

A History Trail of Bisham Abbey

and

All Saints Church, Bisham



Ann Darracott



Maidenhead Civic Society has a long standing interest in the heritage of the Maidenhead area and has supported the study of the history, in particular, of several of the listed buildings from the medieval period. This has proved useful when commenting on planning issues concerning them.

The buildings are:-

Ockwells Manor – a C15th manor house built by John Norreys (Norys), Esquire to the Body of Henry VI, which has important armorial glass in the Great Hall.

Bisham “Abbey” – originally a preceptory of the Knights Templar that was added to by William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury in the C14th when he founded a priory on the site. Subsequent owners made further alterations. The priory was demolished during the dissolution of the monasteries. Henry VIII re-established the priory as an abbey that only lasted six months but the name has stuck.

St. John the Baptist Church, Shottesbrooke – also C14th, and the finest decorated period church in Berkshire, part of a college founded by Sir William Trussell.

There are links between these buildings, with representatives of the same families (Beauchamp, Montacute, Neville and Mortimer) occurring in the armorial glass. The study of Bisham “Abbey” complements in particular the study of St. John the Baptist Church at Shottesbrooke. The Shottesbrooke Church was contemporary with Bisham Priory Church, lost in the C16th.

Bisham “Abbey” is in the ownership of Sport England and Ockwells Manor is in private hands. Both are inaccessible to the general public except on special occasions. To increase awareness of these magnificent local heritage buildings Maidenhead Civic Society has designed and produced presentations that provide virtual tours of both buildings. For further information contact the Society via the website www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk or by email to info@maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk.

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A HISTORY TRAIL OF BISHAM ABBEY

Bisham Abbey,¹ owned by Sport England and currently managed by Serco, has a fascinating history. This ancient, complex building was begun by the Knights Templar in the C13th. Their great hall was added to by William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury (d.1344), in the C14th who also founded a priory at Bisham, suppressed by Henry VIII². In the C16th Sir Philip Hoby, a diplomat, acquired the house from Anne of Cleves and he and his half-brother, Sir Thomas Hoby, married to Lady Elizabeth Hoby, built on each side of the Templars' hall. Finally, the Vansittarts, owners in the C18th & C19th, did restoration work. The trail will trace this long history by pointing out differing architecture, paintings and heraldry and the odd bit of medieval graffiti. A chronology of owners is included at the back of the trail.

The Knights Templars used mainly chalk and flint in their building. The C14th work added by the Earl of Salisbury also used chalk. These materials would have been sourced locally, probably from Bisham Quarry located downstream of the Abbey at Quarrywood. The Hoby brothers knocked down some of the stone buildings, reusing the chalk and completed their buildings with brick.

THE EXTERIOR

This floor plan taken from VCH Berks vol 3 has been coloured in to show the differing dates of the various phases of building from the C13th onwards (except for the staircase lobby which has been re-dated to the C14th).



¹ It was only an Abbey for 6 months from 18 Dec 1537 to 19 June 1538, but the name has stuck. There was a priory on the site from 1337 to July 1537, surrendered to Henry VIII, so it could be re-established as an Abbey. By 1552 the priory church had been demolished; the site of it is still unknown.

² It has been suggested that the earl's son, the 2nd earl also William, built this addition (Country Life April 19, 1941 p 345) because his father had only had Bisham for 9 years. However as the 1st earl was buried in the priory church in 1344 it is more likely he also built onto the Templars Hall to provide accommodation for his wife, Katherine Grandison, and his family (see Darracott 2014).

South Front.



Left to Right:

- (Not visible) C17th brick kitchen most likely added by Sir Edward Hoby (d.1617) who often entertained James I (succeeded 1603) at the Abbey. Edward inherited Bisham after the death of his father Thomas in 1566.
- C13th solar of Knights Templar, with domestic offices under, made of flint chequer work.
- C13th entrance porch, with C16th window and upper brickwork on porch.
- Roof of their C13th great hall on skyline.
- C16th building in front of the hall with pedimented windows, built by Sir Philip Hoby, Edward's uncle, using chalk from the C14th quadrangle which the Hoby brothers demolished. They completed the building with brick. Crow stepped gables show Dutch influence. Philip similarly treated the ruins of Evesham Abbey as a stone quarry.
- C14th end view of stone building added by William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, to east end of the Templar hall but with C16th pedimented windows added by Sir Thomas Hoby.

