The Roman armies came and went. Germanic tribes from the continent, after overcoming the Romano-British inhabitants, settled in the area. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that in 491 A.D. the Saxon chief Aella and his son Cissa led a ferocious attack on Anderida (Pevensey). The invaders massacred the inhabitants and then began to colonise. Since most of their buildings were wood, we know very little about the Saxon settlement here, but we do know that it was called "Herste". We do not know exactly where this site was located, probably it was close to where the Castle now stands.

Although few physical traces of the Saxons now exist, we owe much of our language to them and their presence is recorded in place names. "Herste" itself suggests "a clearing in the wood" and indicates that much of the surrounding area was well forested. The word occurs in

other local place names such as Chilthurst (Bodle Street), Comphurst (Windmill Hill) and Horselunges Manor (Hellingly). Many other local place names are of Saxon origin. Nunningham is a good example as it has survived almost unchanged. It has three Anglo-Saxon elements: Nunna, Inga, Ham, which, translated, give "the settlement of Nunna's people". Other local place names with these elements are Wartling, Chilsham, Pebsham, Bagham and so on.

We know of one alteration of the landscape made by the Saxons. About one mile to the south east of the Castle, below Wartling Hill, there is a moated field called Mota Piece. The name and layout of the field indicate a late Saxon origin.

The Normans arrive

When the army of William the Conqueror landed near Pevensey the village or manor of Herste, just a few miles inland, was in the front line and was probably sacked by foraging Norman soldiers. Evidence for this is found in the Domesday Book, William's survey of his newly conquered land. The survey, completed in 1086, records that the manor of Herste was worth £6 just before the conquest but only £1 immediately afterwards. By 1086 the value had increased again to £10. The ill-effects of an attack might explain this fluctuation.

The Domesday Book gives us the first written evidence of a settlement here: "Wibert holds of the Earl, Herste". In other words, Wibert was granted the tenancy of the manor by the Earl of Eu. At that time Herste had a population of between seventy and ninety, with a church, seven acres of meadow, and wood for two hogs.

Unfortunately, the Domesday Book does not mention the manor house itself. We are left to deduce from one feature of the modern landscape, the avenue of chestnut trees, that the manor house may have been near, but not on, the site of the pre-

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Part of a page of the "Domesday Book" showing (top) the entries for Herst and Werlinges (Wartling)

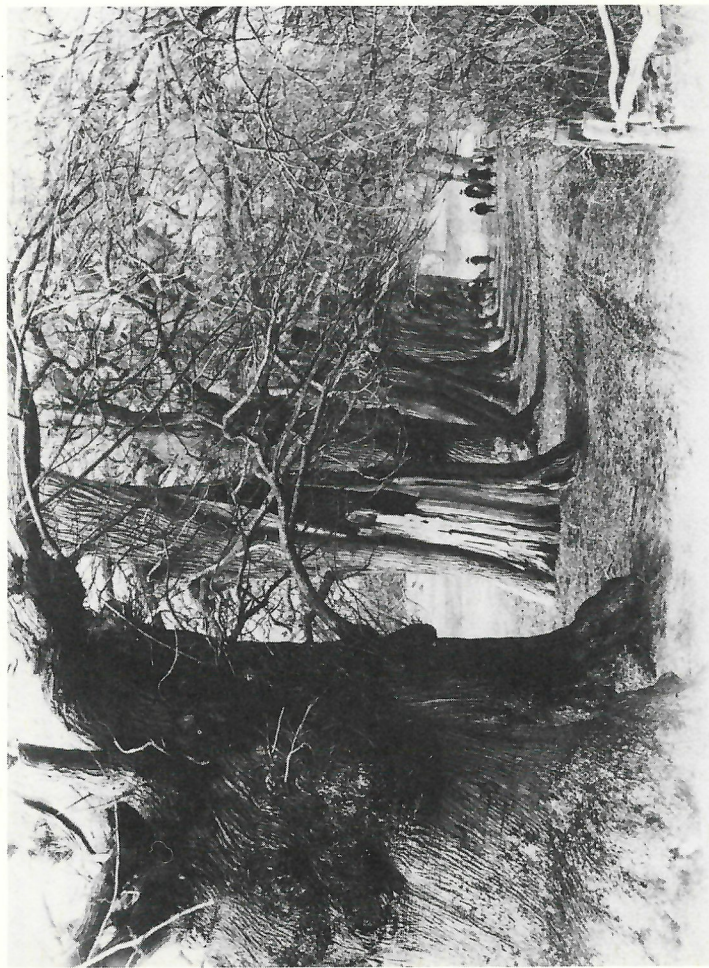
sent castle. The avenue of trees does not lead directly to the present building. Because of re-planting, the age of individual trees varies, but some of them may be about three hundred years old. The line of the avenue could therefore mark the approach to the old manor house.

Herst and Monceux

The family at the manor house had achieved considerable status by the end of the twelfth century. The 16th century historian Camden tells us that the manor "became the seat of a noble family called from it de

Herst". A lady, named Idonea de Herst, is the first member of this family mentioned in records. Surviving documents of local monasteries show that she took an interest in religious affairs. At some time between 1176 and 1199 she made a gift of property at Bromehill, in Romney Marsh, to the abbey at Robertsbridge. When a new abbey was established at Bayham, near Lamberhurst, she was involved in moving monks there from Ottenham Court, near Hailsham.

We are most likely, however, to remember Idonea for her marriage to a Norman nobleman named Ingelram de Monceux, a



Avenue of Sweet Chestnut Trees by Herstmonceux Castle about 1890.



Wax seal impression of Idonea De Herst.

union that subsequently led to the fusion of the names Herst and Monceux. Ingelram's father had the splendid name of Drogo de Monceux and was distantly related to William the Conqueror himself. Idonea and Ingelram had a son who was first known as Waleran de Herst but later changed his name to Waleran de Monceux. The manor probably then became known as Herstmonceux to distinguish it from the other Hersts in the area.

Royal Visitors

When the rebellious barons led by Simon de Montfort fought against Henry III at the Battle of Lewes in 1264, a de Monceux sided with the rebels. He too was named Waleran and was a grandson of the Waleran who married Idonea. On his way to Lewes, King Henry took his army through the park at Herstmonceux, hunting for food and despoiling the estate; during the melee a nobleman named Roger de Tournay was killed by an arrow in his throat.

The next royal visit was less eventful. Good relations had been restored and, in 1302, Edward I broke his journey here, on the way from Michelham Priory to Battle Abbey.

The last of the de Monceuxs

In 1330 the last male de Monceux to hold the manor died and was probably buried in Herstmonceux Church where there is an early 14th tomb. His sister, Maud, who inherited the estate, had married Sir John



Early 14th Century Tomb recess in Herstmonceux Church which may be a monument to one of the Monceux Family. Several years ago a diagonal line, or bend, could be indistinctly traced on the shield. A black bend on a silver shield was the Monceux Arms.

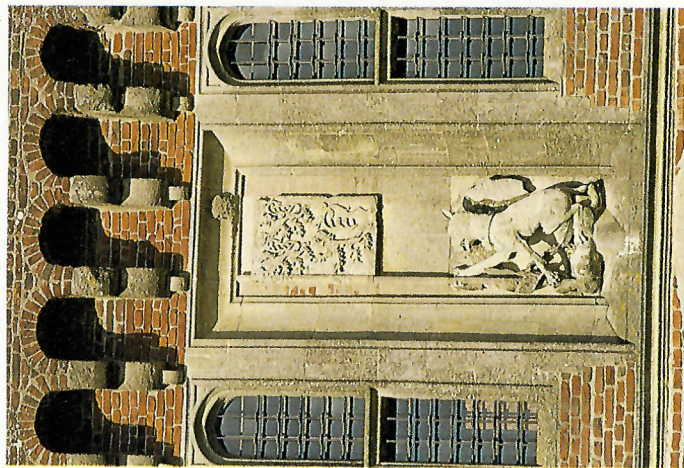
Fiennes†, reputed to be descended from Charlemagne. His family originated near Boulogne, but they also had connections with this part of Sussex as Sir John's grandmother was Sybil Filliol of Old Court in Wartling.

The Fiennes family increased in wealth and power. William Fiennes became Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex in 1396; his grave, in the chancel of Herstmonceux Church is covered by a splendid memorial brass, dated 1403. He had two sons, the younger, James served with King Henry V in France and fought with distinction at the Battle of Agincourt. In his subsequent career he was even more successful, becoming Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex in 1438/9. A few years later he was created Baron, with the title Lord Saye and Sele and, in the year before his death, attained

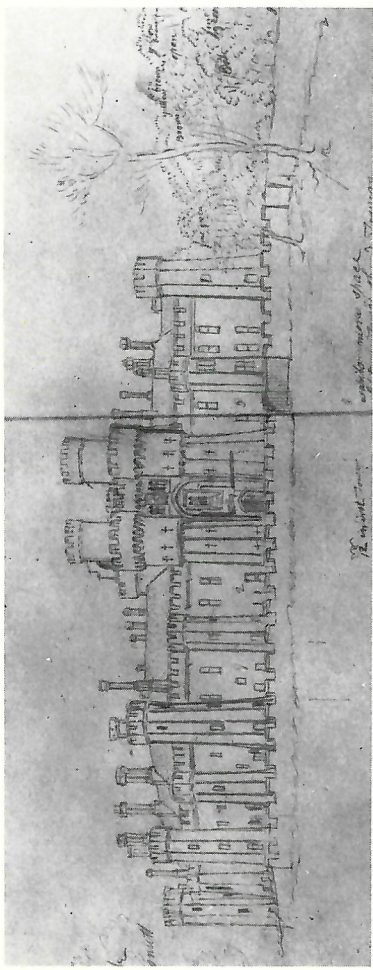
the office of Lord High Treasurer of England, one of the most powerful posts in the land. His triumphant career was then cut short only one year later. In their attack on London, Jack Cade's rebels caught and killed Lord Saye and Sele. His body was quartered and nailed up for display at the gates of the City. The title of Saye and Sele still survives, the present holder being a descendant of James Fiennes.

