

## NETTLECOMBE COURT

### I. THE TREVELYANS AND OTHER RESIDENTS OF THE COURT

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NETTLECOMBE lies near the north-west coast of Somerset, 15 miles from Taunton and 8 miles south-east of Minehead. Writing in 1791 the Rev. John Collinson stated that the parish was situated "in a bottom near that part of Brendon-hill called Raleigh's-down, and watered by a rivulet, which, passing by Orchard-Wyndham and Williton, falls at Donniford into the sea. The lands are exceedingly fertile, and mostly in tillage; the soil being a red loam."<sup>1</sup> The manor house and church are separated by little more than a fence, and south-west of the house stretches the old deer park, the owners of Nettlecombe having had a charter of free warren since 1304.<sup>2</sup>

Nettlecombe is first mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086, when it was stated to be held by William the Conqueror, and in the charge of his Sheriff for Somerset, William de Mohun. Prior to the Norman Conquest it had been one of only two Somerset manors held by Godwin son of King Harold, and after the Battle of Hastings was consequently forfeited to the Crown.<sup>3</sup> In 1068 Godwin, with his brothers Edmund and Magnus, sailed from Ireland with a fleet of 52 ships, devastated the Somerset seaboard and after an attack up the Avon towards Bristol were eventually repulsed.<sup>4</sup> It is possible that Godwin's territorial possessions in the county determined Somerset as the object of the attack.

How long Nettlecombe was retained by the Crown is not known, but it is next found in the hands of John son of Gilbert the Marshal, members of a family which took their name from their hereditary mastership of the King's marshalsea. For many years John had championed the cause of the Empress Matilda against King Stephen, and on the accession of her son Henry II received a grant of Crown lands in Wiltshire;<sup>5</sup> Nettlecombe may have come into his possession at the same time. Subsequently, by an undated grant, he conveyed "all my land of Netelcumba" to Hugh de Raleigh, in return for which Hugh agreed to find one soldier for two months in time of war and for forty days in time of peace, and to give to John and his family a sorrel nag, a horse, two dogs, eighty marks of silver, and two talents and an ounce of gold. As the grant was confirmed by Henry II it can be dated between 1154 (the King's accession) and 1165 (when John is recorded as having died).<sup>6</sup> The Raleigh family later adopted a differenced form of the arms of the Marshal family. Since this time Nettlecombe has never been sold, passing by descent through the families of Raleigh, Whalesborough, Trevelyan and Wolsey.

Hugh de Raleigh, the earliest known member of that family, is believed to have come from the manor of Raleigh near Pilton in Devon. Hugh was Sheriff of Devon during the years 1160 to 1167 and appears to have died childless. He conveyed Nettlecombe to his nephew, Warin de Raleigh, a grant confirmed by Hugh's brother and heir, Richard, and also by successive members of the Marshal family, the latter demanding further large sums of money for their consent to the transaction.<sup>7</sup>

According to one authority, Warin's son and heir Ralph supported the barons against King John prior to Runnymede, an action which resulted in the confiscation of Nettlecombe and its regrant to Sir Warin de Raleigh, Ralph's younger brother.

We have a record of an interesting gift by Sir Warin's widow, Lady Margaret, to her daughter-in-law, Lady Hawise, of a vessel of silver containing a piece of the Holy Cross and a ring of St. Lazarus which had belonged to Berengaria, Queen of Richard I. Sir Warin is believed to have had a brother Wymond, ancestor of the famous Sir Walter Raleigh. His eldest son, another Sir Warin, died leaving two daughters, so that his Somerset estates reverted to his brother, Sir Simon de Raleigh. It is probably this Warin who was the subject of the earliest effigy in Nettlecombe church. At this time, the late thirteenth century, the family property in Somerset comprised the manors of Nettlecombe and Rowdon and lands in the nearby parishes of Stogumber and Sampford Brett. However, Sir Simon married the daughter and heiress of Sir Milo de Reigni, a considerable landowner in the county of Glamorgan, and subsequently seated himself at Wrenchester Castle, leaving Nettlecombe vacant or in the hands of tenants. His son, a second Sir Simon, also resided in Glamorgan-shire, holding the office of Sheriff of that county from 1299 to 1304 and extending his Welsh possessions by purchase. His wife Joan, sister and heiress of Laurence le Tort, brought to her husband the manors of Cutcombe Raleigh and Old Knowle in Nettlecombe. After her husband's death in 1304 she retired to Rowdon in Stogumber, where she founded a chantry in her manor house.<sup>8</sup>

Their sons, Sir John and Sir Simon de Raleigh, both supported the Duke of Lancaster in his struggle against Edward II and the Despensers. After the defeat of Lancaster's supporters at Boroughbridge in 1322 and the execution of the Duke himself, they were arrested and their lands confiscated. Despite this they both secured pardons on payment of heavy fines, later remitted on the accession of Edward III. Sir John de Raleigh, successor of the last Sir John, although possibly not his son, was evidently at the battle of Crécy in 1346, as the following year he received the King's pardon for "departing from the army in parts beyond the sea without licence and contrary to the King's prohibition". He served as M.P. for Somerset in 1363 and died in 1372. His second wife, Ismania Hanham, survived him and two subsequent husbands before her own death in 1420.<sup>9</sup> It is probably Sir John and his first wife Maud who lie side by side in effigy in Nettlecombe church.

Sir John left three sons, John, Warin and Simon, all of whom died without surviving issue, and two daughters, Matilda who married Sir Thomas Chaucer, son of Geoffrey the poet, and Joan who married John Whalesburgh of Whalesburgh in Cornwall. Simon Raleigh succeeded his father and seems to have been a renowned soldier. He was present with John of Gaunt in the expedition against Castile in 1386, in Guienne in 1394, and at Agincourt in 1415, and he may have served in other campaigns for which details have not survived. Simon thoughtfully made his will a few months before Agincourt, but he survived the battle and died 25 years later. Shortly before his death he made provision for a chantry on the south side of Nettlecombe church, endowing it with the manor of Cutcombe Raleigh for the support of a chaplain to say masses for the souls of the founder and his family. Careful thought had to be given to the choice of a suitable priest, for he was to be "with owt the company of women and suspect persones" and should not "be lecherus or perjured, a theaff, or a murderer, with such other vices corrupt". The chantry was swept away in 1548, with all other similar institutions in the country, and the 60-year-old chaplain John Wetheridge was pensioned off with £6 a year.<sup>10</sup>

With the extinction of the Raleigh family, their estates passed to Thomas Whalesburgh, Simon's nephew, and were given to his only child, Elizabeth, on her marriage

with John Trevelyan in 1452.<sup>11</sup> The latter came of yeoman stock, his family deriving their name from Trevelyan, a farm in St. Veep near Fowey in Cornwall, having dwelt in that neighbourhood from the thirteenth century or earlier. According to a seventeenth-century legend the white horse rising from the water on their coat of arms, to be seen through the house at Nettlecombe, was held to represent the steed of the first member of the family which saved its master by swimming with him to the Cornish mainland when the mythical land of Lyonesse sank beneath the sea.<sup>12</sup> However, it seems more likely that the legend was invented to add colour to the heraldry. Until the fifteenth century the Trevelyans were undistinguished Cornish farmers, but with the advent of John Trevelyan they rose from their relative obscurity. His good fortune seems to have been due to his whole-hearted and constant support of the Lancastrian cause during the Wars of the Roses, coupled with a natural aptitude for administration. He was M.P. first for Huntingdon (1442 and 1447) and then for Cornwall (1453 and 1454), was created Steward of the Duchy of Cornwall in 1442, and thereafter secured many and varied lucrative posts in the service of the King, including those of armourer of the Tower of London, constable of Trematon and Restormel castles and Usher of the Chamber. His proximity to the throne at the time of Jack Cade's revolt in 1450 led to his inclusion in a famous poetic satire, as the Cornish chough who "offt with his trayne, hath made oure Egulle [Henry VI] blynde". Denounced in parliament (1450) and ordered to be indicted (1451), he was restored to favour within the year, receiving a number of royal commissions in Cornwall and elsewhere. On the establishment of the house of York in the person of Edward IV he was attainted but pardoned in 1462, arrested again the following year, and duly pardoned in 1468. His eldest son took part in an abortive uprising in Devon against Richard III, which necessitated a further pardon in 1484. That John Trevelyan should have survived those troubled years while so many of his friends lost their lands if not their lives, bears fluent testimony to his influence, personality and wealth, particularly the latter, for his freedom must have been dearly bought. It may have been in gratitude for his preservation that he presented the famous chalice and paten to Nettlecombe church. These bear the date letter for 1479 and are the earliest pieces of dated English plate known to exist. With the accession of Henry Tudor and the final triumph of the Lancastrians at Bosworth Field, John's attainder was reversed and he died seven years later on 20 June 1492. His funeral at Nettlecombe was lavish, for a surviving account shows the purchase of "bred, geese, capons, vele, lammys, whet, malmsey, wyne, fyshe, pygges, chekens", etc., as well as more conventional funeral purchases.<sup>13</sup>

John Trevelyan's rise to fortune meant that his sons were well provided for. His eldest son, John, was created a Knight of the Bath on Prince Arthur's marriage to Catharine of Aragon in 1501. His second son, Thomas, was a groom of the Royal Chamber and escheator for Somerset and Dorset. Another son, George was Chaplain to Henry VIII, Canon of Chichester Cathedral, and held two Trevelyan livings in Cornwall. Of the family lands, those in Surrey and Sussex were left to Richard Trevelyan the elder, the remaining sons receiving various estates in Cornwall. Despite this partition the Nettlecombe properties still presented an enviable inheritance, safeguarded by a further two pardons taken out by the new lord of Nettlecombe in 1508 and 1509, covering every offence from high treason to petty larceny.<sup>14</sup>

But it was not long before the newly established Trevelyans fell foul of one of oldest families in West Somerset. Sir John had been ordered to protect the King's game

within the royal forest of Exmoor, a charge which he fulfilled so effectively that Sir Hugh Luttrell of Dunster, while hunting, lost two of his hounds, confiscated by Sir John's servants. The affair required the personal intervention of Lord Daubeny, Chamberlain to Henry VII and Sir Hugh's brother-in-law, who urged Trevelyan to let Luttrell "take his disporte, and if he list let hym kyll one dere in somer and a nother in wynter hereafter".<sup>15</sup>

