

# Apethorpe Hall

13 July

We were met outside Apethorpe Hall by Nick Hill, project manager, and Kathryn Morrison, senior investigator, English Heritage. The house contains some of the most important surviving Jacobean interiors in the country and we were given an extraordinary opportunity to hear about the major programme of research, repair and conservation that English Heritage has undertaken in saving the property. After years of neglect while in private ownership, the house was compulsorily purchased by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and it came into the care of English Heritage in 2004. It is now a Grade 1 listed building. To date the repairs have cost £5.9m. The property is presently for sale.

Apethorpe Hall was built around 1480 by Sir Guy Wolston, a constable of the royal castle at Fotheringhay. In the 1550s Sir Walter Mildmay, who was to become Chancellor of the Exchequer, rebuilt the south range to provide a state apartment, where Elizabeth I visited in 1566. Sir Francis Fane, who married Mildmay's granddaughter, altered the state rooms and added a long gallery in 1622-24 to provide accommodation for James I's visits. The house was a favourite of his while on royal progress in the area, when hunting in the nearby Rockingham Forest was a major attraction. The Fanes, earls of Westmorland, continued to make changes to the house during the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1904 it was bought by Leonard Brassey who made major alterations with the architect Sir

Reginald Blomfield. Lord Brassey sold the house in 1949; later it became an approved school, closing in 1982.

Among the outstanding features of the grand state rooms of the 1560s and 1620s are the fine decorative plaster ceilings, ornate fireplaces and woodwork. Particularly interesting finds include the original doorway to the King's Chamber, which has helped the team to reconstruct the circulation pattern through the state rooms. In the long gallery, 75% of the 1620s oak panelling survives. The original plan was to insert 16 full-length portraits into the panelling, of which a number have been traced. Behind the panelling is a painted scheme, perhaps showing the client how it would look. Nick and Kathryn have published the results of their research and links are given below.

*English Heritage Research News*, Number 5, Winter 2006-07, ISSN 1750-2446: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/content/publications/publicationsNew/research-news/research-news-05/researchnews5.pdf>

English Heritage, Apethorpe Long Gallery Panelling, Apethorpe Hall, Apethorpe, Northamptonshire: Recording and Analysis Report:

Number: 67/2009. Series: Research Department Reports: <http://research.english-heritage.org.uk/report/?14803>

*Liz Hancock*