Meanwhile the exploits of James' elder brother, Roger Fiennes, proved to be of great importance to the history of Herstmonceux.

†There have been many spellings of this name: Feny's, Fienes, Fienles, and so on. To avoid confusion I have used the spelling of the modern descendants, the Twistleton-Wickham-Fiennes.



The Coat of Arms of The Fiennes Family, three golden lions rampant on a blue background. The banner is held by a wolf-hound and can be seen over the south entrance of the castle.



This drawing, dated 1776, shows the Castle as it looked before demolition.

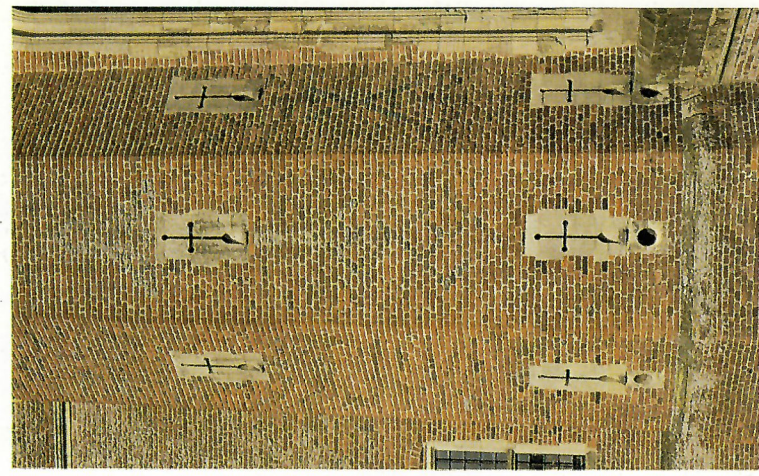
present of two gold pendants, one set with rubies, sapphires and pearls and the other decorated with an enamelled fleur-de-lys.

Sir Roger owned Hever Castle in Kent as well as Herstmonceux manor house but neither was a fitting house for a man in his position. In 1441 he applied to the king for a licence to "with walls and lime, enclose, krenellate, entower and embattle his manor of HURST MONCEUX in the County of Sussex". The licence was granted and the work began.

The Castle

The Castle was built of brick, an unusual material for the time in this country, and it is one of the oldest brick buildings of any note still standing in England. The bricks used are longer and thinner than modern types and were probably manufactured on the site. They are laid in English bond, that is alternate courses of headers and stretchers. Some of the craftsmen may have come from the Low Countries where brickwork was more common, but the majority of the workforce would have been local.

Several interesting points can be deduced from looking at the outside of the Castle and its surroundings. With its moat,



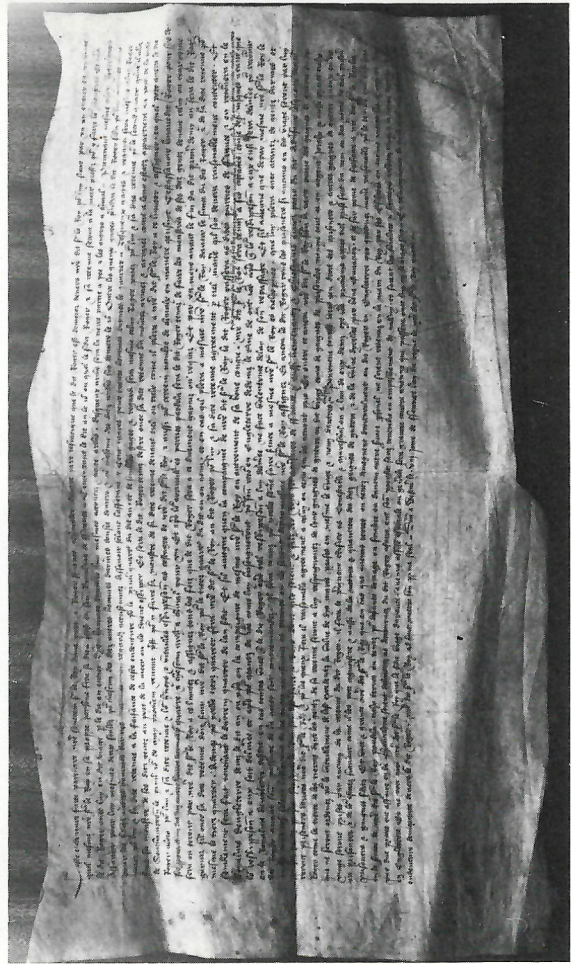
The Brickwork in the West Tower of the South Gate House showing English Bond coursing, arrow cross-slits and gun ports.

2 Building the Castle

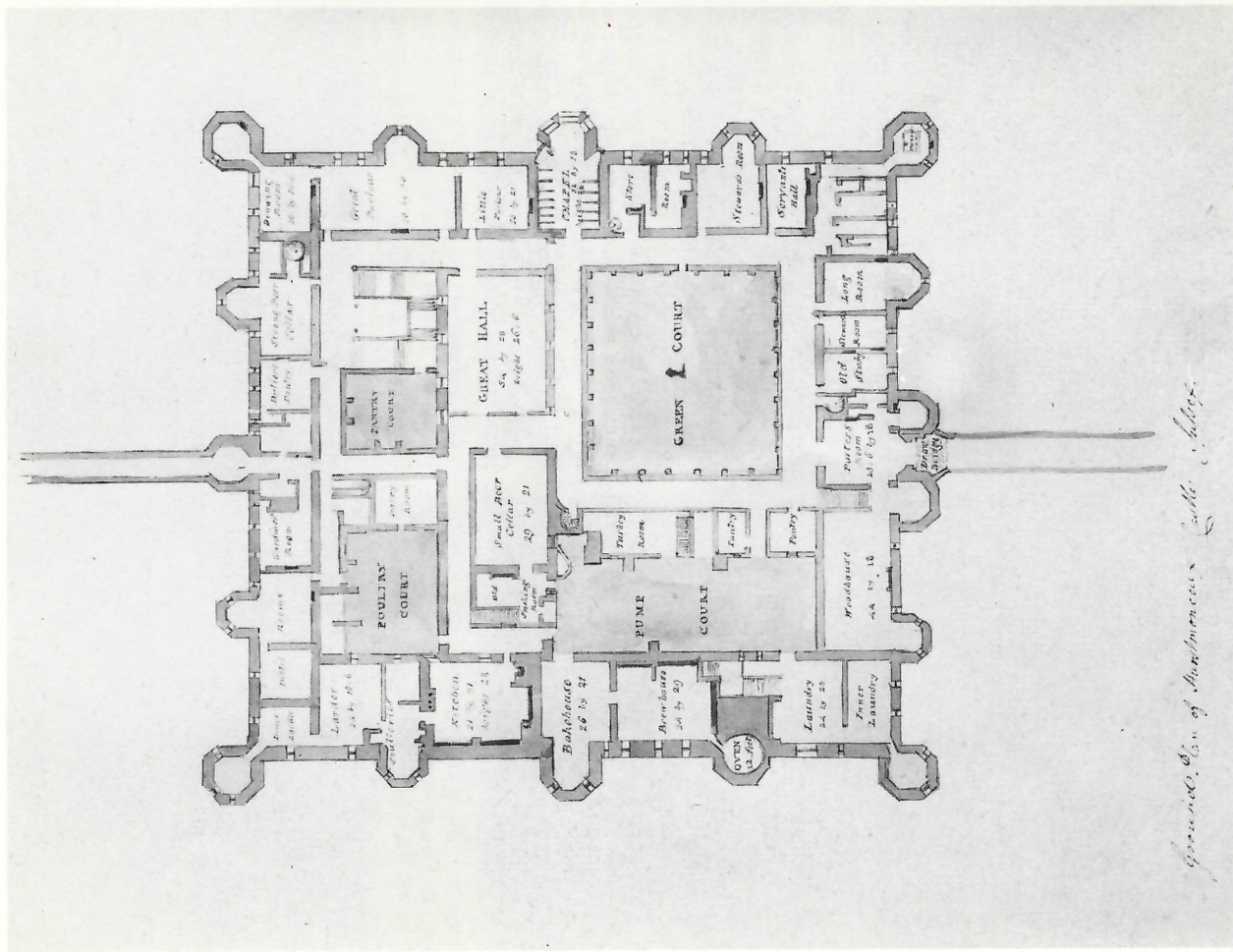
A successful man

Roger Fiennes, baptised on 14th September 1384 at Herstmonceux Church, was to become as powerful as his younger brother. Like him, Roger won royal favour by fighting for King Henry in France. He was able to contribute men as well as his own skills to the King's caused and brought with him from Herstmonceux eight men at arms and twenty four archers. The document shown states that £1086 was paid to cover his expenses and the wages of his men for the year of the campaign.

Some time after the battle of Agincourt, Sir Roger returned to the French wars, this time with thirty men at arms and ninety archers. Unfortunately, he went with Lord Bedford, whose campaign was a failure. Nevertheless, his contribution was appreciated by both Henry V and his son Henry VI and he was appointed Treasurer of the Household of Henry VI. One of his most important assignments in that post was to make the arrangements for the coronation of Margaret of Anjou, Henry's queen. The king was so pleased with Sir Roger's achievement that he made him a



"War Charter" or agreement between Roger Fiennes and Henry II dated 1417. It provides for Roger's payment during the French Campaign.