Sir John Trevelyan died on 21 September 1522, making provision in his will for the erection of "a chapel of Our Ladie and S. George in the north part of the chaunsell of Netilcombe in length of the said chaunsell and in bredethe of 11 or 12 foote".<sup>16</sup> He left two surviving sons, the eldest, another John Trevelyan, aged 30, succeeding him at Nettlecombe. John had married Avice, daughter and heiress of Nicholas Cockworthy of Yarnscombe in Devon. He evidently preferred his wife's home to Nettlecombe, for he appears to have taken up residence there and made arrangements for leasing his family's mansion only four years after coming into his inheritance. The inventory of his furniture made on this occasion is particularly interesting, listing each room in the house before its major reconstruction at the end of the sixteenth century. The mansion then consisted of the hall, nine chambers, two smaller rooms, cider house, buttery, bakehouse, kitchen and dairy. The hall was hung with red cloth but sparsely furnished with only three trestle tables and four forms. The fire dogs or "andirons" mentioned are probably those which still guard the fireplace in the present hall, as they bear the arms of Trevelyan and Cockworthy (Plate IV). In contrast John Trevelyan's chamber must have resembled a storeroom. Hung with green cloth, it boasted a large bed, three carpets, thirteen cushions, twelve chests, four boxes, three chairs, four stools, three forms, two chimney pieces, two andirons, a Spanish basin, holy water bucket, two pictures, a sword, and a large number of sheets and blankets. The remaining chambers were more modestly furnished, but the impression is given of a well stocked house, able to provide ample Tudor comforts throughout a long winter.<sup>17</sup>

The marriage in 1529 of his eldest son, John, with Maud, daughter of Giles and Agatha Hill of Honiton, led to the penning of a very perceptive character sketch of John Trevelyan the father. It appears that after the customary marriage settlement had been drawn up, Mrs. Hill's concern for her daughter's welfare persuaded her to make fresh demands on the Trevelyan estate. In a letter of 1533 Lord Chief Justice Fitzjames states that Mrs. Hill "wold bynd hym [the father] to certen thynges other than be compriside yn ther indenture of mariage, wherof sche hathe nor wretynge ne yet proffe, but the verie trouthe this Trevelian is not the wyseste man, ne yett of a seurtie no ydeott, but a man of litill discretion, and not broken, but hath allwey lyved at home withowte any brekyng. And bycause he wold not folowe the mynd off the gentlewoman sche hathe made this labour ageyn hym, more as I suppose to prove hym a ydeotte than for eny truste of her bargeyn. Iff he be a ydeotte, on my feythe I wold the Kyngges Heighnes hade righte of hym."<sup>18</sup> Evidently the Trevelyan family reaped few benefits from their union with the Hill family, and it may have been their "litill discretion" which led to their dispute with the Sydenham family.

On 30 June 1531 John Trevelyan leased Nettlecombe house and park to John Sydenham, Jane his wife, and their sons John and Alexander, for a term of 80 years or the lives of the lessees. One of the conditions of the grant was that within three years Sydenham was to "make or cause to be made a nywe conveyent halle at Netelcombe . . . of lyme and stone helyd with tylestone ther as the olde halle nowe ys,

and of the length of the same old hall or within 6 foote of the same length.” Sydenham later stated that he had “buylded the sed hall and dyvers other edyfyces upon the premysses”, indicating that the medieval hall was reconstructed at about this time. But in other respects Sydenham hardly proved an ideal tenant. When John Trevelyan’s son and heir, John, threatened to have Sydenham ejected on the death of his father, as the estate was entailed to him and the lease invalid after that date, the new tenant sued the Trevelyans for a more secure grant. They countered by stating that a number of the conditions in the lease had been broken and that Sydenham ought to be ejected. According to John Trevelyan the water had been diverted from the park, new tracks had been made through the grounds, the tenants had been molested and their animals killed and impounded. Sydenham kept greyhounds “whiche hurteth the deres, and have kyllyd 2 deres in a daye”, fences had been pulled down, fish, rabbits, herons, and woodpigeons poached, and a variety of other misdemeanours committed. The case was heard at Exeter in November 1539, but the court found for Sydenham, “as he hath done cost and charges . . . to a grett some of money” upon the property. In consequence John Trevelyan continued at Yarnscombe in Devon, where he died on 1 February 1546/7.<sup>19</sup>

Young John Trevelyan, until this time resident at the original family home, Trevelyan in Cornwall, returned to Nettlecombe on his father’s death, the Sydenhams by some means having been turned out. As his father left other sons, the Trevelyan lands were further fragmented and much of the Devon property passed to his brothers, but not without acrimonious law suits, and accusations that their father’s will had been tampered with. John died in 1563 and was succeeded by his eldest son, yet another John Trevelyan of Nettlecombe. He was one of 12 children and the family fortunes were probably somewhat depleted to provide for the younger members. In 1574 and 1576 we find him considering breaking up his housekeeping at Nettlecombe, and presumably intending to move into one of the family’s more economical manors. Shortly after this, in 1577, he died and was succeeded by his eldest son.<sup>20</sup> It is to this son, John Trevelyan, that we owe much of the main structure of Nettlecombe Court. The hall and porch are dated 1599, but additions and alterations must have continued after this date for in a letter of 22 October 1602, John’s cousin, Richard Hill, wishes him a “happy end of your buildings, and longe continuance in injoyenge ye same to your owne desiered comforts”.<sup>21</sup> How the money for these improvements was raised is not known, although it seems likely that it was secured by mortgages on the estate. John’s first wife was Urith, daughter of Sir John Chichester of Raleigh (whose family were the heirs of the senior branch of the Raleigh family), and granddaughter of Sir William Courtenay of Powderham Castle in Devon. Their marriage settlement is dated May 1568 when John was only eleven.<sup>22</sup> Urith gave her husband ten children before her death in 1591, and two years later he married a Cornish widow.

Throughout his life John’s brother, William, seems to have been a cause for concern to the head of the family. On one occasion he was involved in a cattle rustling expedition. William’s friend, Anthony Stawell, was engaged in a dispute with Thomas Cappis of Jews Farm, Wiveliscombe, which resulted in a mid-winter attack, fully armed, on the latter’s house and their driving off 21 cattle and 400 sheep. The animals were marooned at Rookscastle on the Quantock Hills and by the time they were located the sheep were dead and the cattle were in a sorry state. In 1585 John Trevelyan made a number of payments to William, including 50s. “delevered unto

him when he went to Ser Frances Drake to goe in the vyadge with him att his goinge from my house and sent unto him morr by Thomas Cavell to Plimmoth". The black sheep returned unscathed from this adventure for in 1591 John was paying for clothes so that he could serve with Sir George Sydenham. In a letter to a Taunton woollen draper he laments that William had "often before now promised to be come a new man, and to alter his trade of life (which to discourse wear too tedious unto me to declare, and to your selfe his lyfe is well knowen)".<sup>23</sup>

Of John's children, the second son George went to Ireland to serve with his uncle Sir Arthur Chichester in 1604. As was the case with most younger sons, his letters are mainly concerned with pleas for financial and other aid. From Belfast he requests "a coppel of felte hattes, not broode brembde, to pare of ousterd stockinges, a pare of garters, and any thinge elles that you shall thinke fytting and neadful for the contry and colde cleamency of his barberowes lande", adding to this list in a post-script "one summer shute compleate . . . for wee dare not by ett heare for feareof the plage, which is now entred into Dybling [Dublin]". With his uncle's promotion to Lord Deputy Governor his clothing requirements became more elaborate. From a cousin in London he requested "one sord and dager well hacte with sylver, with a payre of playne lether hangers, the girdell and strap narrowe and long, with the bockelles well hacte, two boltes of Holand, the one fyner then the other, 3 or 4 elles of fyne cambricke, to pare of sylk stockinges of the beest, with a pare of garters answarabell, one feere cloke of some 5*l*. prise, two blake felte hates with bandes as you thinke fyt, halfe a grose of sylke poyntes, and syx pare of playne gloves". The patronage of his uncle resulted in his return as first M.P. for Belfast, a knighthood, and marriage with a worthy widow of Ulster. He enjoyed these advances for only a short time, for he died in 1620. His influential uncle stated that "he died a good Christian and in perfect memory to his last gasp, for which God be praised! which (and his lady's being with child) is all the comfort he hath left behind him".<sup>24</sup>

The third son, Christopher, born in 1583, was sent to Exeter College, Oxford, whence he sent back graphic accounts of his student life, promising that "I will intermitte no paines or diligence through which I may increase my lerning and knowledge . . . that length I may be a comfort to my parentes, and a joy and healpe to my frendes and kindred". Very soon after Christopher arrived at Oxford in 1605 his father asked him to accept the Rectory of Mawgan in Cornwall, a Trevelyan living. However, the dutiful son asked whether he might stay at the University for some five years to fit himself for this calling, "the daunger of which is as yet unknowen unto me", a request that appears to have been granted, for in 1610 we find him writing to describe the preparations for laying the foundation stone of the new Wadham College.<sup>25</sup>

John Trevelyan the father died on 7 March 1622, referring in his will to the fact "that it hath pleased God to take to his mercye before me John Trevelian my Eldest Sonne", who had died less than two months before him. The house on which he had spent so much was to be "carefullie repaired, susteyned and upheld" until his 9-year-old grandson, George Trevelyan, reached the age of 26. Until that time the latter's uncle, Amyas Trevelyan, was to live at Nettlecombe and maintain it with the assistance of two other trustees. Apart from letters to Sir Arthur Chichester soliciting patronage for young George, we have no details of Amyas's trusteeship at Nettlecombe. However, before John Trevelyan had been in his grave eight months his daughter Joanna, wife of Robert Pollard of Kilve, had been forced to sue brother