East Front.



- C14th chalk building with C16th windows and bay of brick added by Sir Thomas Hoby. This is the remaining side of a cloister quadrangle present in 1552 when Sir Philip Hoby had the house surveyed.
- From a distance the apex of the east end of the C13th Knights Templar's hall can just be seen (use binoculars). Note that it bears a cross symbolising that the Templars were independent of national control answering only to the Pope. This end wall of the hall was constructed with beautifully knapped flint blocks (the other end is mainly chalk).
- Behind the bush on the extreme right hand of cloister arcade can just be seen a stone coffin lid. Apparently a coffin was found when subsidence near a wall was investigated. The keys and skeleton found inside suggested it was the coffin of a past Prior.³

North Front.



Left to Right:

- C14th building - end view: Thomas Hoby inserted a ceiling in the top floor room of C14th building to create an upper storey in the roof. The upper of the two windows lights this roof space. It is of a style that suggests it was retrieved from an earlier building. The larger lower window is C16th.
- Exterior of staircase lobby made of a mix of brick, chalk and flint chequer work.
- C16th addition by Thomas Hoby again showing use of recycled stone finished with brick pedimented windows and with crow stepped gables indicating Dutch influence. He also built the brick tower, apparently fashionable at the time.
- Single storey building with flint chequer work thought to have been the Knights Templar chapel because of its E-W orientation.
- Extreme right: C16th addition then a modern one.

³ See *J. Berks Archaeol & Arch Soc* vol 16, p113. There is another story about the discovery of blotted copy books (that promptly disappeared) under floor boards in the house that gave rise to the legend that Lady Elizabeth Hoby mistreated her son, William, the poor writer, so that he died (see note from Emily Climensson in *J. Berks Archaeol & Arch Soc* vol 12 1906-7 p60-61). Dormer points out the lack of evidence, including there being no child of that name. (See his letter BRO D/EX73/4/2/16). She is said to haunt the house leading to a profitable sideline in Ghost Tours.

West Front.



- This front is a jumble of buildings: go through narrow passageway. Crowstepped gable of Hoby C16th build on skyline. From a distance it is just possible to see that the west end of the Templar hall is mainly chalk.



- C17th kitchen with an enormous chimney with slanting brickwork, possibly of Dutch influence.

THE GROUNDS

North of house:

This is a moated site. The line of shrubs marks the moat, a remnant of which can be seen connecting to the Thames.

South of house:



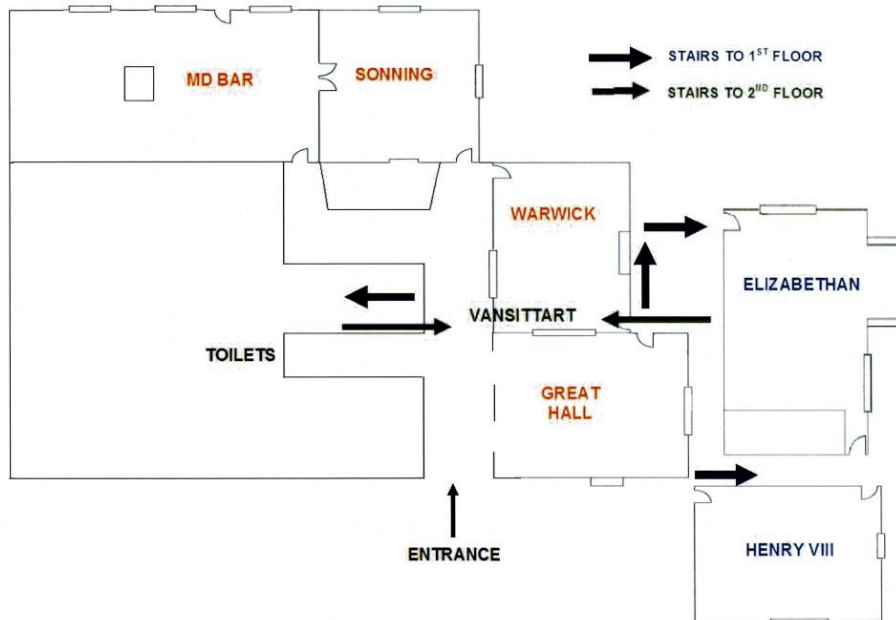
- Long building with a turret, originally a barn, then stables, now divided into private houses.