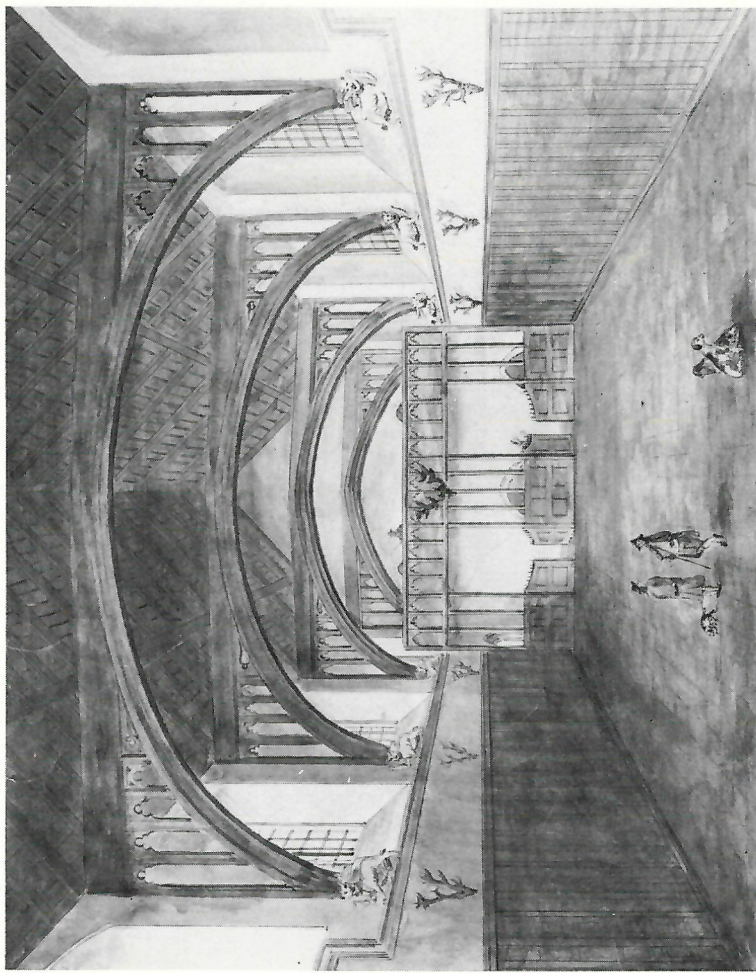
Although drawn in 1708, this ground plan shows the use of most of the rooms as they must have been when the Castle was first built.

towers, battlements and machicolations, Herstmonceux looks every inch a medieval castle but looks can be deceiving. Militarily it is in a poor situation because there is rising ground to the north, east and west and it does not command any important position. Moreover, the gun ports, below the arrow cross slits on either side of the drawbridge, are not very practical. They are not big enough to allow a hand gun of the period to be traversed or aimed. Before he could usefully fire, a defender would have had to wait until an enemy placed himself conveniently in front of the gun port. The walls themselves, although several feet thick, would not have withstood bombardment by canon balls for

very long. Sir Roger's purpose was apparently to build a stylish country house, not a fortress.

Inside the Castle

The interior of the Castle has been completely rebuilt and the building now forms a square, enclosing a large courtyard. As you can see on the plan, there were originally four courtyards of unequal size. The main entrance to the Castle led directly into the Green Court. The entrance is covered by a magnificent central arch, above which, carved in stone, are the arms of Sir Roger Fiennes, supported by a wolf-hound. The north side of the Green Court was formed by the Great Hall. All round



The Great Hall of Herstmonceux Castle as it was before demolition. From a water colour by Jas Lamber Snr.

the court was a cloister, probably used as a private walk by the Lord and his family. Behind the Great Hall was the Pantry Court. In the north west corner was the Chicken Court and in the south west corner, the Pump Court.

From the first the Castle was provided with all the facilities necessary for the provision and maintenance of a luxurious country mansion. There were bake houses, brew houses, granaries, beer cellars and extensive kitchens which rose the full height of the building.

The top storey of each of the two south corner towers was constructed as a dovecote and the south east one remains unaltered. There are no stables in the plan but a survey of the Castle made in 1570 mentions an "old stable, forge and slaughter house, without (outside) the mote", however no visible traces of these buildings remain.

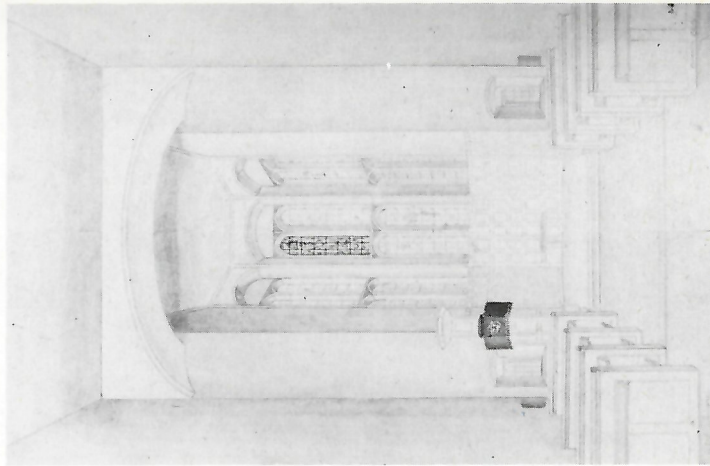
The dungeon

Under the south east tower, there is a dungeon or "oubliette", a name that comes from the French word "oublier", to forget. Anyone sentenced to imprisonment could be dropped in through the trapdoor in the ceiling and forgotten. Grose describes it in his *Antiquities* as "an octagonal room in the midst of which is a stone post with a long chain and in a corner of the room a door into a privy, a commendable attention to cleanliness".

Fish were readily available to the kitchens from a series of ponds which then, as now, fed the moat from the north. The present day moat runs along the east, south and part of the west walls. The ditch under the bridge on the north side may never have been flooded as the bottom is above the water level of the rest of the moat. To the north of the Castle there is now a large walled garden. The survey of 1570 mentions a walled arbour and orchard to the north of the castle "wherein standeth

a fair pile of brick of four storeys high which hath been used as a banqueting house". The fair pile of brick has since disappeared, but the walled garden remains.

When Sir Roger brought fashionable visitors from court to his new castle he must have been well pleased. The building, which is nearly 200 feet square, had cost him £3,800. The towers on the south side are an imposing 90 feet above the level of the moat. The Castle in fact represents a transitional stage between a medieval stronghold and an Elizabethan country mansion and could be comfortable, as well as imposing. Although the Great Hall was built within the Castle, the chapel, with its six windows, each sixteen feet high by two feet wide, looks to the outside world.



Herstmonceux Castle Chapel as it looked before demolition.

Other original windows are larger than those of fortified buildings. The idea of a mansionlike Herstmonceux was appealing; Cardinal Wolsey took it a stage further in building the great brick palace of Hampton Court. The style of the brickwork there and the plan of the oldest part of the palace seem to be developments of the pattern of Herstmonceux Castle. Apart from Hampton Court, Eton College Cloister, built c 1440, bears a strong resemblance to the demolished Green Court at Herstmonceux.

There are a few other buildings in the vicinity which incorporate the same type of brick as the castle in their construction. They include Church Farm House,

the Dacre Chapel in Herstmonceux Church and, three-quarters of a mile to the north, Comphurst.

The latter is partly Tudor and stands at what was once the north entrance to Herstmonceux Park. For a short distance to the south of Comphurst, an old green lane leading towards the Castle, can still be traced.

Unfortunately, Sir Roger Fiennes had only a few years in which to enjoy his new castle as he died in 1449. His son, Richard, married Joan Dacre, through whom he eventually acquired the title of "Baron Dacre of the South". This marriage also gained for the Fiennes' large estates and properties in the North of England.



Herstmonceux Church showing the Dacre Chapel (right centre) built c.1480 of the same type of brick as the Castle.



Comphurst at the former North approach to Herstmonceux Castle. The Tudor Wing (right) is built of the same type of brick as the Castle.

3 Family Troubles

The Fleet Prison

In 1525 Thomas, the second Baron Dacre, was thrown into the Fleet prison for collusion with thieves and for "his remysnes and negligence in punysshement of them and also his familyer and conversaunte being with them knowinge them to have com'ytted felonye and dyvers other his mysdoings". What else happened to Thomas we do not know. He died in 1533 and is buried in the magnificent Dacre tomb in Herstmonceux Church.

Tyburn Tree

The next baron, also named Thomas, was even more unfortunate. On an April night in 1541, when he was 25 years old, he decided to go poaching, in the company of friends, on land belonging to Sir Nicholas Pelham of Laughton. At Pikehaie, in the parish of Hellingly, the party was confronted by three of Pelham's gamekeepers and, in a struggle that ensued, one of the gamekeepers, John Busbrig, was fatally injured, dying two days later.

Thomas and his associates were arrested and arraigned on a charge of murder. Thomas himself was imprisoned in the Tower of London. Eventually he was tried, found guilty and hanged, apparently at Tyburn. Three of his accomplices were hanged at a place called St Thomas Waterings near the second mile-stone of the Old Kent Road.

The trial was held in Star Chamber and no records of it exist. Although Lord Dacre's descendants subsequently claimed that his only crime was that of poaching and that he was not even present at the

fight, at his trial he pleaded guilty to a charge of murder, trusting for his life in the King's mercy. The advice that induced him to enter such a plea may simply have been unwise, or it may, as his friends claimed, have been false counsel, obtained from greedy privy councillors, who secretly sought his conviction so that they could profit by the forfeiture of his estates. However, any such designs on the Dacre estates were thwarted by the Will of Sir Thomas' grandfather, according to which the properties were strictly entailed to the family.



Thomas Fiennes, 3rd Lord Dacre of the South. Hanged for murder in 1541. From a portrait after Holbein.