Amyas for trust monies delivered to him for her benefit. Sir Arthur Chichester had no patience with Amyas, and whereas his earlier correspondence had been addressed to "my good nephew", by November 1623 he was commencing his letters with a curt "Sir".<sup>26</sup>

How the Nettlecombe estate fared under Amyas's management we do not know, but it must have been a happy day for the Trevelyans when young George came of age in 1639. He married Margaret, daughter of Sir Robert Strode of Parnham in Dorset, whose arms and initials appear on the overmantel in the small dining room at Nettlecombe (Plate VII), and the arms of her parents in the bedroom above. The couple may have lived at Parnham until George reached his majority, as the latter's great-uncle, Edward Chichester, was writing to him there in 1634, and their eldest son was probably born there.<sup>27</sup> But George and Margaret's quiet life in the Somerset countryside was rudely shattered by the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642. From 1638 George had been Captain of a troop of horse in Sir Charles Berkeley's Somerset regiment, and when hostilities commenced he was actively engaged in supporting the royalist cause in the west country. In August 1642 he was given an independent troop and in March of the following year was promoted to Colonel and authorized to raise a regiment of twelve hundred men for the defence of the county.<sup>28</sup> By June he had levied a considerable part of his quota, and Sir Ralph Hopton sent him a lieutenant, "a man that understands horse well, and hath comanded before in good service". Charles Steyning of Holnicote contributed a man and his mount. However, the man was not "soe well accommodated with military necessaries as 'tis fitt hee should bee", and the horse was even less suitable, having been poorly ridden and, "by meanes of his mettle and defect of discipline, will ride verry hott amongst a troope, and soe not please soe well as a cooler horse".<sup>29</sup> One can only hope that the remainder of George's regiment was better equipped.

Margaret Trevelyan was sent to Wales in May 1643 to raise money for the King from the family's estates in Glamorganshire, having received a pass for the journey from George's uncle, Thomas Luttrell of Dunster.<sup>30</sup> We have no details of George's part in the struggles that followed, but he was probably employed under Hopton. Of the events that followed the victory of Parliament and the beginning of George Trevelyan's personal nightmare, we are only too well informed.

At the conclusion of the war a committee was established to enquire into the activities of individual royalists and to fine them in accordance with the wealth they possessed, or, as it was then expressed, allow them to compound for their delinquency. In a petition of January 1645/6 George begged to compound, stating that he had lain down his arms before any actual service, his estate was small, his children many and his debts great. The following August he was fined £1,560, of which £400 was to be paid immediately, £400 in three months, and £760 three months after Cornwall had been subdued and the Trevelyan estates there became accessible. Despite a protection order on George's estates, Nettlecombe was plundered by soldiers of Colonel Popham's regiment, who took away various goods and drove off twelve plough oxen, two fat oxen, 100 sheep, and two horses, which were never recovered. Fortunately they did not find the family plate which, according to a family tradition, Margaret Trevelyan had concealed under the floor of a chamber over the breakfast room. It was not recovered until early in the eighteenth century when a maid dropped her thimble between the floorboards and they were taken up. A list made in 1730 shows that the silver thus revealed comprised two large salts, eight spoons, seven bowls and

a cup. Regrettably all these pieces were sold by the 3rd baronet shortly afterwards. Another earlier assault had been made on the house in 1643 by Robert Gay, then Rector of Nettlecombe and a staunch parliamentarian, with a mob of similar sympathies. They fired the outhouses and made unsuccessful attempts to destroy Nettlecombe Court itself. As a result Gay was imprisoned but subsequently released, continuing as Rector until his death in December 1671.<sup>31</sup>

These depredations no doubt reduced both the value and produce of the estate, and as George was in debt to the sum of £500 in 1646 it became obvious that he was unable to pay the full assessment. It had been Margaret Trevelyan who had presented her husband's first petition, and it was Margaret again who travelled to London to plead for the family and their property. According to family tradition her coach was drawn by six oxen because all their horses had been confiscated. Her journey was in vain for on 15 December 1647 George's estate was ordered to be confiscated for the non-payment of a second fine of £1,000. Only nine days later, while on her return to Somerset, Margaret Trevelyan died of smallpox and was buried at Hounslow in Middlesex, leaving her husband landless and with eleven small children. His lands were discharged in March 1647/8 but sequestered again the following year. He was not finally discharged until June 1649 when he made a last payment of £230. Even after this he was complaining in July 1651 that the Cornish committee had ordered his tenants not to pay their rents on the pretence that he had not yet compounded, and disputes over individual debts continued into 1652.<sup>32</sup> George Trevelyan did not live long to enjoy the possessions he had ransomed with such difficulty, for he was buried at Nettlecombe on 3 November 1653, aged only 39.

After the Restoration his eldest son, George Trevelyan, was created a baronet on 24 January 1661/2, as a reward for his father's services and sacrifices during the Civil War. Sir George's marriage with Mary, daughter and heiress of John Willoughby of Ley Hill near Honiton in Devon, restored the family fortunes, for the Willoughbys owned considerable Devon property including the manor of Seaton. We have a number of letters written by Sir George to his father-in-law, which reveal him as an industrious and sober country gentleman, although surprisingly puritanical for a royalist in Restoration England. His attitude to the excesses of his times is shown in a letter of 12 April 1664, describing an evening he spent at Combe Sydenham (about 1½ miles south-east of Nettlecombe) as the guest of Sir William Wyndham.

"We dranke healths soe long that at last I told them I could drink no more without prejudicing my health. Then Sir William Wyndham proposed, that if I would give John Crosse, his servant, halfe a crowne for every glasse, I should be excused. I replied that I would willingly give him 12d. a glasse and soe upon that account I gave away 3s. I was also kept prisoner in the dining roome that I could not get out. Christian Crufman was admitted into ye roome and was set on by Sir William to kisse me. I told her that she had not yet, neither should she now. Then the said Christian drank't to me and brought me a glasse of clarett to pledge her. I told her that when ye glasse had gone round and did come to my turne I would give another shilling and also I told her that I would not be made the foole of ye company. Presently ye said Sir William Wyndham answer'd that I was the veriest foole there, and withall fell upon me, gave me a stroak in my mouth which made my teeth bleed, pull'd my haire with both his hands and knock't my head against ye wainscott. I am sure I gave him noe cause at all."

Sir George did not personally reap the fruits of his profitable marriage as he died



in 1671, ten years before his wealthy father-in-law, leaving his third and only surviving son, John, aged one, to the care of his widow; he also left a superb organ above the hall screen at Nettlecombe.<sup>33</sup>

The extensive estates appear to have been well administered during Sir John's minority and, after the death of his mother, Lady Mary, in 1689 and his own coming of age, he commenced an ambitious programme of rebuilding and restoration at Nettlecombe. He not only altered and improved the house but also the outbuildings and gardens. The park was re-fenced and the brick walls of four gardens erected. Among the more elaborate works were "the altering the Green Court front with iron gates and iron palisades opposite to which is a new canall-pond, and a new cascade of five falls or breaks about 26 feet perpendicular falling in the middle of the said canall . . . new making the garden in the front with a bason for water in the middle". He erected many stables and other farm buildings but his pride and joy was "a new barn about 100 feet in length and twenty in briddth with two threshing floors wherein 8 labourers might very well work at one and the same time".<sup>34</sup>

Having been educated at Wadham College, Oxford, as had been his father before him, Sir John (Plate I) was elected M.P. for Somerset, sitting during the years 1695-1698 and 1700-1701, and served as High Sheriff of the county in the year 1704-1705. In 1708 he was returned as member for Minehead, a seat controlled by the Luttrells of Dunster. In 1715 he stood again with Sir William Wyndham, grandson of the Sir William who had assaulted his father. Although both were elected, the unsuccessful candidates petitioned Parliament, complaining that the Minehead constables had declared that Wyndham and Trevelyan should be returned if they had only five votes apiece, and that there had been open bribery. The Commons declared the whole election void, but at a subsequent contest in 1717 Sir John was returned. On that occasion Thomas Gage, one of the defeated candidates, alleged in a further petition that the constables had "admitted what votes they pleas'd" for Sir John, and that of the latter's 185 votes, 82 had been secured by bribes. However, the petition was rejected and Sir John continued as member until 1722.<sup>35</sup>

Sir John enjoyed his baronety and estates for 84 years, longer than any other member of his family before or since. But his declining years were troubled by severe gout and by the conduct of his eldest son George. In 1733 the latter had married Julia, daughter and heir of Sir Walter Calverley, and ultimate heir of Sir William Blackett of Wallington in Northumberland, and had received £12,000 as her marriage portion. In 1743 Sir Walter Calverley was worried about his daughter's straightened circumstances, and Sir John confessed that George's "being so much in want of mony now must be owing to his vanity and folly and his being above advice at his first letting out or gaming. The latter I dont know tho I very much fear it." George became very cold towards his wife and would not listen to his father in matters of estate management. By 1748 he appears to have deserted Julia and their children, and Calverley was concerned because he had heard nothing from his daughter for six weeks and had been forced to send her £20 to pay her servants. He suggested that Sir John and he should make further provision for Julia and their grandchildren, but Trevelyan was loathe to part with any more of his resources. He had already settled half his estate on George, made over £120 a year to the grandchildren, and was about to send the eldest, Jack, to Eton. He thought that "it would be extreme hard that I should be made uneasy and want in my old age, which I am determin'd not to do if I can help it". Eventually an agreement

was reached and Julia Trevelyan was allowed about £700 a year for herself and her children. We have a charming letter from her to Sir John, written from Bath in 1752, asking that young Jack might be inoculated, "as being far less dangerous than having the small-pox in the natural way".<sup>36</sup>

Towards the end Sir John was in considerable pain. In April 1753 he wrote that "I have been confin'd to my Chamber for above a month last past and stil am with the gout in both my feet and some times in one hand. I am drawn in my chair from my bed to the fire, and at night from the fire to my bed side, where with the help of a strong man and some difficulty I get into bed." He fulminates against his son who has £1,200 a year and forces his father to support his wife and children. "If he has by his vanity, folly, vice and axtravagance [*sic*] brought himself into bad circumstances, am I to suffer for it, that have denyed my self ten thousand things for the good of the family and estate." In just over two years, on 25 September 1755, he died.<sup>37</sup>