- Nearer to the river is a dovecote perhaps added by Margaret Pole, née Neville, Countess of Salisbury, beheaded on the order of Henry VIII in 1541 in the Tower. Inside is a potence - a revolving ladder to collect the eggs.

INTERIOR OF HOUSE

This floor plan gives the current names of the rooms and some of the directions the tour will take:



Entrance Porch of Knights Templar.



- C13th Outer Porch with C16th brickwork and window. Inner Vaulted Porch with Purbeck marble shafts on inner doorway. Graffiti on right hand side of doorway into house.



- Carved wooden seats in porch, one with heraldry dating on or after 1792:
- (L) East impaling Vansittart, for Augustus Henry East⁴ of Hall Place who married Caroline Vansittart in that year;
- (R) Vansittart impaling Stonhouse, for George Vansittart married to Sarah Stonhouse. He bought Bisham from the last Hoby in 1780.

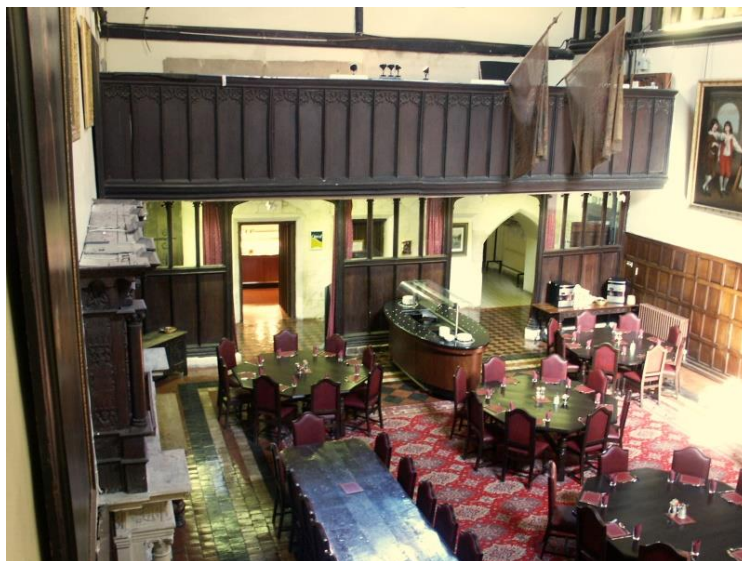


- C13th door with spectacular contemporary iron knocker into house

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⁴ In the estate accounts of 1825-26 it is noted that the Abbey was let to Augustus but he was not charged the annual rent - the sum of £1,500 having been agreed to be expended on the Abbey in lieu of rent (BRO D/EX73 /1/3/13).

Screens Passage & Minstrels Gallery.



- Date of this uncertain, as it appears there was no external access to the gallery prior to C16th when Thomas Hoby built onto the side of the Templar's hall; it seems more likely that this is a C16th addition by the Hobys to the great hall of the Templars.

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Great Hall:

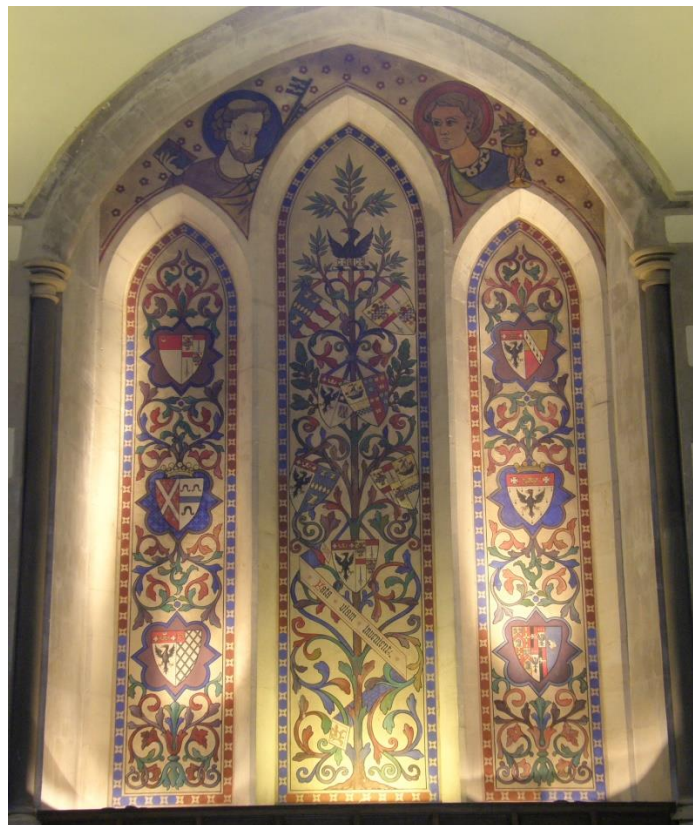


Roof

Plain braced rafter roof (restored). Blackened timbers found in C19th thought to be due to central hearth in hall with louvres in the roof to let the smoke out. Prior to restoration the hall had a ceiling and dormer windows.