Whatever the truth of his trial may be, there is no denying that the manner of his execution was unusual. Condemned noblemen were normally extended the privilege of a quick death by the axe, but Sir Thomas was subjected to the pain and ignominy of death by public hanging, like a common criminal. An interesting note in the hand-writing of Sampson Lennard, later to marry Lord Dacre's daughter, states:

This unfortunate Ld Dacre herein mentioned did never committ wylful murder for it was generally known he was not at ye place; but in his imprisonment he was cunninglye dealt wt all to confess ye inditement for so he was persuaded he should save his followers. And so by ye Tyranny of ye tyme he was cast away through too privy counsellors yt gaped after his lving, wch yett they had not by reason of an intayle

Sir Thomas left a widow and three young children. Life must have been difficult for them as the family's honours and probably much of the income were forfeit. They may have been reduced to occupying only part of the Castle as a fireplace seems to have been put in the south gatehouse at about this time. Also about then, the family were obliged to erect a monument in Herstmonceux Church to mark the burial place of Sir Thomas Fiennes, Second Lord Dacre of the South and his son, Sir Thomas Fiennes. As a result, the Dacre Tomb was built.

Whilst it was being repaired and restored in 1971, by Mr G Elliott, B.E.M., it soon became obvious that the tomb was made of pieces from more than one monument. The tomb chest, the frieze of shields and the spandrels on the north and south sides are carved mainly from Purbeck marble; whereas the niches, the cornice on the south side and the effigies are made of Caen stone, a type of limestone from Normandy.

Close inspection of the Caen stone pieces indicated that they had been altered. The cornice on the south side has been shortened to fit the space, the crest on the central helmet has been cut away and replaced by an oak eagle and the crest on the helmet beneath the northern figure has also been removed. Two other important facts considered were that the style of the armour is more typical of the third quarter of the 15th century rather than the second quarter of the 16th century and, also, the coats of arms carved on the



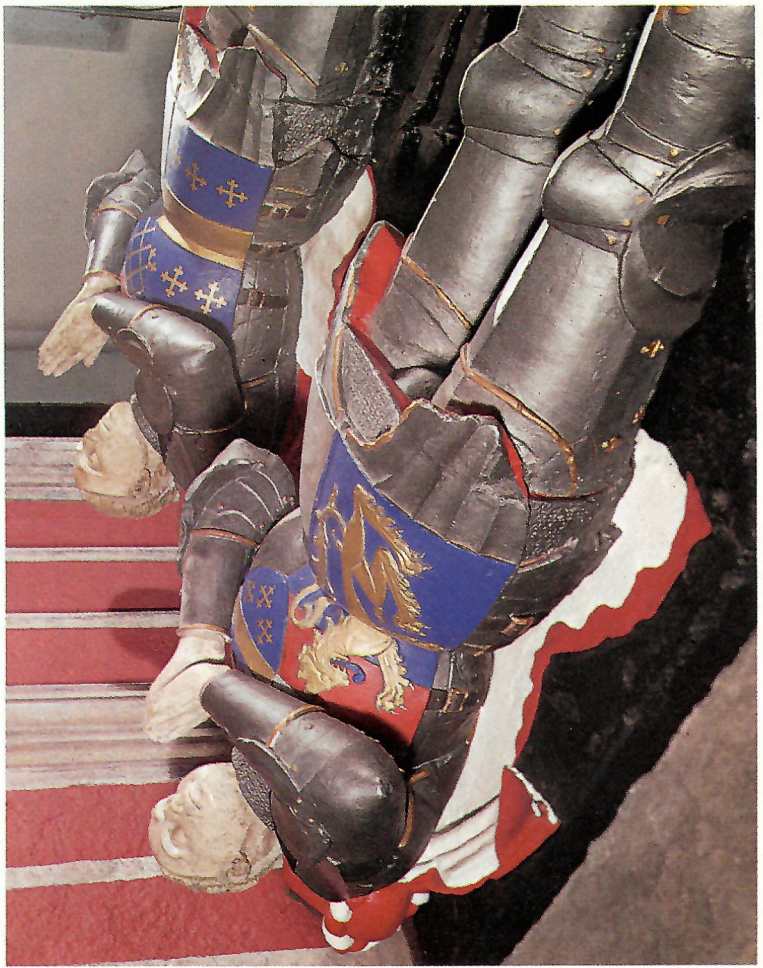
The Dacre Tomb in Herstmonceux c.1450 – c.1540.

effigies are not representative of any of the Fiennes family of that time. As long ago as 1916 it was suggested that these effigies might represent Thomas Hoo, K.G., Lord of Hoo and Hastings, died 1455, and his half-brother Sir Thomas Hoo Esq., who died in 1486.

During repair of the left leg of the northern effigy, an extra strap was discovered on the inside of the left knee, where it normally can not be seen. Investigation revealed that it was all that remained

of a garter, the badge of the Knights of the Garter. It was clear that the garter had been chiselled off but the mason had been unable to reach the last little piece.

Further examination of the coats of arms showed that they too had been altered and that the original blazons indicated the Hoo family. The discovery of the garter, coupled with the fact that none of the Fiennes was a Knight of the Garter, strongly supports the belief that these effigies represent the Hoo half-brothers.



Effigies on the Dacre Tomb. Left, Sir Thomas Hoo and Right, his half-brother, Thomas, Lord of Hoo and Hastings, K.G.

Taking all the evidence into consideration a possible history of the monument can be suggested. The original Purbeck tomb may well have been built for Sir Roger Fiennes about 1450. It would have been decorated with brass shields and inscriptions. It may have been open to the



Margaret Fiennes, Daughter of Thomas, 3rd Lord Dacre of the South; who married Sampson Lennard and became Baroness Dacre in her own right.

elements on the north causing that side to be badly weathered. Around 1483, the Dacre chapel was built, probably to commemorate Roger's son, Richard. Richard's son, Sir John, may also have been buried in the chapel.

About the time the tomb was altered, the dissolution of Battle Abbey was under way. The Hoo half-brothers were benefactors of the abbey and it is likely that there was a tomb over their burial place in the abbey church. The church was soon demolished and the Fiennes family may have taken the opportunity to re-use parts of the Hoo monument to refurbish the tomb in Herstmonceux Church. It would have been cheaper than building a totally new monument.

Further trouble came to the widow. Her eldest son, another Thomas, died in 1553 at the age of 15. The second son, Gregory, however, was restored in blood and honours by an Act of Parliament in 1558 but he showed little interest in Herstmonceux and lived and died in Chelsea. It was his sister, Margaret, who became Baroness Dacre in her own right after his death, who began to restore the Castle to its former state. She married Sampson* Lennard and so brought another family name to Herstmonceux.

*He signed documents 'Samson' but almost every other reference to him includes the 'p'. To be consistent I have used the latter spelling.

4 The Cost of Living in a Castle

The Lennard Family

Margaret, Baroness Dacre, and her husband restored the Castle to its former level of comfort and added further embellishments including several armorial chimney pieces and a grand staircase to the Great Hall. Despite their obvious attachment to Herstmonceux they were both buried at the Lennard home at Chevening in Kent where their noble tomb can still be seen in the church.

Descendants of Margaret and Sampson Lennard continued to live in the Castle, but it is only from the time of Francis Lennard, who became Lord Dacre in 1630, that we have detailed evidence of what life in the Castle was like. About Francis himself not a great deal is known but he trod a precarious and successful path during the troubled years from 1630 to 1660. Although he was a Parliamentarian, he was strongly opposed to the trial and execution of Charles I. He was one of a small group of peers who spoke out against it, at great risk to himself.

The Castle Accounts

About that time a man named Field, who appears to have been both a tenant on the estate and Lord Dacre's steward, at a salary of £10 per year, was keeping an account book with all the receipts and expenditure of the estate. Fortunately, Field's account book has been preserved and from it we can see in fascinating detail how the Castle was run.

Food accounted for a large part of the expenditure. The inhabitants of the Castle seem to have eaten anything that



Francis Lennard, Lord Dacre of the South, 1619-1682. From a portrait attributed to Sir Peter Lely.

moved. Apart from beef, mutton, poultry and pork, birds such as bitterns, black birds, curlews, herons, larks, oystercatchers and wheateaters were eaten. The taste in fish was equally catholic, including not just cod, bass, bream, conger, mackerel, crab, salmon and salmon-trout, but also butts, damselfish, maids, urses and wivers!

The quantities of food consumed suggest that people had enormous appetites. The household, averaging 40 people including children, used about 200 lbs

Double page of the Account Book of Herstmonceux Castle for the week beginning 30th December 1643. The left hand page lists extraordinary payments including

for the staff which were usually paid quarterly. The right hand page shows what household provisions were consumed in that week.

5 The Process of Decay

Thomas Lennard, the next Lord Dacre, was the last descendant of the ancient families of Herst and Monceux to own the manor. He began by spending a great deal of money on the alteration and modernisation of the Castle. He put new sash windows in the northeast corner, panelled the principal apartments and installed wood carvings by Grinling Gibbons. He married Lady Ann Fitzroy, an illegitimate daughter of Charles II; this marriage gained for him the specially created title of Earl of Sussex and the promise of a dowry of £20,000.

Unfortunately, the dowry was never paid. Thomas' love of court life and gambling drained the resources of the estate. By 1692 he was in such trouble that he was obliged to petition Parliament for permission to sell some of his estates to pay off his debts. In 1708 he sold the Herstmonceux estate to George Naylor of Lincoln's Inn for £38,215. This was the first recorded occasion when the manor changed hands by purchase. Lord Dacre then retired to his estate at Chevening where he spent the rest of his life more soberly, dying there in 1715.

The Grey Lady

The new owner, George Naylor, died in 1710 after holding the estate for only 2 years, but his daughter, Grace, inherited the estate and stayed in the Castle until she died in 1727. Tradition says that she was starved to death in one of the towers of the Castle by a wicked governess and that her ghost, known as "The Grey Lady" still inhabits the Castle.