On succeeding his father, Sir George Trevelyan immediately set about milking the estate for all the money he could raise, despite restrictions in his father's will. In 1757 John St. Albyn of Alfoxton, an old friend of Sir John's wrote that Sir George had granted leases of the Nettlecombe property on poor terms to the value of nearly £1,000, which he had no right to lease in the first place. He thought that "a man ought not to be trusted with any power whatsoever" who would "cut down such whole avenues of young maiden trees, and such numbers of other stately, maiden, ornamental, as well as sheltring trees round the poor old mournful mansion house at Nettlecombe", and who had sold "a whole service of family plate, in which he had no property whatsoever, only the bare use of it for his life, and leave his son nothing but a very uncertain chance of recovering satisfaction out of his assetts". Fortunately for the future of the family, that same year young Jack Trevelyan married Louisa Marianne, daughter of Peter Simond, a wealthy London merchant, with whom he received a very welcome £20,000, and eleven years later succeeded his dissipated father in both title and estates.<sup>38</sup>

Sir John had been born on 6 February 1734/5 at Esholt in Yorkshire, the seat of his maternal grandfather, Sir Walter Calverley, and before he was one year old had been taken to Nettlecombe to be raised by his other grandfather, the old Sir John. Educated at New College, Oxford, he lived in Berkshire after his marriage until his father's death. He was always very dear to his uncle, a second Sir Walter Calverley, who had changed his name to Blackett on inheriting estates in Northumberland and Durham. The two of them went abroad together in 1770, and when Sir Walter died childless in 1777 he left all his property to his nephew. With the property went considerable debts and, in order to keep these northern estates intact, Sir John sold his Devonshire and part of his Cornish lands. From this time the Trevelyan baronets often seated themselves at Wallington in Northumberland as well as at Nettlecombe. Sir John also "succeeded" to his uncle's seat in Parliament, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which he held from 1777 to 1780. Thereafter he represented Somerset from 1780 until 1796, boasting that his electoral expenses, in contrast to those of his grandfather at Minehead, amounted to no more than 28 guineas—"10 guineas to the under Sheriff, 5 guineas to the County Clerk, 5 guineas to the Bell-ringers, 5 guineas to the people who chaired me, and 3 guineas to the Porter of the County Court." Between 1787 and 1788 he had the rooms on the south-west side of Nettlecombe Court restored and redecorated in the Adam style. It is there that his portrait by Romney hands, depicting a man of considerable girth, who because of his size was nightly

winned up to the screen gallery in the hall to prepare for bed. When he inherited the Somerset estate it was almost entirely leased on lives, even the lands immediately adjoining the park and particularly at Stogumber. These leases he refused to renew and the whole property eventually reverted to him. By exchange with Lord Egremont and by judicious purchases he improved the lands considerably, uniting properties formerly isolated, so that he could travel nine miles from Yard to Treborough without leaving his own land. He launched an extensive reafforestation scheme to replace the trees felled by his father, and employed a clergyman, the Rev. John Johnson to examine and arrange his family's archives. A man more unlike his father it would be hard to imagine. He died aged 93 on 18 April 1828 in Great Pulteney Street, Bath, having outlived his wife by over half a century.<sup>39</sup>

His eldest son, another Sir John Trevelyan, was already 67 when he succeeded his father. He had been educated at Winchester, and in 1792 married Maria, daughter of Sir Thomas Spencer Wilson of Eastbourne in Sussex. Two years earlier her sister Jane had married Spencer Perceval, fourth son of the Earl of Egmont, who became Prime Minister in 1809 on the death of the Duke of Portland. In that year and in 1810, prompted by an antiquarian friend, Thomas Leman of Bath, John made efforts to secure a peerage for his father from his influential brother-in-law. Leman urged Trevelyan to visit London and solicit the favour personally, suggesting that he offer at his own expense to return two members of Parliament pledged to support the Government. These efforts were evidently unsuccessful, but negotiations may have been abruptly concluded by the assassin's bullet which struck down Perceval in the lobby of the House of Commons on 11 May 1812. Sir John Trevelyan spent much of his life at Wallington, not from choice but because his wife preferred that house to Nettlecombe. Alterations were made to rooms on the north-east side of the mansion to tempt Lady Trevelyan back to Somerset, but she could not be persuaded to forsake Northumberland. Sir John died on 23 May 1846.<sup>40</sup>

His eldest son, Sir Walter Calverley Trevelyan, was educated at Harrow and Oxford, and was one of the more learned members of his family. An ardent geologist and botanist, he studied at Edinburgh and in 1821 visited the Faroe Islands, publishing accounts of his observations there. He spent the years 1835 to 1846 travelling in Southern Europe, but returned to England on his father's death. The 15 scientific papers he wrote relate principally to the geology of the North of England, as he lived for most of his life at Wallington. He and his cousin, Sir Charles Edward Trevelyan, worked for many years to produce three volumes of their family's papers, published by the Camden Society, on which much of this article is based. The estates "were greatly improved during his tenure, for he was a generous landlord and a public-spirited agriculturalist, much noted for his herd of short-horned cattle". He was married twice but died without issue at Wallington in 1879, his second wife surviving him for only ten days.<sup>41</sup> Sir Walter had been a strict teetotaler all his life, serving as President of the United Temperance Alliance, and built the Temperance Hall at Roadwater. In consequence he left his fine wine cellar at Wallington to Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, M.D., "to be applied to scientific purposes".<sup>42</sup> The title passed to Alfred Wilson Trevelyan, the posthumous son of Sir Walter's youngest brother, but the Northumberland estates were left to his cousin, Sir Charles Edward Trevelyan, whose family still resides at Wallington. The famous historian, George Macaulay Trevelyan, was Sir Charles's grandson.

With Sir Alfred's succession, the Trevelyan family again returned to Nettlecombe.

Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, the 67-year-old baronet had lived in Ireland for most of his life. He enjoyed his inheritance for only twelve years, dying at his London home in Harley Street on 18 April 1891. The *Somerset County Gazette* stated that "in a few years [he] had established a wide reputation for benevolence and well-directed charity". As he left no male heir, the title and estates passed to a distant cousin, Willoughby John Trevelyan.

Sir Willoughby was a great-great-grandson of Sir John Trevelyan (1735–1828), his father having settled at St. Perranuthnoc in Cornwall. He was born at Goldsithney in that parish in 1866, educated at Exeter College, Oxford, and was High Sheriff of Cornwall in 1906. An enthusiastic huntsman, he was responsible for establishing the Nettlecombe Harriers in 1895 and was a staunch supporter of the West Somerset Foxhounds. It is his coat of arms with those of his wife which appear over the porch at Nettlecombe. He died on 23 December 1931 and was borne to his grave on a farm wagon. The baronetcy went to his only son, Sir Willoughby John Trevelyan, who now lives near Salisbury, but the Nettlecombe estates were left to his only surviving daughter, Joan Alys Trevelyan, who married the portrait painter, Garnet Ruskin Wolseley. Mr. Wolseley was the great-great-grandson of Sir Richard Wolseley, 1st baronet of Mount Wolseley, co. Carlow, Ireland, who was in turn the grandson of Sir Charles Wolseley, 2nd baronet of Wolseley in Staffordshire. The senior branch of this family have resided at Wolseley since the eleventh century.

The present owner, John Walter Wolseley, an artist like his father, lives on the estate and has converted part of the former stable block into a studio. From 1945 until 1965, Nettlecombe Court was occupied by two successive schools; since then it has been leased to the Field Studies Council and is now known as the Leonard Wills Field Centre.

#### SOURCES

The history of Nettlecombe has been described by the Rev. John Collinson in his *History of Somerset*, 1791, iii, 535–42; in the *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 54, i, 77–85; and in *Country Life*, 1 February 1908. While all these accounts have been utilized, the present study is based primarily on manuscripts deposited at the Somerset Record Office by Mr. G. R. Wolseley (ref. DD/WO, cited as Trev. MSS.). Selections from these records appeared in *The Trevelyan Papers* by Sir W. C. Trevelyan and Sir C. E. Trevelyan, published by the Camden Society (cited as *Trev. Papers*).

## NOTES

- 1 *Collinson*, iii, 535.
- 2 *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, iii, 44.
- 3 *Victoria County History of Somerset*, i, 438.
- 4 *Ibid.*, ii, 180.
- 5 *Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxvi, 221.
- 6 *Trev. MSS.*
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*; *Collinson*, iii, 536–537.
- 9 *Collinson*, iii, 537–538; *Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1318–1323, 627; 1327–1330, 20; 1346–1349, 232; *Calendar of Fine Rolls*, iii, 85, 87, 100, 158, 170.
- 10 *Trev. MSS.*; *Collinson*, iii, 538; *Somerset Chantries*, Somerset Record Society, vol. 2, pp. xxi, 48.
- 11 *Trev. Papers*, i, 184.
- 12 *Ibid.*, ii, v.
- 13 *Ibid.*, i, 27–52, 60–67, 75, 89–97.
- 14 *Ibid.*, i, 90–94, 100–119, 121.
- 15 *Ibid.*, i, 120.
- 16 *Ibid.*, i, 124; *Somerset Medieval Wills*, Somerset Record Society, vol. 19, p. 197.
- 17 *Trev. Papers*, i, 124–128.
- 18 *Ibid.*, ii 55–57.
- 19 *Trev. MSS.*; *Trev. Papers*, i, 180–181.
- 20 *Trev. MSS.*
- 21 *Trev. Papers*, iii, 42.
- 22 *Ibid.*, ii, 59–73.
- 23 *Trev. MSS.*; *Trev. Papers*, i, 128–136, iii, pp. xviii, 24–25.
- 24 *Trev. Papers*, iii, 59–60, 76, 159.
- 25 *Trev. Papers*, iii, 79, 85, 113.
- 26 *Trev. MSS.*; *Trev. Papers*, iii, 167–169.
- 27 *Trev. Papers*, iii, 188.
- 28 *Ibid.*, ii, 118–121, iii, 313.
- 29 *Ibid.*, iii, 238–239.
- 30 *Ibid.*, iii, 234–235.
- 31 *Ibid.*, iii, 314–315, 333.
- 32 *Ibid.*, iii, pp. xxxiv, xlv, 316–329; *Calendar of Committee for Advance of Money*, ii, 723; *Calendar of the Committee for Compounding*, ii, 1077–1078.
- 33 *Trev. MSS.*
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Victoria County History of Somerset*, ii, 235–236; *History of Minehead*, F. Hancock, 1903, 336–337.
- 36 *Trev. MSS.*
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 *Ibid.*; *Proc. Som. Arch. & Nat. Hist. Soc.*, 54, i, 85.
- 40 *Trev. MSS.*; *Proc. Som. Arch. & Nat. Hist. Soc.*, 54, i, 83.
- 41 *Dictionary of National Biography*, lxii, 210.
- 42 *West Somerset Free Press*, 5 Dec. 1896.