Windows

East - large C13th window with contemporary fresco of St Peter & St John on splays: blocked off in the C14th when William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, added his building. Note the squint (small window to the right of the main window) which connects to C14th addition.



Blocked lancets of the east window display Vansittart **heraldry** put there by George Henry Vansittart (d.1885) (GHV) to record members of his family and those of his first wife, Catherine Steurt-Menzies (d.1874). His father General George Henry Vansittart died prematurely in 1824 when his son was only 9 months old.⁵ Most coats are impaled with the wife's coat.

Left lancet, top to bottom:

- Maria, sister of GHV's wife.
- Henry Windsor, 8th Earl of Plymouth, married to an aunt of Mrs Vansittart (the General's wife Anna Maria née Copson). They appear to have been the guardians of the two boys and lived at Bisham after the premature death of the boys' father, General George Henry Vansittart, in 1824.
- Augustus, GHV's brother - born posthumously.

Central lancet, top to bottom:

- Vansittart crest.
- Left: Maternal grandfather of GHV. Right: Wife's maternal grandfather.
- Left: George Vansittart, GHV's paternal grandfather, who bought Bisham in 1780. Right: Wife's paternal grandfather.
- Left: General George Henry Vansittart, GHV's father. Right: Wife's father.
- George Henry Vansittart GHV.

⁵ John Allen, unpub ms, 2009. The attribution of coats is from this manuscript.

Right lancet, top to bottom:

- Vice Admiral Henry Vansittart, GHV's paternal uncle.
- Nicholas Vansittart, Baron Bexley, nephew of GHV's grandfather George who bought Bisham. Born Bray, father Henry of Foxleys Manor.
- Rev Edward Vansittart Neale; another uncle, managed the Bisham estates after the death of General Vansittart, his elder brother, during the minority of his nephew GHV. He had added Neale to the family name on inheriting estates from that family also quartering their armorial coat with that of Vansittart.

North - C13th window similarly blocked by Sir Thomas Hoby in C16th.

Both C13th windows uncovered in 1859 by George Henry Vansittart whose grandfather bought the Abbey. Spandrels in east window show original paintings of St Peter & St John.

East and West - Victorian Gothic windows designed by Rev T E Powell were installed when earlier dormer windows were removed. Rev Powell was the incumbent at nearby All Saints church in 1848-1898.

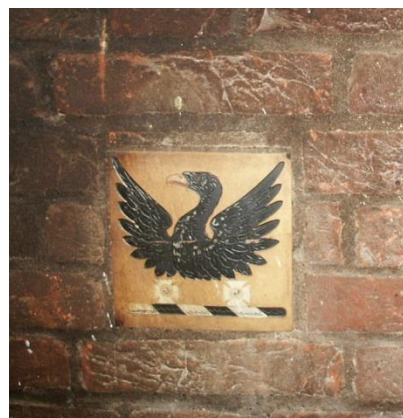
Floor

Victorian tiles. What is thought to be the original Knights Templar floor of large paving stones is several feet down.

Fireplace



Fireplace is attributed to Sir Philip Hoby. Jacobean over-mantel was given by James I to Lord Windsor for his house at Worcester ca. 1605. When the house was sold, a descendent, Henry Windsor, 8th Earl of Plymouth, presented it to Bisham where he was living at the time. The earl died at Bisham in 1843. Note Vansittart crest on tiles in fireplace (detail below) and the Windsor crest on the firedogs..



Tapestries depicting the story of *Tobias & the Angel* once adorned the walls of the Great Hall (see explanatory panel near Reception). The set was probably acquired by Sir Philip Hoby from Flanders. They were sold by Sotheby's in 1967 on behalf of the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) to Lord Gort of Bunratty Castle. Sir Philip Hoby had evidently been given a partial sample copy of one of the tapestries and this can be seen at Stonor House (his wife was Elizabeth Stonor) near Henley, part of the Bisham Collection housed there.