The estate passed to Francis Naylor, a nephew of George, who lived in Suffolk

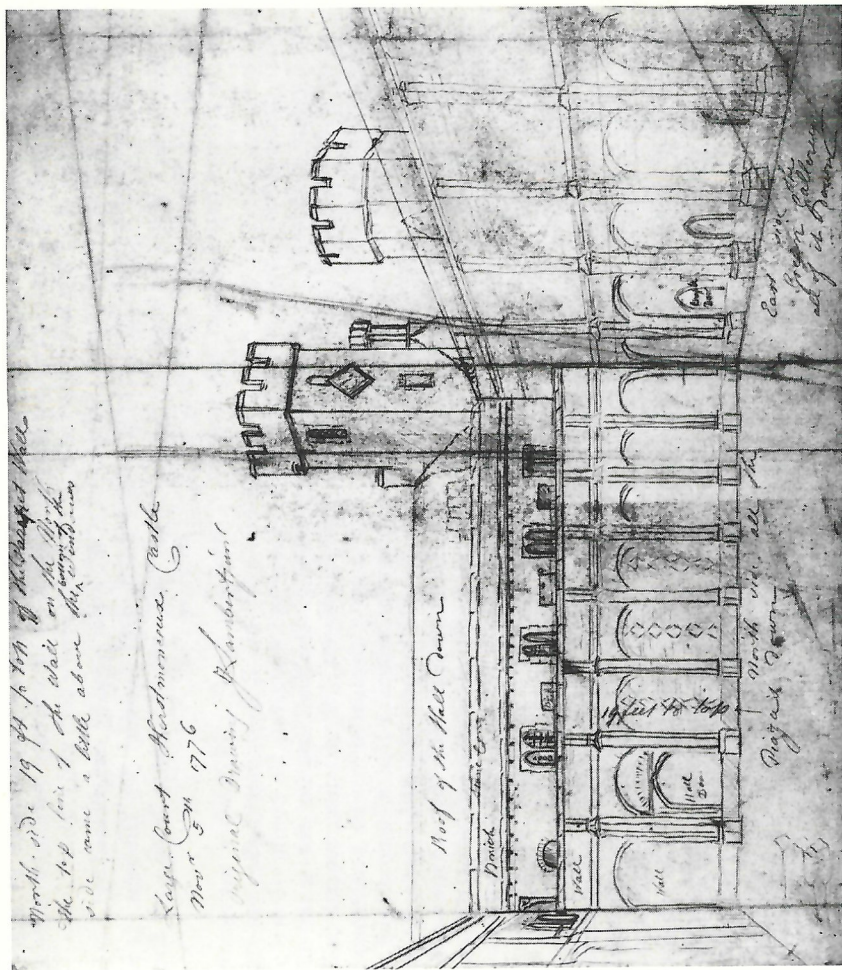


Thomas Lennard, Lord Dacre, Earl of Sussex, 1654-1715. He sold Herstmonceux Castle in 1708 to pay off his gambling debts.

and seldom visited Herstmonceux. During the 1730's and 40's the Castle was the residence of Dr Francis Hare, the father of Francis Naylor, who later became Bishop of Chichester.

The end of luxurious living

Francis Hare, the Bishop of Chichester, and his wife, Margaret, were the last family to inhabit the original Castle.



Drawing of the Green Court during demolition, dated November 5th 1776. The artist has indicated the extent of the destruction at that date by adding comments such as "...The Green Gallery, all of it down." This is one of a series of drawings done during the demolition by two local artists both called James Lambert. They were Uncle and Nephew.

They allowed the fabric of the building to fall into serious disrepair while they continued to live in the grand style, regularly entertaining guests at splendid dinner parties. On August 3rd 1730, for example, there were among the guests "Sir Thomas Webster, Lady and daughter, and Sir Nicholas Pelham and the Colonel". The menu consisted of "soup, carp, haunch of venison and pie, beans, breast of veal,

ragoued calves head, chicken forced, Turkey, Ducks, Partridges, fry, pease, Lamprey, custard pudding".

Lord Ashburnham, accompanied by his brother and another gentleman, came to dinner on August 17th and they were treated to "soup, carp, haunch and pie, breast of veal, ragoued chicken a la dobe, fryd soles, friggasses of rabbits, Turkeys, Ducks, partridges, wheatears, Lamprey,

prawns, fry, lobster in scalloped shells and almond pudding". As the century progressed, the cost of all this lavish entertainment became greater and neglect of the Castle itself more harmful.

When Horace Walpole visited Herstmonceux in 1752, the damage was already evident. In a letter dated August 5th, he had found

"the chapel is small and mean; the Virgin and seven long lean saints ill done, remain in the windows; there have been four more but seem to have been removed for light; and we actually found St Catherine and another gentlewoman with a church in her hand, exiled into the buttery".

Walpole was not impressed by the general state of decoration in the Castle:

"It does not seem to have been ever quite finished, or at least that age was not arrived at the luxury of whitewash for almost all the walls except in the principal chambers are in their native brickhood".

He found the furnishings deficient:

"(There is) no magnificence of apartments. It is scarcely furnished with a few necessary beds and chairs."

On the other hand he was pleased by:

"delightful carvings by Gibbons, particularly two pheasants hung over the chimneys"

The end came in 1776 when the estate was held by Robert Hare, the son of Francis and Margaret. He commissioned a survey of the building by the architect Samuel Wyatt. Wyatt pronounced the Castle so delapidated as to be beyond economical repair. Hare's second wife, Henrietta, then persuaded him to demolish the interior of the Castle and use the materials from it to rebuild Herstmonceux Place, a manor house on the estate, half a mile to the north.

Demolition commenced in the autumn of 1776 and was completed in the following summer by which time almost nothing of the interior remained. Wyatt refashioned Herstmonceux Place, but the core of the house is believed to be much older, possibly even 15th century.



Herstmonceux Place, designed by Samuel Wyatt and rebuilt with material from Herstmonceux Castle.

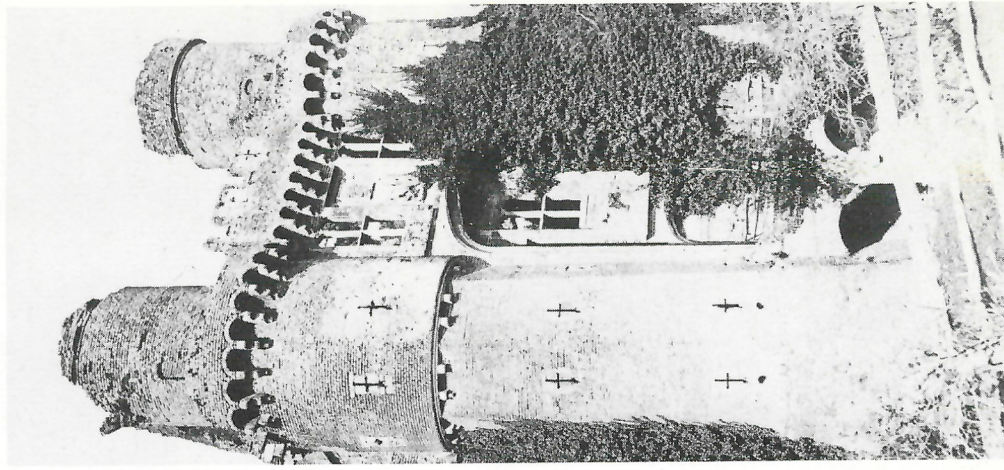
6 The Ivy-covered Ruin

The Headless Drummer

In the next century the Castle gradually became ivy-covered and developed the appearance of a great ruin with romantic appeal to the Victorian imagination. Of the interior rooms and the Great Hall, only the foundations and a few fragments of wall were left. The north and south gatehouses and most of the outer walls were all that remained standing.

Smugglers used the empty shell that remained, finding it an ideal place in which to hide contraband. On one occasion excisemen found a cartload of tea beneath the site of the great staircase. At about this time another ghost began to manifest itself. Apparitions of a drummer, sometimes headless, and varying in height between eight and ten feet (with or without his head!) were seen beating a ghostly tattoo along the southern battlements. Most probably the smugglers encouraged such stories to frighten away inquisitive strangers, but the legend of the drummer came before the smugglers. The room over the south gate-way is named 'the Drummer's Room' in a plan dating from the early eighteenth century.

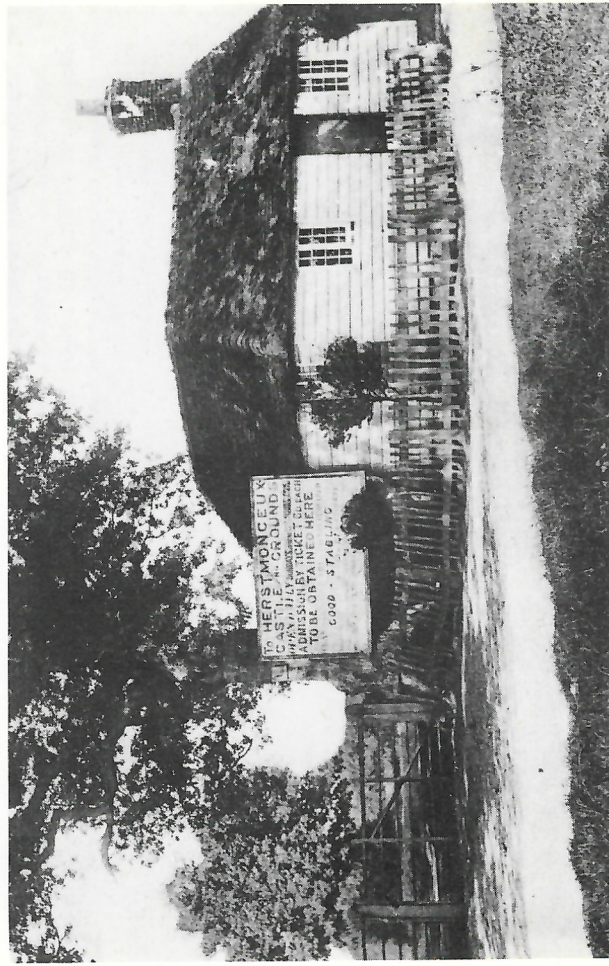
Gradually the Castle ruins became a centre of interest for sightseers. In the early part of the nineteenth century, one of the most notable visitors was J.M.W. Turner whose painting of the ruins in water colour still exists. In Victorian times there was a thriving tearoom business inside the courtyard. Outside, the walled garden which had survived from Tudor times was well kept and open to visitors.