PLATE I.

Sir John Trevelyan (1670-1755), in the possession of John Wolseley, Esquire.

*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*

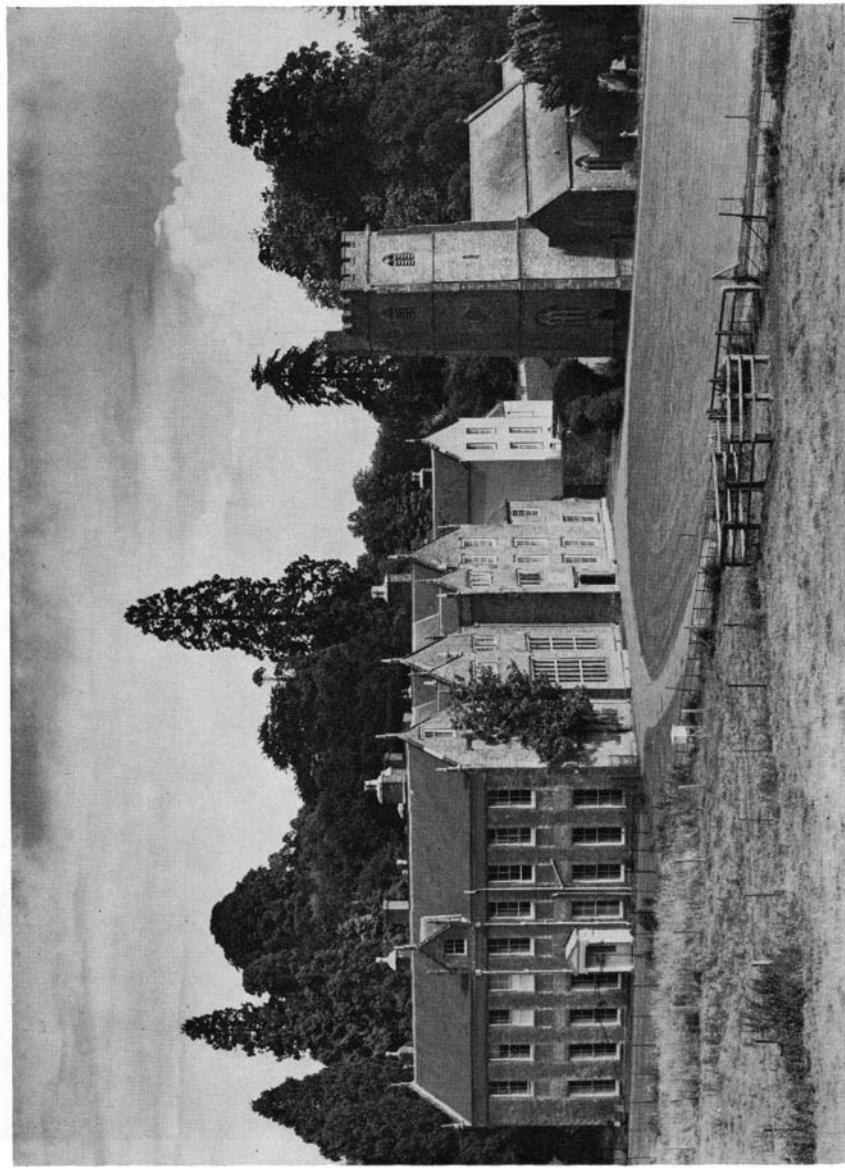


PLATE II.

Nettlecombe Court and Parish Church, from the South.

*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*

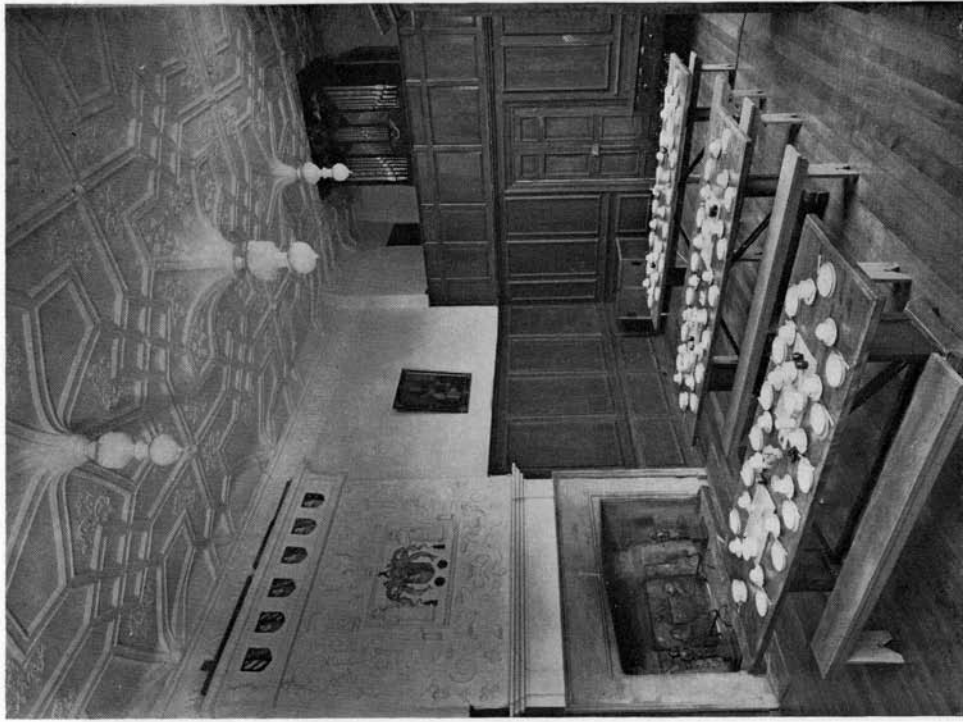


PLATE III.

Nettlecombe Court: the Great Hall.  
*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*



PLATE IV.

Nettlecombe Court: the fireplace (1599) in the Great Hall.  
*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*



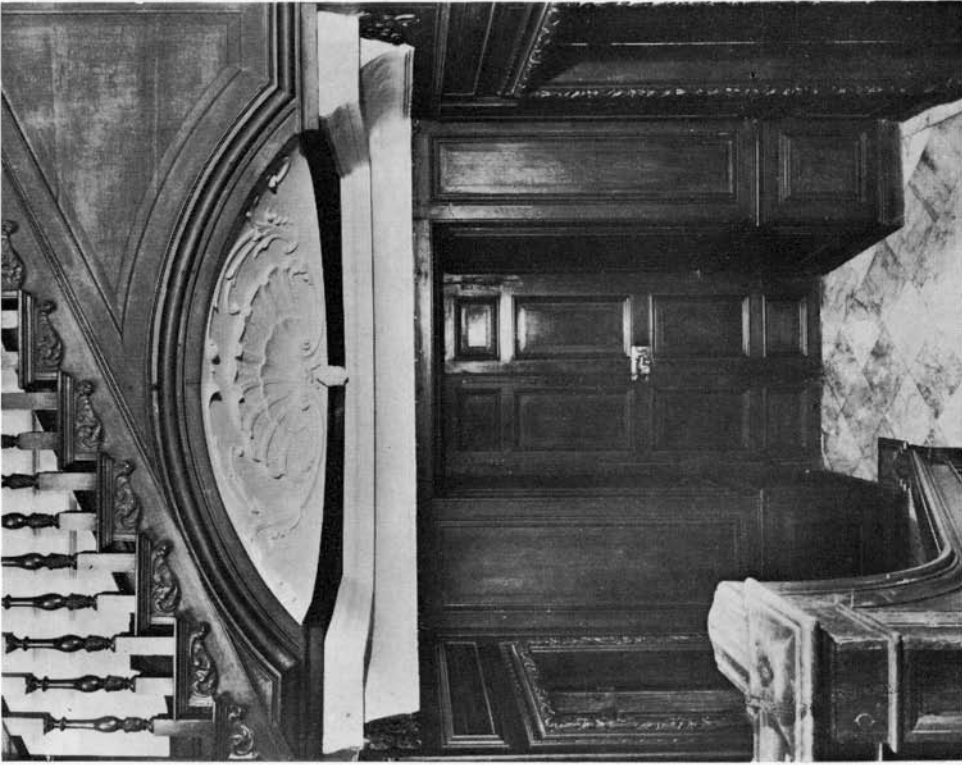


PLATE V.