Paintings

North Wall



Children of George Vansittart (artist John Russell RA).



George Vansittart (d.1825) as a young man (artist: Gilbert Stuart).

George bought Bisham from the last Hoby descendent in 1780. This was probably painted at the same at the portrait of his wife Sarah and daughter Laura now in the Warwick Room as the same artist painted both.



Lady Elizabeth Hoby (d.1609), wife of Sir Thomas Hoby and later John Lord Russell (artist: attributed to Robert Peake). An erudite woman who spoke Latin and Greek that she used not only in writing epitaphs but also passing secret messages. She was a fervent Protestant and very litigious.⁶ Her monument in the Hoby Chapel of the nearby church of All Saints is thought to have been designed by her and features her effigy wearing the same outfit. She influenced the design of the impressive alabaster monument for her husband, Sir Thomas Hoby, and his half-brother Philip - also located in the chapel.

⁶ See Laoutaris for her property disputes and role in a petition to stop Shakespeare building a theatre in Blackfriars next to her house (an early example of Nimbyism) that led to the building of the Globe on the opposite bank of the Thames. It is also suggested the Bard alludes to her disputes in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

East Wall



Sir Thomas Hoby probably Thomas (d.1744)⁷ (artist: attributed to Jonathan Richardson).



Edward Vansittart Neale (1810-1892) (artist: English School ca.1880). Inherited Bisham from his cousin GHV. He was a barrister who apparently, on becoming interested in the Cooperative Movement, threw up his flourishing practice and moved into digs in Manchester, returning to his family at weekends. Margaret Dickinson, his descendent, who once lived at the Abbey, credits him with beginning the dissolution of the Bisham Abbey estate, since whenever the Society needed money he sold a bit more Bisham land. He is regarded as the father of the Cooperative Society. His father's portrait is in the Vansittart Room.

South Wall

On either side of fireplace More information is needed to clarify why these paintings are at Bisham.



Left: *Sir Thomas Hudson*, pupil of Jonathan Richardson (artist: Jonathan Richardson).



Right: *Lady Hudson*, his wife, daughter of Richardson ((artist: Jonathan Richardson).

Over fireplace



Left: *English Gentleman* (artist: John Theodore Heins).



Right: *Mrs King* (artist: John Theodore Heins); grandmother of Mrs George Henry Vansittart née Copson, the General's wife.

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⁷ Jonathan Richardson (d. 1745) also painted Sir Thomas Hudson and Lady Hudson, both paintings in the great hall (south wall). Thomas Hudson (d.1779) was Richardson's pupil who married his daughter Mary.

Lobby:



- Medieval graffiti behind door.
- The staircase is Georgian replacing an earlier one that gave access to the C14th addition onto the end of the 'Templars' hall.
- Tudor table from old kitchen.
- Masonry from the old priory found in the river.
- In frame: sample of wallpaper that used to be in what is now called the Elizabethan Room during the time of the Vansittarts.
- In frame: Tudor children's clothes found under the old staircase in 1815.

Paintings



1609 Estate map of Bisbam Estate drawn for Sir Edward Hoby on the death of his mother; very faded (another in Berks Record Office is in good condition); draughtsman Elias Alleyn (detail from BRO copy).



Phyllis Vansittart Neale (d.1958) (artist: Helen Donald Smith). She loaned the Abbey to the CCPR in 1947 as a memorial to her two nephews, Berkeley & Guy Paget, who had died in the 1939/45 war. Her sister, Mrs Elizabeth Paget, inherited in 1958 and sold the Abbey to the CCPR with the idea of perpetuating the use of the place for the youth of England.

Verger of Winchester Cathedral (artist: Sir George Hayter).

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Warwick Room:



Dining Room, part of building by Sir Thomas Hoby.

This room was remodelled in C18th, including the ceiling.



C19th Chimneypiece. Put in by George Henry Vansittart who also devised the scheme in the east window of the great hall.

Heraldry: (L to R) George Henry Vansittart; his father General George Henry; his brother Augustus.

Vansittart crest on tiles in fireplace.