South Gate tower of Herstmonceux Castle about 1900.



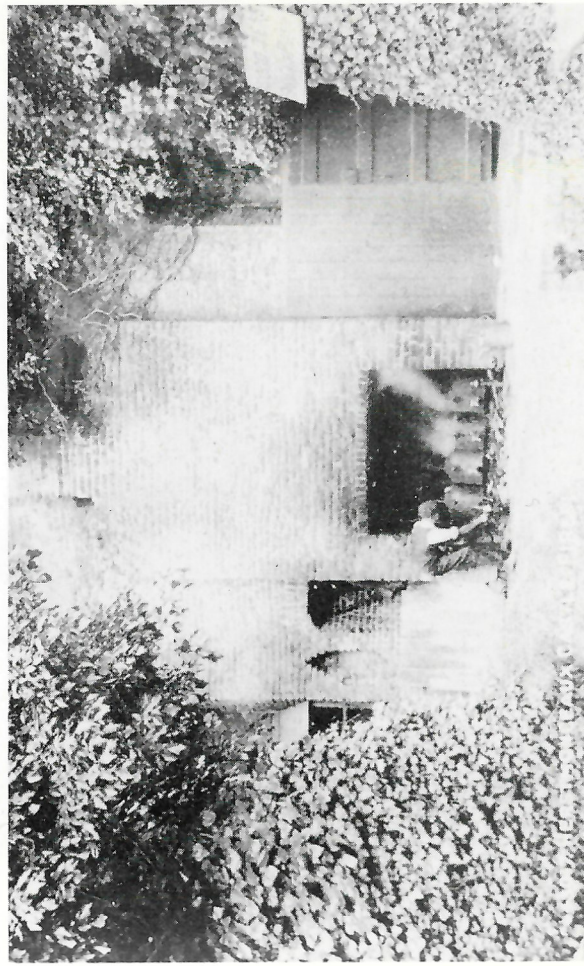
Interior of Castle, about 1900, showing remains of Chapel (Left), Gate House (Right) and internal buildings (Foreground).



East entrance to grounds about 1900 attracting visitors with 'good stabling' rather than a car park.



Walled Gardens on the North Side of the Castle at the turn of the Century.



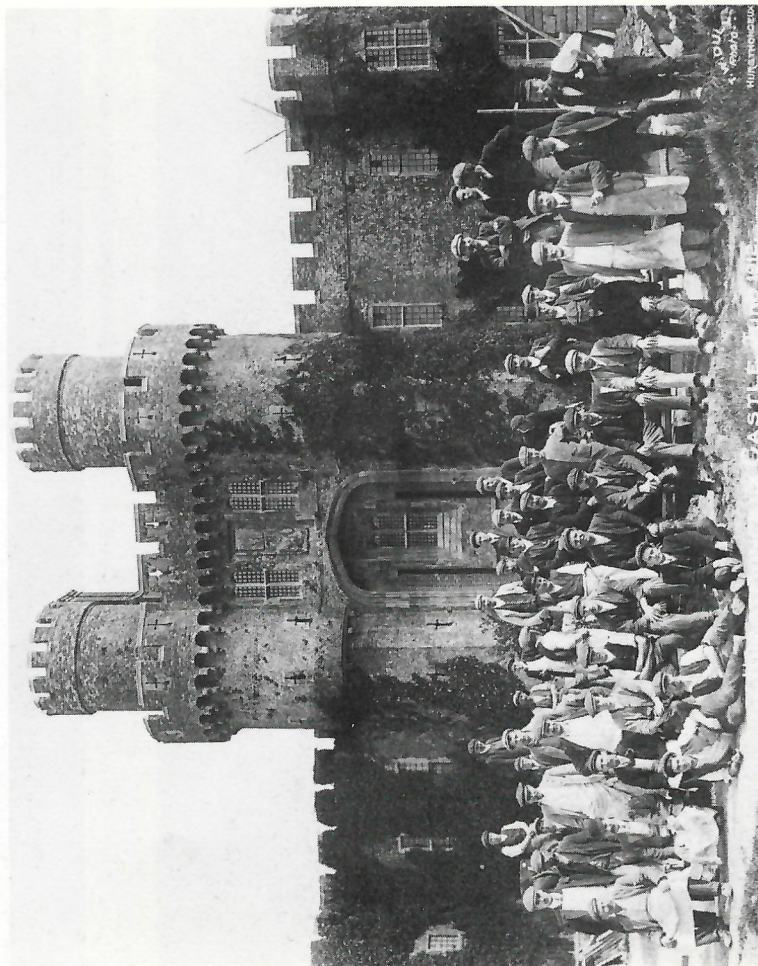
Urns being boiled for the Tea Rooms inside the castle ruins about 1900. The notice on the right reads:— Good Teas 9d. each person.

7 Restoration of the Castle

The First World War

During the nineteenth century, the Castle had several different owners (see chart p.40). In 1911 Lieutenant Colonel Claude Lowther bought the estate and decided to reconstruct the Castle and live in it. The building work was carried out by local craftsmen and by June 1912 most of the south front was rebuilt.

Before the work could go much further, the First World War intervened. Colonel Lowther then devoted himself to the war effort and was responsible for raising and equipping five battalions of the Royal Sussex Regiment, known as Lowther's Lambs. The mascot of the 11th battalion, a ram called Corporal Peter, was later buried with military honours in the grounds to the north of the Castle.



Local workmen in front of the Castle in June 1912 showing how far reconstruction had progressed.

Reconstruction

After the War various difficulties delayed the reconstruction and it never regained its former momentum until after the death of Colonel Lowther, in 1929. Even so, the Colonel accomplished a great deal. He restored all of the south side and the west as far as the outer wall of the new Great Hall. On the east side the work reached the outer wall of the chapel. He also established the principle on which restoration would take place. The style was similar to that of the original building but the plan was different, with a single large courtyard within.

Lowther furnished the interior with woodwork and panelling from other historic houses in England. The most important piece that he acquired was the staircase from Theobalds, James I's country house in Hertfordshire. The Elizabethan woodwork in the Drummer's Room is also due to Lowther but, since it fits the space so well, it may just possibly have formed part of the original castle as its provenance is unknown.

The next owner to work on reconstruction was Sir Paul Latham, who continued on Lowther's plan but with one notable difference in design. Whereas Lowther had intended a "mediaeval castle" effect with flat roofs and with battlements silhouetted against the sky, Sir Paul returned to the original design with high pitched roofs rising above the crenellations.

For the interior, Sir Paul acquired two items of special architectural and historical interest. An overmantel (said to be Jacobean, although the lower part seems to be later) from Madingley Hall Cambridge was built into the ballroom. Secondly, a magnificent carved staircase, together with landings and door frames, dating from about 1680 and thought to have originated in the workshop of Grinling Gibbons, were brought from Wheatley Hall, Doncaster.

The moat was flooded again for the first time since 1570, at the latest. Its channel was widened and consequently the bridge to the south entrance had to be lengthened.



Central Courtyard of the Castle as finally rebuilt by Sir Paul Latham.



Staircase from Theobalds in Hertfordshire. Bought by Lt. Col. Lowther and built into the staircase hall in 1912.



Library staircase brought by Sir Paul Latham from Wheatley Hall, Doncaster



The Equatorial Group built to house the telescopes of the Royal Greenwich Observatory

World War delayed the move; but soon after it ended the Admiralty chose Herstmonceux as the new site, and in 1948 the long business of providing new accommodation for the observatory staff and instruments commenced. The move took nearly ten years to complete. In the meantime some of the staff lived in temporary accommodation, at the end of the bridge on the south side of the Castle, that had been built by the Hearst of Oak Benefit Society during the War and demolished in 1957 following completion of the West Building.

The Future

The outer fabric of the Castle, much of which is original, is classed as an ancient monument and is preserved as such. The principal rooms inside remain as they were restored by Lowther and Latham. Outside, the estate now amounts to 386 acres, half of which is rented out for agriculture. Of the remainder, about 40 acres of garden, park and woodland are open to the public between Easter and the end of September. Since Colonel Lowther's time the planting of azaleas, rhododendrons, daffodils and other flowers and shrubs has continued, so that at all times of year the grounds provide a colourful setting for this magnificent building.



Herstmonceux Castle in Springtime.

The arrival of the Royal Greenwich Observatory

Sir Paul did not live in the Castle for many years. Soon after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, he moved to Milland, a house a little way along the road to the village. The staff of a friendly society, known as the Hearts of Oak Benefit Society, was evacuated from London to the Castle.

After the war, it was rumoured that Butlins were considering buying the Castle for a holiday camp. In 1946, however, the Admiralty purchased the Castle and surrounding lands for £76,000, as the new site of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. In its new location the observatory was renamed the Royal Greenwich Observatory, in order to maintain its identity.

When the Royal Observatory was founded in 1675, Greenwich was a small village, far from London. With the passing centuries, London and its surrounding villages grew and merged to form Greater London. By the beginning of the 20th century, pollution was rapidly increasing and the skies were becoming more and more unsuitable for astronomical observation. Conditions eventually became so bad that moving the observatory was the only solution. The Second



A corner of the Walled Gardens as they are today.

8 The Village of Herstmonceux

The Move

The present village of Herstmonceux lines the main road from Hailsham to Bexhill, at Gardner Street. The name "Gardner Street" for that village was used until comparatively recently. We are not certain when the villagers were moved from the original settlement of Herstmonceux but it may have been when the park was enclosed. The move appears to have improved the fortunes of the village, which had been declining. The number of tax payers had dropped from about 42 in 1086 to only 10 in 1332. The village might have been almost deserted by 1441.