Nettlecombe Court: doorway of West Staircase hall.  
*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*

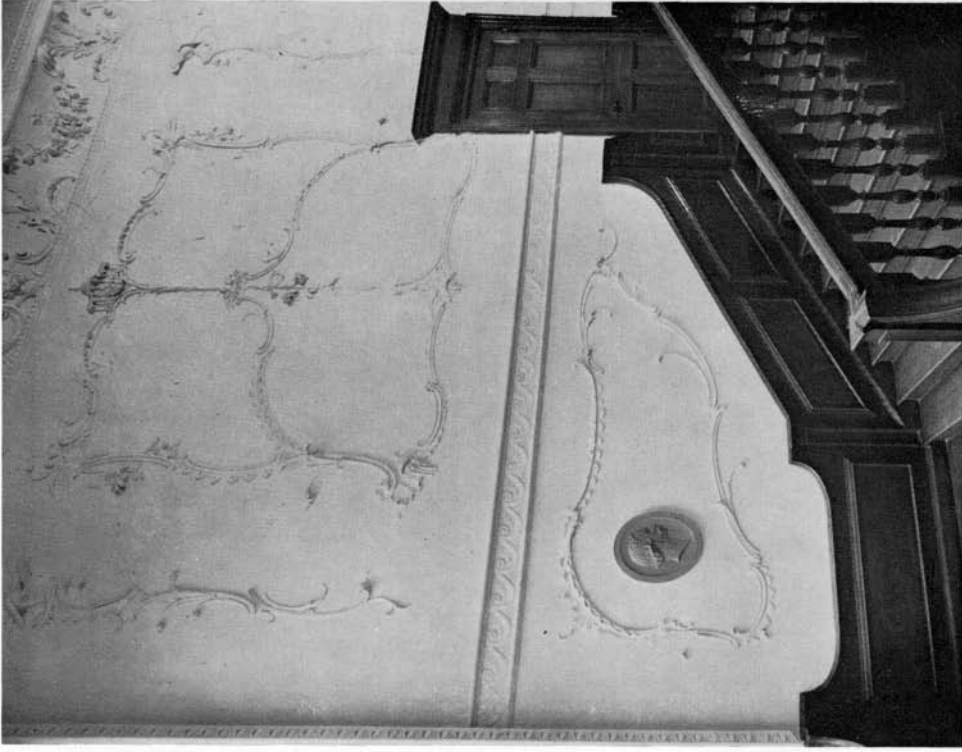


PLATE VI.

Nettlecombe Court: West Staircase.  
*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*



PLATE VII.

Nettlecombe Court: the fireplace (1641) in the Small Dining Room.

*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*



PLATE VIII.

Nettlecombe Court: Chamber, now used as a guest room.

*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*

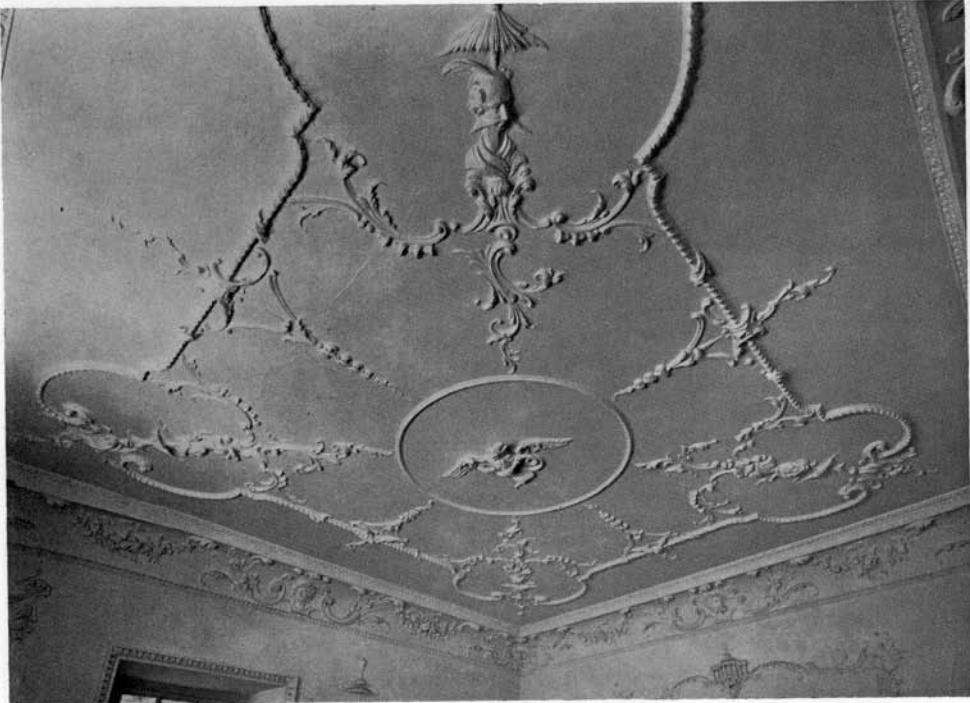


PLATE IX.

Nettlecombe Court: ceiling of West Staircase.

*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*

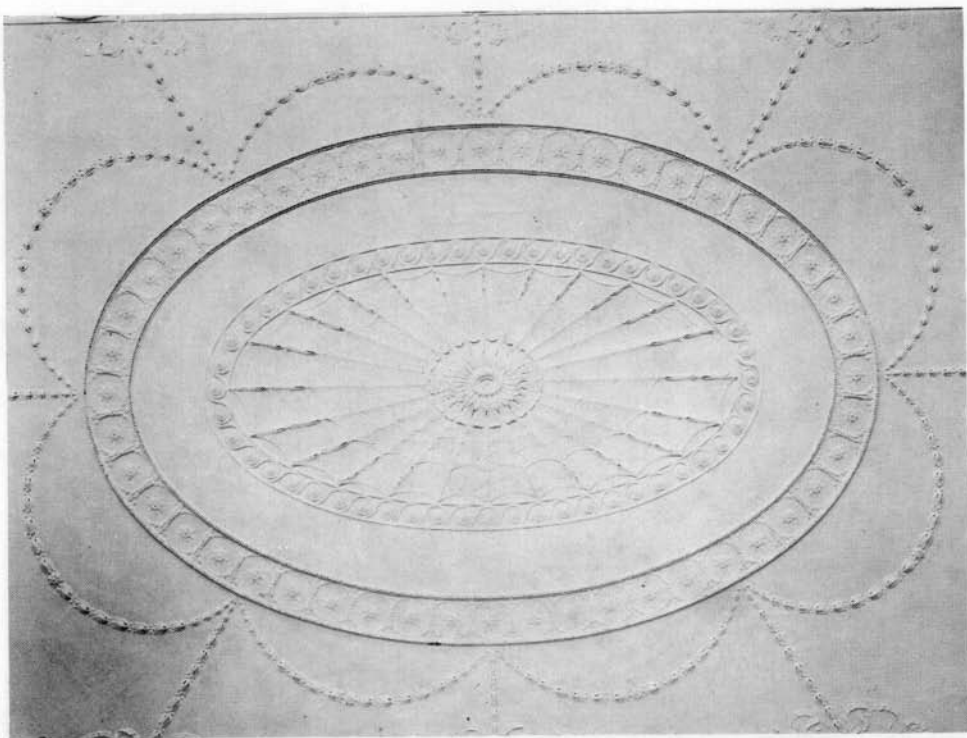


PLATE X.

Nettlecombe Court: ceiling of Drawing Room.

*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*



PLATE XI.

Nettlecombe Court: Dining Room.

*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*



PLATE XII.

Nettlecombe Court: ceiling (c. 1704) of "withdrawing room within the little parlour".

*Photo., N.M.R., Crown Copyright.*

## NETTLECOMBE COURT

### II. THE BUILDINGS

By G. U. S. CORBETT

*Investigator, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments*

THE house stands immediately north-west of Nettlecombe Parish Church and is of two and three storeys with attics (Plate II). The walls generally are of local sandstone rubble, in part rendered, with roughly squared quoins of large sandstone blocks from Capton or Vellow, and with ashlar dressings from Ham Hill; the roofs are slate-covered. Until recently the rubble stonework was rendered.

Of the three parallel north-west-south-east ranges (see Fig. 1 facing p. 294), that in the centre containing the *Kitchen* is of late medieval date, and the range standing nearly at right-angles on the north-west side of the Kitchen Court is probably of the same period; the kitchen and kitchen passage may well take the place of a former great hall, possibly that hall which John Sydenham claimed to have built during the 1530s. The large open fireplace, which appears to be of the first half of the sixteenth-century, is likely to have been built when an open-roofed hall was chambered over.

The *Great Hall, Porch* and *Oriel* were built in 1599. The south-west range also is probably of 1599 in origin, at least in its south-eastern part, but the original plan has been obliterated by later alterations. The *Small Dining Room (Staff Sitting Room)* and chambers over it were added in 1641. A note in the personal account books of Sir John Trevelyan concerning work in November 1704 on "ye little parlor, drawing room and dressing room" must refer to the rooms designated *Office* and *Study* on the plan facing p. 294, and to the chamber over the study, since an inventory of 1750 identifies these rooms with some certainty (see below); hence the richly decorated plaster ceilings in these rooms are probably of *c.* 1704. The *West Staircase* is of about the same period, but with somewhat later rococo plaster enrichment; it is said to be dated 1733 by a scratched inscription (*C.L.*, 1908, p. 169), no longer seen.

The brick-fronted *South-West Range* as we see it today is largely of late eighteenth-century date, but it undoubtedly takes the place of, and incorporates the structure of earlier buildings. A document of 1741 headed "Account of the buildings at Nettlecombe since Sir John Trevelyan came of Age" (S.R.O., DD/WO), relating to the period 1691-1741, mentions "the New building of all the Garden front with Bricks, Consisting of three rooms in the first floor 15 ft. high, the second floor 4 rooms 14 ft. high, with Garrets over, and a large Stair case". This can only be the present south-west range and west staircase, but the wording leaves little doubt that "the new building . . . with bricks" partly or entirely replaced an older range, perhaps of 1599. Between 1703 and 1707 Sir John's account books include references to work on the great parlour and "stare case", and setting up two marble chimneys in the new building, which allow us to date the reconstruction of the range more closely. Sir John's new building of 1703-1707 is two-storeyed, but the antecedent range had evidently been three-storeyed, witness the three storeys of blocked windows in the south-east front; the unusual height of the first-floor rooms is probably due to there having been three storeys originally.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the south-west range was again

remodelled. The façade of c. 1703 was simplified, the window openings receiving plain brick jambs and heads in place of stone architraves and aprons (the latter attested by fragments of stonework left in position), and the whole façade was clothed in plaster. The recent removal of this plaster has exposed the remaining traces of the original stonework. In 1787–1788, Sir John's "three rooms in the first floor" (what we now call the ground floor) were changed to two rooms and a vestibule, the *Drawing Room (Common Room)* and *Dining Room (Senior Common Room)*, with neo-classical decorations to suit a magnificent suite of Adam furniture.\* The first-floor rooms also were remodelled, with new fireplaces, cornices and woodwork, except for two or three early eighteenth-century doors and doorcases which remain.