Paintings

There are two paintings of ladies of the court of Charles I and one of his queen, in this room attributed to Sir Anthony Van Dyke. It is probable that they were acquired by Peregrine Hoby (1602-1679), natural son of Sir Edward Hoby, before the downfall of Charles I. Peregrine was MP for Marlow during the Long Parliament of 1640-48 and was among those forcibly removed from parliament in 1648 (Pride's Purge) because they did not support Cromwell, in what is regarded as the only military coup d'état in English history.

West Wall



Mary Villiers, Duchess of Lennox & Richmond (1622-85) wife of James Stewart, Duke of Lennox, who Charles I created 1st Duke of Richmond in 1641. He was a Scottish nobleman and cousin of the king (artist: attributed to Sir Anthony Van Dyck). She was the subject of several paintings by Van Dyke. Her husband was also painted by him (in 1637). Her father, George de Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, said to be a lover of James I, is credited with bringing the artist to England in 1620. Mary was Lady of the Bedchamber to the dowager Queen Henrietta Maria in 1662 (see painting of Queen opposite), whose husband Charles I was beheaded in 1649. Mary's brother, George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, built the mansion at Cliveden of which only the arcaded terrace remains.



(Over fireplace)

Constance Vansittart née Craven (d.1902) (artist: attributed to Henry Graves), 2nd wife of George Henry Vansittart who installed the chimneypiece here and the fresco armorials in the east window of the great hall.



Elizabeth Cecil, Countess of Devonshire (1619-1689) wife of William Cavendish Earl of Devonshire (attributed to circle of Sir Anthony Van Dyck; original in Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire); identified inaccurately on the frame as the Countess of Sutherland. Her great grandparents were William Cecil, Lord Burghley, right-hand man of Elizabeth I and Mildred Cooke, the sister of Lady Elizabeth Hoby. Hatfield House, built by her grandfather Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury, has a Van Dyck Room.

East Wall



Sarah Stonhouse (d.1819), wife of George Vansittart, and their daughter Laura (artist Gilbert Stuart).
A further portrait of Sarah is in the Vansittart Room.



Henrietta Maria (d.1669), wife of Charles I (artist: attributed to Sir Anthony Van Dyck).

Van Dyck became Court Painter to Charles I in 1641 and painted many portraits of both King and Queen. The artist is said to have flattered the Queen who has been described as being small, with skinny arms and teeth like defence works projecting from her mouth.

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Upstairs to Elizabethan Room:

This part of the building was added onto the end of the Templar's hall by William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, who died in 1344 and was buried in Bisham Priory Church which he founded in 1337. The priory church was already demolished by 1552 when Sir Philip Hoby's surveyor made his report and its precise location is unknown though may be to north east of house. The monastery is known to have been near the road.

Elizabethan Room:



C14th; the *Great Chamber* of the 1552 surveyors' report also known as the Council Chamber. Very much altered in C16th by Thomas Hoby who added a bay window, pilasters, put in a ceiling and altered the windows. During Vansittart's time this room had two fireplaces, one Tudor, one modern - both now gone.

Armorial Glass

North window

Armorials for *Elizabeth I* who visited Bisham in 1592, flanked by the achievements of Anne of Denmark and her husband James I. All may have come from All Saints Church.

Anne of Denmark (far left); her husband *James I* (far right).

According to Ashmole, these two, in the mid C17th were in the east window of the parish church next door. They were probably moved here when George Henry Vansittart & Rev Powell paid for the chancel to be extended in 1849. Another pair of achievements is in an east window.



Before the death of Elizabeth I, Sir Edward Hoby was sent to Scotland to negotiate with the Scottish king who eventually became King of England as James I in 1603. They became friends and these armorials were probably put up to celebrate the king's visits to Bisham in C17th.

The Bay Window



When Thomas Hoby added this bay he put up stained glass that must have been kept safe when the priory church was demolished. His diary for 1562 records “*This year were the garden and orchard planted at Bisham and the gallery made with noble men’s arms*”.

Three of these extant coats were probably the *noble men’s arms* he put up together with some that are now lost. His son Edward almost certainly added the rest of the armorial glass at a later date, after James I succeeded to the throne.

Individual armorials, left to right:

William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury and his wife, Katherine Grandison

Dating from the C14th it is the oldest and best quality stained glass at Bisham. William Montacute was made Earl of Salisbury by Edward III in 1337 and founded the priory at Bisham in that year.⁸ The King owed him as in 1330 he helped him seize power by capturing in Nottingham Castle Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, who had been in control. Montacute died in 1344 supposedly at a tournament at Windsor and was buried in Bisham Priory Church. The armorial does not have the Garter insignia as he died in 1344 before the order was founded. His wife, Katherine Grandison, is one of the contenders to be the Countess of Salisbury who is said to have dropped her garter leading to the Order of the Garter and its motto *Honi soit qui mal y pense*. She died of the plague in 1349 and is said to have been buried in the priory church.