The Village

After the move, the population certainly began to increase. By 1676 there were about 250 people. The number of surviving houses built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is evidence of increased prosperity. A beam in the Old Post Office is inscribed with the date 1603 and 'Elm Tree House' is partially half timbered and could be sixteenth century but the majority of the older houses are eighteenth century. The Woolpack Inn as it stands presents a facade of the late eighteenth century but parts of it are much older. Its name reflects one of the main products of the area, wool.



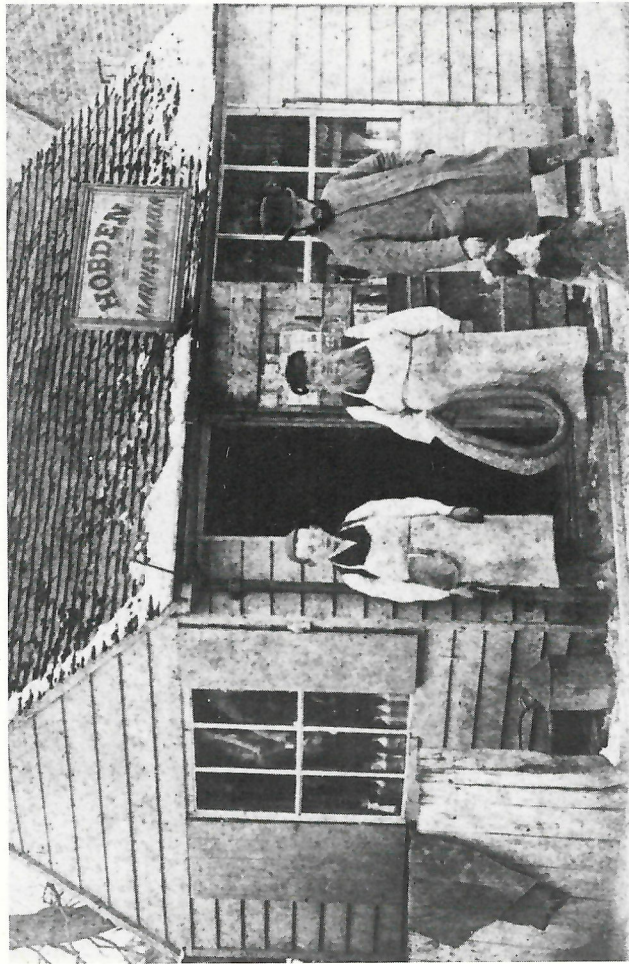
The Village Centre about 1890. The Woolpack Inn is to the left and the road to Cowbeech on the right.



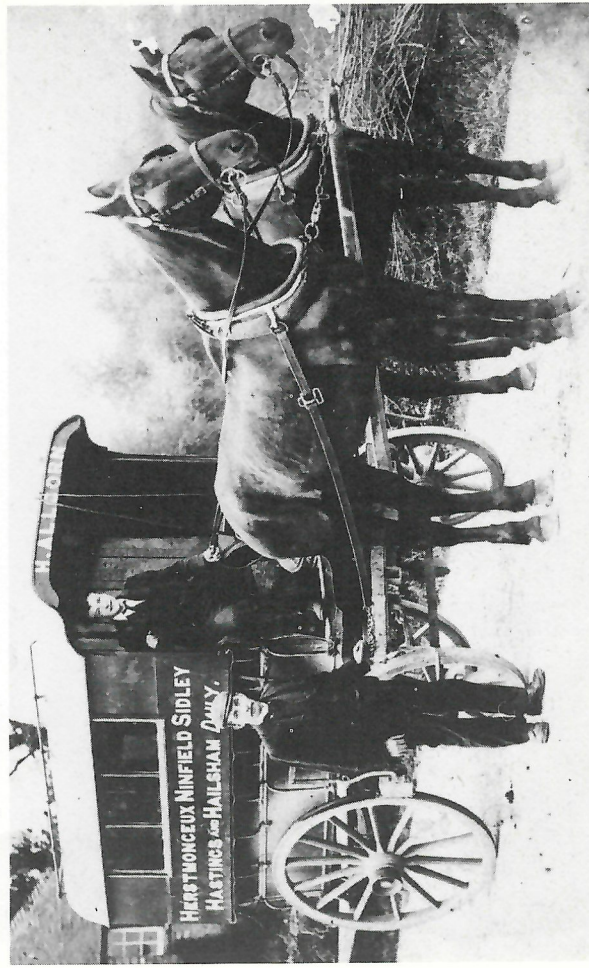
Smith's Trug-Basket Workshop before 1900.



Herstmonceux stores about 1900 with the Owner, Mr. Pont, on the right of the picture.



Valentine Hobden, harness maker in a picture taken before 1890. Because he had a wooden leg, he was known as 'Stump' Hobden.



There were a number of carriers in the district. Here is one of Allcorn's Horse Buses about 1900.

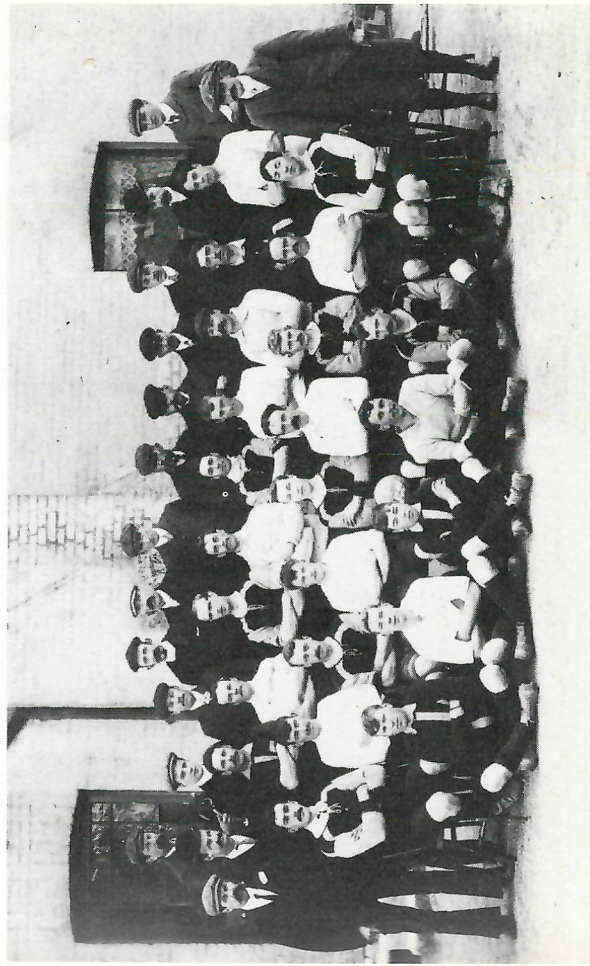
No doubt sheep shearers and sheep farmers visited the inn after they had been to the animal fair in Fairfield just to the north of the village.

Until recently, generations of the villagers worked on the land. Consequently some local names can be traced back many years. One such name is Allcorn, it can be dated back to 1384 and is mentioned again in 1644. There was still an Allcorn in Herstmonceux until a few years ago.

The village was largely self-sufficient; there were blacksmiths, a brewery, a workhouse at Higham House and an asylum at Bedlam Cottages along West End. More sinister perhaps are the names of the two fields flanking the road to Windmill Hill, Great Gallows field and Little Gallows field.

Brick-making also flourished in Herstmonceux and names such as "Brick House", "Brickyard Farm" and "Kiln Copse" still exist.

Another product for which Herstmonceux has long been famous is the trug basket. The word "trug" comes from the same root as "trough", and the shape of the basket is certainly reminiscent of a trough. Although there was more than one manufacturer of these baskets, the best known name is probably Smith. The firm has existed for more than 170 years and it won a medal and diploma of merit for its products in the Great Exhibition of 1851. A special order for baskets was placed by Queen Victoria, and one Thomas Smith walked all the way from Herstmonceux to Buckingham Palace to deliver them personally.



Herstmonceux Football Club, 1908.



Herstmonceux Boy Scout Troop, 1909.



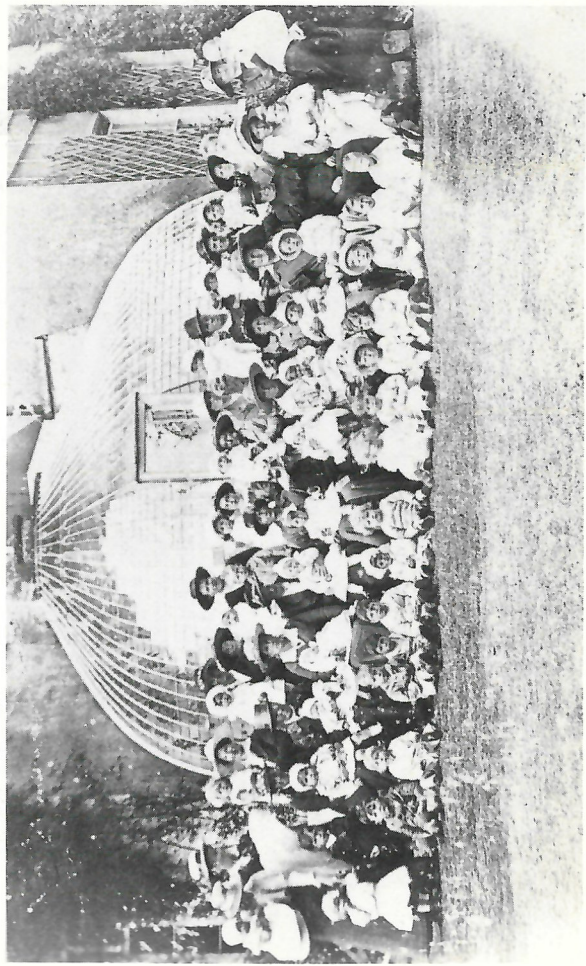
Herstmonceux Band, about 1911.