The present *North-East Range* was built early in the nineteenth century, perhaps in place of a former stable range. The existing stables, 150 yds. north of the house, were built in 1792. Reset in the nineteenth-century range are the moulded jambs of three medieval doorways, possibly taken from the former range.

#### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The *South-East Front* (Plate II) is an approximately symmetrical composition of three storeys, with five gabled bays. At the base is a continuous chamfered plinth; the gables have roll-moulded copings and obelisk finials; the windows, some of them casements with original ovolo-moulded stone mullions and transoms, others with eighteenth-century sashes, have moulded labels with returned stops. In the central bay the hall has two original double-transomed windows extending through two storeys, and there are corresponding casement windows in the third storey. Adjacent on the south-west, the oriel bay, set forward, has similar fenestration. On the north-east the corresponding porch bay has an archway with a moulded four-centred head enclosed in a square-headed frame with a cornice which breaks forward over scrolled consoles; the inscription "1599 IT", carved in each spandrel of the arch, refers to John Trevelyan (1557–1623) and the date of erection of the hall. In a stone panel over the arch is a modern shield-of-arms of Trevelyan impaling Money, set up by the eighth baronet after his marriage in 1901 to Alice Edith Money; above are two storeys with three-light casement windows, as described. The south-west bay of the south-east front has three storeys of blocked windows, two in each storey, and a small attic window in the gable. The north-east bay has two sashed lights in each storey with labels similar to those of the casement windows already noted; a stone with the initial T is set between the two first-floor windowheads. Adjacent on the north-east is a two-storeyed wing with a single sashed window in the lower storey and with two similar windows above; relieving arches show that the ground-floor room originally had two windows. Built into the east corner of the wing is the south-west jamb and part of the arched head of a blocked doorway; the chamfered plinth appears to continue on the masonry of the blocking, implying that the former doorway is earlier than 1599; it probably gave access to the court through a screen wall, or possibly through a gate-tower.

The *South-West Front*, of brickwork with ashlar quoins and a moulded ashlar plinth,

\* The furniture was sold at Christie's in 1957 for £7,500. There is no mention of Nettlecombe or of Trevelyan in the virtually complete record of the Adams's work at Sir John Soane's Museum, and it must be presumed that the furniture was designed for another house. Bills in the Trev. MSS. show that the joinery, plasterwork etc., of the neo-classical decorations were executed under the direction of Samuel Heal.

has two storeys in the same height as is occupied on the south-east by three. The façade is symmetrical and of nine bays, with tall sashed windows in each storey. On the ground floor the central doorway has a neo-classical porch with Ionic columns and pediment probably of 1787–1788. The brick jambs and heads of the windows are evidently secondary to the original material of the façade, and of poorer quality. Fragments of stonework left in position above and below some of the windows show that the openings originally had stone architraves, possibly moulded or rusticated and with pedimented heads and panelled aprons; these features were removed, doubtless in the remodelling of 1787–1788. The traces of the former window surrounds were allowed to remain, concealed until recently by the rendering of the façade.

The *North-West Elevations*, which are rendered, are largely two-storeyed, the rising hillside causing the lower storey to be below ground level; in the yard, however, where there is a retaining wall, the lower storey is exposed. The west staircase is lit by two very tall sashed windows with original thick glazing bars and with moulded labels. In the lower storey, the small dining-room has a projecting stone window of five square-headed lights with recessed and hollow-chamfered surrounds; the rooms above have sashed windows with no projection. The doorway to the central staircase hall is modern. The gabled north-west wall of the middle range has a modern three-light casement window in each upper storey; the wall is rendered and has no special features, but the thickness of the window embrasures show it to be ancient. Further north-east, the upper storeys of the pantry wing have four bays of plain sashed windows, probably of the eighteenth century.

The gabled north wall of the *North-East Range* has no openings. Reset against it to form a summerhouse is a stone doorway, perhaps of the late fifteenth century, with a moulded four-centred head, continuous jambs and moulded stops. The north-east and south-east elevations of the range have nineteenth-century sashed and casement windows irregularly arranged in three storeys.

In the *Kitchen Court* the south-west elevation of the north-east range has three doorways and a passage through to the backyard. The doorways have plain square-headed lintels and moulded jambs with run-out stops. In two of the doorways the jambs have wave-mouldings such as are often associated with fourteenth-century buildings; the mouldings extend upwards to flank the lintels and terminate at square corbels which support rubble relieving arches; the lunettes so formed contain large plaster shells. These features are clearly visible in the doorway of the workshop, but the other two doorways are partly hidden by the nineteenth-century back staircase. Another plaster shell set in the north wall of the study (at the south corner of the court) suggests that there was once a connecting doorway, perhaps closed up when the present game larder (not shown on plan) was erected. The doorways are probably of the nineteenth century, but the moulded jambs are presumably reset medieval material. In the lower storey the south-east elevation of the pantry wing has three windows, each of two square-headed lights with stout timber surrounds, mullions and transoms, lightly moulded on the arrisses, and with iron-framed casements with leaded glazing; these are probably of the early eighteenth century. The upper storey is masked by a nineteenth-century corridor supported on iron pillars. The north-east elevation of the kitchen range has a round-headed stone doorway with continuous double-ogee mouldings ending on rectangular plinths. The mouldings may be reused medieval material, but the doorway in its



present form appears to be of the seventeenth century. The adjacent kitchen window has nineteenth-century hollow-chamfered timber mullions imitating stonework.

Inside the house, the doorway between the porch and the screens-passage has a roll-moulded elliptical head and continuous jambs with shaped stops. Reset on the south-west wall of the porch is a carved stone achievement-of-arms of Willoughby quartering nineteen other coats.\* The screens-passage has late eighteenth-century decoration, including doors with fielded panels in doorways with low four-centred heads; the latter, frequent in the central part of the house, are an eighteenth-century allusion to the Tudor origin of the hall.

In the *Great Hall* (Plate III) the walls are lined with painted bolection-moulded panelling in two heights, probably of the early eighteenth century. A large seventeenth-century painting attributed to Hondecuter, incorporated with the panelling of the south-west wall, has an enriched frame similar to those of the doorways in the west staircase, suggesting that the panelling of the hall and the construction of the staircase were more or less contemporary. The hall fireplace, of 1599, has a stone surround with a lightly moulded four-centred head and continuous jambs. The overmantel has plaster strapwork peopled with animals and huntsmen surrounding an achievement of the arms of Trevelyan, impaling Chichester, Kempthorne and Blewett; above are shields-of-arms of Whalesburgh impaling Raleigh, and of Trevelyan impaling Whalesburgh, Halywell, Cockworthy, Hill and Harris. The hall ceiling is original (but skilfully restored in 1967), with interlacing ribs with foliate enrichment and with three pendant bosses. At the wall-head the ceiling is coved above a moulded cornice and a frieze with foliate scrollwork, all of 1599. The plasterwork of the cornice and frieze continues in the gallery over the screens-passage, where the hall is narrower, showing that the restriction is an original feature. The solid masonry screen-wall with its central doorway thus appears also to be original and not, as might be supposed, an eighteenth-century substitute for Elizabethan timber screens.

The gallery over the screens-passage has a light wooden parapet of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The organ in the gallery, with highly enriched pipework, was built in 1666 for £100 by John Loosemore,† the builder of the organ in Exeter Cathedral; it was repaired and enlarged in the nineteenth century and remains in working order. Opening off the gallery, the first-floor chamber of the porch was fitted as a muniment room, with a stone floor and a heavy cast-iron door, probably of the early nineteenth century.

On the second floor, above the hall, the former hall chamber has been divided into several rooms, the division evidently dating from before 1749. The "outer chamber over the great hall" mentioned in the inventory of that year is probably the passage; the "middle hall chamber", "the long room" and the "two-bed chamber" are recognizable in the three rooms over the body of the hall. The long room, partitioned in 1967 to make a passage to the room beyond, contains a fireplace, with a plain

\* Sir George Trevelyan (d. 1671) married Mary, daughter and heir of John Willoughby of Leahill, Devon.

† "February the 1th 1665 [1666 N.S.]. Then made a bargaine with Sir George Trevelyan for an Organ with these stops in it as follows

—one diapason, one flute, one Recorder: these in wood  
—one principall, one flagelett, one Trumpet: these in mettell  
—one shaking stop

And for this organ I am to have one hundred pounds, 20 $\text{£}$  whereof at the 25th day of March next and fourscore residue thereof when the work is finished. John Loosemore." (S.R.O., DD/WO).

See also A. A. Wilson (1968). *The English Chamber Organ 1650-1850*. London: Cassirer (Faber and Faber).

stone surround, opening into the chimneystack of the hall fireplace; no doubt it served to heat the large hall chamber before the partitions were introduced.

Attached to the hall, on the north-west, is a small three-storeyed wing with one room on each floor. The overmantel (Plate VII) in the ground-floor room (*Staff Sitting Room*) is dated 1641 and the wing probably is of that date. Flanking it are two staircases, that on the west of 1703–1707, the other of 1880, but it is almost certain that staircases occupied both positions in 1599, when the hall was built. The wing of 1641 may therefore be seen as the filling-in of a space between two stair towers, both now gone. On the ground floor, the wing is entered from the central staircase through a stone doorway with an ogee-moulded and hollow-chamfered four-centred head, continuous jambs and chamfered stops; it is probably of 1599, reset. The *Small Dining-Room* (*Staff Sitting Room*) to which the doorway gives access has a stone fireplace surround with a moulded four-centred head surmounted by a plaster strapwork panel with a shield-of-arms of Trevelyan impaling Strode, dated 1641, and with M S for Margaret Strode (d. 1646), first wife of George Trevelyan (1613-1653). The ceiling, with intersecting beams forming four panels, is enriched with plaster mouldings; at the wall-head the beams rest on plaster brackets with heavy acanthus enrichment; between the brackets the wall has a plaster entablature with a strapwork frieze. The chamber (*Guest Room*) over the small dining-room has an enriched plaster chimneypiece and ceiling contemporary with those of the room below (Plate VIII). The chimneypiece has a panel of strapwork enclosing a shield-of-arms of Strode impaling Wyndham, for Sir Robert Strode of Parnham, Dorset, father of Margaret Strode mentioned above. The ceiling has a large oval panel with the Trevelyan coat surrounded by a leafy wreath, and corner spandrels with arabesques with heraldic finials. The walls of the chamber are lined with reset seventeenth-century oak panelling, except on the north-west where the two sashed windows are surrounded with eighteenth-century fielded panelling in two heights. The second-floor room and the attic of the 1641 wing contain no notable features.