Confusingly the Montacute coat is very similar to that of the Hobys.

⁸ Drawings of the priory church exist dating from the C15th (see Darracott 2014 who suggests the design of the church was influenced by the design of Exeter Cathedral and Ottery St Mary Church, a miniature replica Exeter, which Montacute’s brother-in-law, Bishop John Grandison, built). For Bisham’s link with Shottelbrooke see Ibid 2012 rev 2014.



Dorothy wife of Thomas Cecil, Earl of Exeter. She was a Neville, daughter of Lord Latimer.

Very similar to the coats for James I and his wife and probably dates from the same period; almost certainly put up by Sir Edward Hoby.



Richard Neville (d.1460), Knight of the Garter (KG), Earl of Salisbury in right of his wife, Alice Montacute. Alice's father, Thomas Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, was shot in the face at the siege of Orleans in 1428. She was so important that Neville's coat occupies the subordinate position of 2 & 3 quarters. It is surrounded by the KG garter so cannot be earlier than 1438.

Not such good workmanship.

When Ashmole visited in the mid-C17th there were two of these and one for their son, the famous Richard Neville the Kingmaker, now lost. He was Earl of Warwick in right of his wife, Anne Beauchamp, heir to Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick.



Thomas Cecil, Earl of Exeter KG, eldest son of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who apparently helped Philip Hoby obtain the grant of Bisham. Cecil's second wife and mother of the more famous Robert Cecil, Thomas's half-brother, was Elizabeth Hoby's sister Mildred.

Thomas Cecil was made Earl of Exeter by James I in 1605 at the same time as Robert was made Earl of Salisbury.

Elizabeth was close to both Lord Burghley and his son Robert. Apparently her son Edward was closer to Thomas.



Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, and her husband Richard Pole KG.

Daughter of George, Duke of Clarence, and the Kingmaker's daughter Isabel, she was the last Neville to hold Bisham. The dovecote has been attributed to her. She was executed in the Tower in 1541 on the orders of Henry VIII in retaliation for her son, Cardinal Reginald Pole, while safely abroad, denouncing the king's marital policy. Apparently Margaret wouldn't put her head on the block and ended up being hacked to death by the executioner. She never used the beautiful tomb she had built in Christchurch Priory.

Two armorials for Margaret were at Bisham in C17th.

In mid C17th when Ashmole visited Peregrine Hoby at Bisham, the armorial glass was in the dining room; the gallery window; the lobby between the gallery and the dining room, and the chapel (one of the two for Margaret, Countess of Salisbury). It is not known where the chapel was.

Another East Window, to the right of the bay

An additional set of achievements for James I and his wife, probably made for the mansion house at the same time as the set now in the north window; originally in the All Saints Church.



Anne of Denmark (left) and James I (right)

Paintings

West Wall



George I (d.1727) (artist: after Sir Godfrey Kneller)



Henry Windsor, 8th Earl of Plymouth (d.1843) (artist: James Sant who copied the portrait by Henry Perronet Briggs). The earl and his wife, an aunt of George Henry Vansittart's mother, were guardians of George Henry during his minority and lived at Bisham. Their armorials occur in the heraldic scheme in the Great Hall that George Henry put up. The earl has a memorial in All Saints Church.



Nicholas Vansittart, Baron Bexley, (d.1851) (artist: James Sant who copied the portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence). Born Bray. His armorials also occur in the Great Hall scheme. He was the nephew of George Vansittart (d.1825) who bought Bisham Abbey; father Henry (d.1770?) of Foxleys, grandfather Arthur van Sittart (d.1760) of Shottesbrooke. It was his father's generation that began spelling the name as a single word.

East Wall

There are a number of paintings by the Dutch artist Pieter Borsselaer at Bisham. Peregrine Hoby, natural son of Sir Edward Hoby, appears to have commissioned portraits of his wife, his daughter and sons.⁹ These paintings and perhaps those of the king and queen, were probably commissioned after Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660.



King Charles II (artist: Pieter Borsselaer).