The Post Office directories for 1855 and 1867 show the trades and professions represented in Herstmonceux at the time: artificial manure dealer, baker, blacksmith, boot and shoe maker, brewer, bricklayer, butcher, carpenter, carrier, coal merchant, cooper, draper, fancy basket manufacturer, farmer, fell monger (dealer in animal skins) glazier, grocer, hairdresser, innkeeper, maltster, spirit merchant, master of national school, miller, milliner, nurseryman, painter, parish clerk, plumber, postmistress, relieving officer and registrar of births, deaths and marriages, road surveyor, saddler and harness maker, surgeon,

tailor, veterinary surgeon, watch and clock maker and wheelwright.

In all there were 36 different occupations.

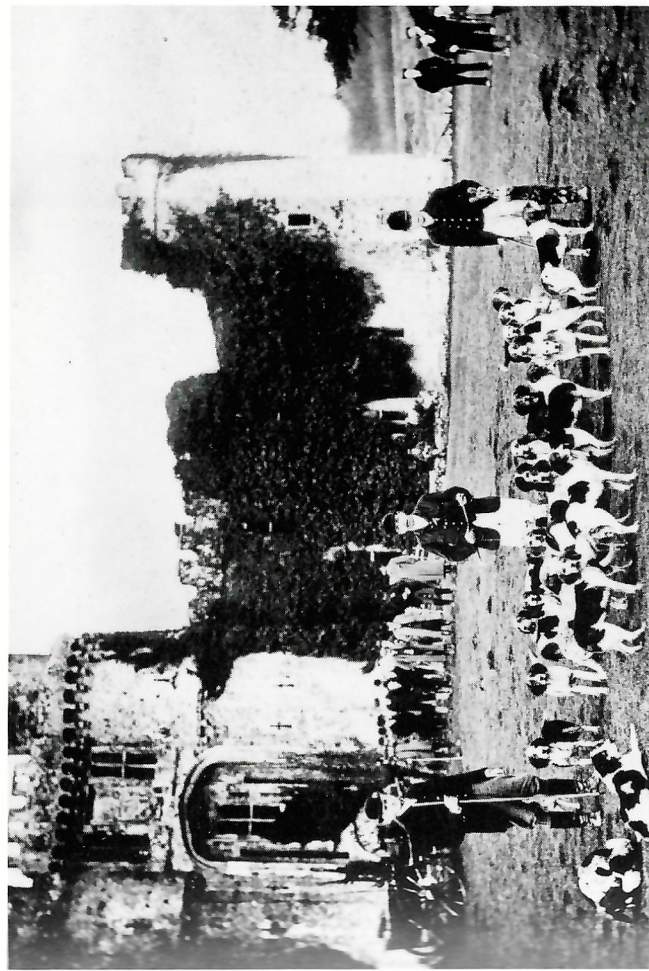
T.W. Duly was a man who epitomised the versatility of a village craftsman. He was a trug-basket-maker, and a saddle-and-harness-maker. He was also a coal, coke and wood merchant and maker of, in his own words, the "famous Nonpareil Cycles". More important for posterity, he was a photographer and a maker of postcards and his many surviving photographs are now valuable illustrations of the way of life in a village at the end of the nineteenth century.



Herstmonceux Baby Show, at the Old Rectory, 1919.

OWNERS OF THE MANOR OF HERSTMONCEUX

- Before
 1066 – Edmer, a priest
 1086 – Wibert, tenant-in-chief
 1200 – Idonea de Herst who married Ingelram de Monceux
 1211 – Their son Waleran de Herst (or Monceux) Died c. 1216.
 1216 – His son William de Monceux
 ? – His son Waleran, alive in 1279.
 After
 1279 – His son John. Died in 1302.
 1302 – His son John. Died in 1316.
 1316 – His son John. Died in 1330.
 1330 – His sister Maud who had married Sir John Fiennes c. 1327. He died 1351.
 1351 – William Fiennes, their eldest son. Died 1359.
 1359 – His son, Sir William memorial brass in Herstmonceux Church Died 1403.
 1403 – His son, Sir Roger Fiennes, builder of Herstmonceux Castle. Died 1449.
 1449 – His son, Sir Richard, who married Joan Dacre in 1446 and became First Lord Dacre of the South. He died in 1483.
 1483 – His grandson, Sir Thomas, second Lord Dacre. Richard's son, Sir John, died in 1483 before his father. Sir Thomas died 1533, after his son, also Sir Thomas who died 1528.
 1533 – Sir Thomas Fiennes, Third Lord Dacre, grandson of the Second Lord Dacre. Hanged at Tyburn 1541.
 1541 – Thomas, 1538-1553, eldest son of the Third Lord Dacre.
 1553 – Gregory, brother of Thomas, restored to title of Lord Dacre by Elizabeth I in 1558. Died 1594.
 1594 – Margaret Fiennes, Baroness Dacre, 1541-1612. Sister of Gregory. Married Sampson Lennard.
- 1612 – Their son, Sir Henry Lennard, Lord Dacre. 1570-1616.
 1616 – His son, Richard, Lord Dacre, 1596-1630.
 1630 – His son, Francis, Lord Dacre, 1619-1662.
 1662 – His son, Thomas Lennard, Lord Dacre, Earl of Sussex, 1654-1715.
 1708 – Herstmonceux Estate bought by George Naylor for £38,215. He died 1710.
 1710 – His daughter, Grace. Died 1727.
 1727 – Her cousin, Francis Naylor. Died 1775.
 1775 – His half-brother, Robert Hare, demolished the Castle 1776. The estate was inherited by his son, Francis Hare Naylor. He sold Herstmonceux in 1807 to
 1807 – Thomas Reed Kemp
 1819 – Bought for John Gillon, M.P.
 1846 – Bought by Herbert Barrett Curteis, M.P. and remains in the same family through his son Herbert Mascall Curteis and grandson, Herbert Curteis.
 1911 – Bought by Lt.-Col. Claude Lowther. Restoration begins.
 1929 – After Lowther's death, Herstmonceux is bought by Reginald Lawson.
 1932 – Estate purchased by Sir Paul Latham who completes the restoration.
 1946 – Bought by the Admiralty for The Royal Observatory.
 1965 – Transferred to the Science and Engineering Research Council. The establishment is now called the Royal Greenwich Observatory.



Hullsham Harriers meet at Herstmonceux Castle, 1901.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Director of the Royal Greenwich Observatory, for the help and facilities which were made available during the preparation of this guide. Thanks are also due to Dr A Hunter, CBE, and Mr P S Laurie, OBE, for their invaluable comments and encouragement and to Mr N P J O'Hara, whose efforts in tidying up the text finally got the project under way.

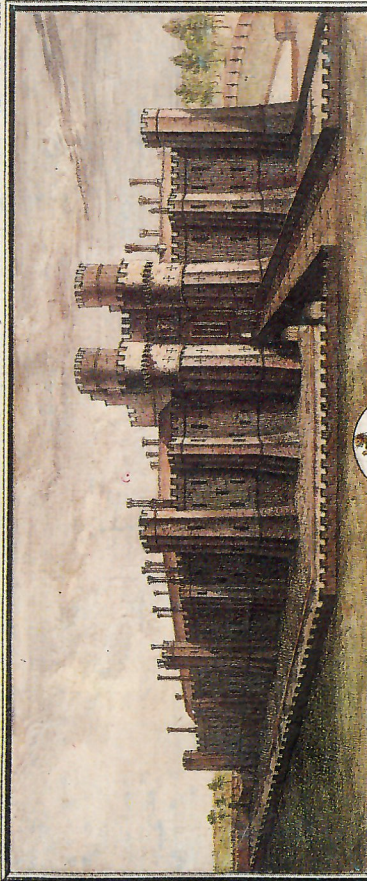
The photograph of the Domesday entry for Herst (page 4) was supplied by the Public Record Office which is the custodian of the original document; the reference number being E31, Vol.II, f18. The photograph of the Seal of Idonia de Herst (page 5) is reproduced by permission of the British Library and the photograph of the 17th century model yacht (page 23) is by kind permission of the National Maritime Museum, London.

All other illustrations are by the author and I would like to thank the following for permission to photograph objects or documents in their care:— The Essex Record Office; "War Charter" of Roger Fiennes, ERO, D/DL F15 and the Account Book of Herstmonceux Castle, ERO/D/DL E22 (pages 8, 20 and 21); The Victoria and Albert Museum; the Lambert drawings of Herstmonceux Castle (pages 9, 10, 11, 12 and 25); the owners of the collection of the late Sir Richard Barrett Lennard; Fiennes and Lennard family portraits (pages 15, 18, 19 and 24); Miss R C Howard; flint arrowheads (page 1); Dr L K Robson; Bucks' print of Herstmonceux Castle (cover) and Rev W A Hawkins; Herstmonceux Church. I also extend my thanks to all those people, in and around Herstmonceux, who have allowed me to reproduce their old photographs of the Castle and the village.

In a guide of this type there are bound to be omissions, it is not meant to be a fully comprehensive history. Nevertheless, I have made every effort to ensure that all statements are verified and some errors of previous authors are corrected. I would be happy to hear from anyone who would like to know more about Herstmonceux and, indeed, from anyone who may have some fresh information for me.

D A Calvert A.I.L.P., A.M.P.A.
 Royal Greenwich Observatory
 Herstmonceux Castle.

THE SOUTHWEST VIEW OF HURSTMONCEUX-CASTLE, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX.



To Francis Barr Taylor Esq.
This Prospect is humbly presented by
His most Obedient Servant
John N. Wallis Engraver.



1737. Hurstmonceux Castle stands on the ruins of an ancient Norman Castle. It was built by a French Baron, who was afterwards Lord of the Manor. The Castle was destroyed by the English in 1545. The ruins are now a public park. The Castle was built on a hill, and the surrounding area is now a public park. The Castle was built on a hill, and the surrounding area is now a public park. The Castle was built on a hill, and the surrounding area is now a public park.

Hurstmonceux Castle in 1737. From an etching by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck.

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The History of Hurstmonceux Castle

by DAVID CALVERT
Royal Greenwich Observatory
S.E.R.C.