The early eighteenth-century *West Staircase* is of oak, with marquetry enrichment in boxwood and walnut. The cut strings have richly carved scrollwork on the step-spandrels. The newel posts are square, with panelled sides, and each step has two turned balusters with acanthus enrichment; the handrail is of stout cross-section and has moulded sides. In correspondence with the balustrades the walls of the staircase have oak dadoes with bolection-moulded panelling. The original doorways of the staircase hall have bolection-moulded architraves with foliate enrichment (Plate V), and oak doors with bolection-moulded panels; these occur on the ground floor and on the first floor of the south-west range; the doorway from the third landing to the chamber over the small dining-room is of the nineteenth century (Plate VI). Above the dadoes, the staircase walls and ceiling and the thin partition to the vestibule in the south-west range are decorated with delicate rococo plasterwork (Plate IX), said to be of 1733.

The central staircase, of pine, was made in 1880, but it evidently replaces an older staircase, probably of 1599, without which there would be no access to the upper storeys on the east of the hall.

The ground-floor rooms of the *South-West Range* were entirely remodelled by Samuel Heal, architect, in 1787–1788 and the only trace of the former three-room plan is the thick partition between the drawing-room and the vestibule. The narrow inaccessible compartment at the north-west end of the drawing-room is evidently a

device to exclude the dampness of the rising ground from the interior of the house. Heal's neo-classical decorations were probably intended as a setting for the furniture, now gone, attributed to Adam. The drawing-room has good quality joinery with *carton-pierre* enrichment, and cornices and ceiling with delicately modelled plaster-work (Plate X). The fireplace surround is of white marble inlaid with red; the iron basket grate is original. The dining-room is in the same style as the drawing-room, with Ionic columns and with a cornice with a harpy frieze (Plate XI); the fireplace surround is of white marble and pink granite; the ceiling is plain.

Adjoining the drawing-room on the north-east, and partly cut into the hillside, is a small single-storeyed room with a modern roof supported on a seventeenth-century deep-chamfered beam and a corresponding wall-plate; a few stout joists remaining between these members show that there was originally an upper storey. This seventeenth-century room attached to the north-east side of the south-west range is the only part of the range (apart from the gabled south-east wall) to retain characteristics earlier than the eighteenth century; it suggests that the whole range occupies the position of an earlier building, of seventeenth-century origin if not of 1599. The "great parlour and drawing-rooms" mentioned in the 1689 inventory were probably situated here. Apart from two early eighteenth-century doors, the first-floor rooms of the south-west range have late eighteenth-century dadoes, door-cases and cornices of no great elaboration. The roof of the range is of the eighteenth century, as also the vaulted underground cellar on the north-west.

The outside walls of the *Middle Range* are thicker than those of the hall and south-west range and therefore are likely to be earlier, although few datable features survive. The large kitchen fireplace appears to be of the mid-sixteenth century, suggesting that this may be the "nywe and conveyent halle" built by John Sydenham in the 1530s. The office at the south-east end of the range, known in the eighteenth century as the "little parlour", has a ceiling of nine panels formed by the intersection of moulded timber beams and wall-plates, perhaps of 1599, with plaster wreaths and crossed branches inserted in the panels, probably *c.* 1704. The triangular north corner panel shows that there was an old corner fireplace although the present fireplace surround is modern. The door-cases, windows and other joinery are of the late eighteenth century. The adjacent study (the "withdrawing room within the little parlour" of the 1750 inventory) has a rich plaster ceiling of *c.* 1704 (Plate XII), with a large circular panel with a cherub at the centre, surrounded by a wreath of flowers; the spandrels have entwined olive, acanthus and flower wreaths. The first two items in the inventory of 1750 are "the little parlour" and "the withdrawing room within the said little parlour"; presumably the compiler started his inventory with the rooms nearest the main entrance; the next items are the great hall, the hall gallery and the "best parlour", the latter presumably in the south-west range.

On the north-west of the office lie the kitchen passage and kitchen. The doorway between the central staircase and the kitchen passage has a plain chamfered four-centred head and opens inwards to the staircase; it probably is of 1599, as also the wall between the office and the screens-passage. Above this doorway the relatively thin south-west wall of the kitchen passage is corbelled out to the superior thickness of the other middle range walls. The partition between the passage and the kitchen is of uncertain date; the present doorway is probably of the late eighteenth century, but the large iron hinge-pins of an earlier door are seen in the south-west jamb of

a shallow recess on the south-west, showing that there must have been an earlier partition or screen, perhaps with doorways at either end. The open fireplace in the kitchen has a heavily moulded four-centred head, continuous jambs and chamfered stops; beside it are the remains of an oven. The doorway in the north corner of the kitchen, with a chamfered elliptical head and continuous jambs, suggests that the north-west wall of the kitchen is original. The room on the north-west of the kitchen has a south-west doorway to the yard in an opening with splayed reveals, probably late medieval, although the present jambs and door are modern. On the north-east of the same room is a small original stone doorway with a chamfered elliptical head and continuous jambs.

On the first floor of the middle range the chambers over the office and study (*Library* and *Staff Laboratory*) are evidently "Sir John's bed chamber" and "Sir John's dressing room" in the inventory of 1750, the next entry being "the closett over ye porch adjoining to Sir John's bed chamber". The bedchamber (*Library*) has a stone fireplace surround of 1599 with a moulded four-centred head. The dressing room (*Staff Laboratory*) is panelled in two heights with bolection-moulded pine panelling; this, and the moulded plaster ceiling with cherub-heads and foliate wreaths is of the same period as the ceiling in the study below, *c.* 1704. The other first and second-floor rooms in the middle range and in the pantry wing have unpretentious eighteenth-century woodwork and plasterwork.

Apart from the three medieval doorways described above, the *North-East Range* is wholly of the first half of the nineteenth century. It appears to be referred to in *Procs. Som. A. & N.H. Soc.*, 54 (1908), p. 83, with the words "some rooms on the east side of the house were built by the late Sir J. Trevelyan"; Sir John inherited the property in 1828 and died in 1846. Nevertheless it is probable that a range of buildings stood on the same site in medieval times, closing the kitchen court on the north-east and justifying the doorway or gateway, one jamb of which remains embedded in the east corner of the study wing. The moulded jambs of the three medieval doorways may well have been salvaged from this building when it was demolished to make way for the nineteenth-century range. A vaulted ground-floor cellar on the north-east of the range is probably to be explained as the substructure for a first-floor bathroom.

## APPENDIX

The present use of Nettlecombe Court and its buildings

(by J. H. Crothers, The Leonard Wills Field Centre, Nettlecombe Court)

In 1967 Nettlecombe Court was leased by the Field Studies Council and converted for use as a Field Centre. The Council encourages the pursuit of field work and research in every branch of knowledge whose subject matter is essentially out of doors. Nettlecombe Court was the ninth Field Study Centre to be established by the Council and, like its predecessors, it aims to provide accommodation, working facilities and expert guidance to all who have a serious interest in the countryside. The Centre is open to visiting students between early March and early November and during that time organizes a series of one-week courses on relevant subjects. The courses are variously attended by students from school, college and university, and by adult amateur naturalists. Some 60 visitors can be accommodated at a time, which means that, with the resident staff, just over 70 people live and work in the buildings.

Considerable alterations were necessary to fit Nettlecombe Court for its new role, but care was taken to make as few alterations as possible to the exterior, whilst internally not only were rooms allocated appropriate functions but a fair amount of restoration was undertaken—especially to the

ceiling of the Great Hall. The main alterations concerned the top storey and the roof, where dry rot, woodworm and death watch beetle had all been most active. A new flat roof now spans the valley between the parallel roofs over the great hall and the 1641 additions, and extends to meet the ridge of the south-west range. This new roof is only visible from the church tower or from high up on the slope behind the house. Three large washrooms were provided on the top storey; one in the north-east Range (in place of a bathroom installed about 1938); one in the middle range; and one over the 1641 addition (again replacing an older bathroom). This naturally involved adding a few drainage pipes to the exterior of the house, but none are visible from the front. During 1967–1970 some further partitioning of top storey rooms was carried out. The main room over the Great Hall was partitioned to leave a passage through to the room beyond—required as a fire precaution—which unfortunately has resulted in the fireplace now standing in the passage. Three large rooms, two at the extremities of the north-east Range, and one over the large biology laboratory, have been divided into eight small ones for staff and visiting adults. On the first storey a partition was partially removed and another erected to provide a small laboratory over the kitchen; whilst the large biology laboratory was formed by the removal of an earlier partition. Considerable invisible changes were necessary on the first and second floor to water and electrical systems (most of which dated from 1938). No external fire escapes mar the exterior of the building but an internal one was added between the attic and the first storey in the south-west Range. Fire-resistant doors were required around the stair wells throughout the house. They are not notable for their beauty but are vital for the safety of staff and visitors.

The ground floor rooms are currently (1970) used as common rooms, dining hall, office, Warden's Den, kitchen and store rooms, drying room and workshop. The first floor houses staff accommodation, library and laboratories: the top floor is occupied by visitors' accommodation.

The name of the Field Centre commemorates the gift of £15,000 towards its establishment by Professor Leonard J. Wills of Birmingham University, and his family, in memory of his father, William Leonard Wills, Edge-Tool Manufacturer and Field Naturalist.