Charles's wife Catherine of Braganza (artist: Pieter Borsselaer).

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⁹ Portraits still at Bisham are of sons Sir Edward Hoby (d.1675) and his brother Sir John Hoby (d.1702). These can be seen in the Vansittart Room and the Margaret Dickinson Room respectively. There is a further portrait identified as Thomas Hoby Esq, also in the Margaret Dickinson Room. Could this be another son? Not at Bisham are portraits by Borsselaer of Sir Peregrine Hoby, his wife Catherine Doddington and Miss Hoby, probably his daughter Catherine.

Henry VIII Room:



C14th but altered when Sir Thomas Hoby made the Great Chamber of the Montacutes into two rooms separated by a small landing and steep flight of stairs. Note C18th ceiling.

Chimneypiece



Overmantel bearing the armorial achievement of Thomas Hoby (H) and Elizabeth Cooke (C), his wife. The colouring has no heraldic validity. Small door to right of chimneypiece leads up, via a spiral stair, to a room above also with a fireplace, possibly the housekeeper's room. This room is contiguous with a larger room above the Elizabethan room and may have been servants' accommodation.

West Wall



Formerly an outer wall. Remnant of original C14th window with underneath inscription *And he that is rash in his talking shall be abhorred*. This window was discovered in 1903 and the head was left open.



Door on west wall connects to rest of Hoby addition but via a stair that appears to be in the remains of a spiral staircase, probably part of the C14th addition. The spiral probably served a short turret that Montacute added perhaps for surveillance purposes but that also facilitated the provision of a squint into the hall.



Return through the Elizabethan room and then up the stairs. The rest of the tour is in rooms added by Sir Thomas Hoby....

Corridor outside Vansittart Room:

Paintings



Unidentified female



Unidentified female

Vansittart Room:



Chimneypiece (C18th)

Paintings

West wall



Henrietta Vansittart (artist: Henry Pierce Bone); a daughter of George & Sarah Vansittart. George bought Bisham from the last Hoby descendent.



Rev Edward Vansittart Neale (artist: Henry Pierce Bone); a son of George & Sarah. Rector at Taplow. He added the name Neale after inheriting the Allesley Estate near Coventry after the last Neale died and quartered their coat with that of Vansittart. He managed the Bisham estates after the death of his elder brother, General George Henry Vansittart, during the minority of the General's son, also George Henry, who came of age in 1844. His son Edward inherited Bisham after the latter's death in 1875 without heirs.

North Wall



Sarah Vansittart née Stonbouse (artist: English School early C19th); wife of George Vansittart. A later portrait than the one in the Warwick Room.

East Wall



Sir Edward Hoby (d.1675)¹⁰ (artist: Pieter Borsselaer). Edward was created a baronet in 1666. He predeceased his father Peregrine.



George Vansittart (d.1825) (artist: Sir George Hayter); a later portrait than that in great hall.

¹⁰ An identification board in this room said Sir Edmund Hoby Mills. The picture frame says Sir Edward Hoby Mills. The correct name is Sir Edward Hoby, the family name only became Hoby Mills after 1766.



Peregrine Hoby (d.1679) (artist: attributed to Robert Peake¹¹), natural son of Sir Edward Hoby; painted when aged 13. As an adult he seems to have commissioned Pieter Borsselaer to paint members of his family, including the portrait of his son, Sir Edward Hoby in this room.

South Wall (above door)



Vice Admiral Henry Vansittart (d.1843 in Canada) (artist: English School), one of the sons of George Vansittart (d.1825). Henry's 3rd son, Edward Welby Vansittart (d.1904), fought pirates in the China seas being made Captain and at the end of his career, Vice Admiral (see memorial plaque on the north wall of the chancel in All Saints Church).

-----oO-----

Continue down corridor and down stairs noting Tudor doorway leading to Minstrel's Gallery.....



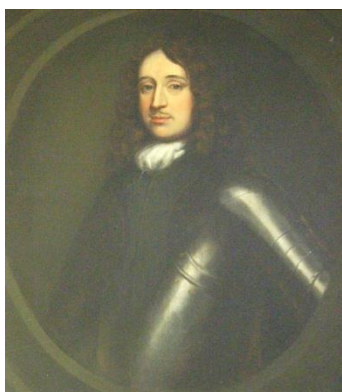
Continue to the.....

¹¹ By Sport England. This is the same artist credited with his grandmother, Lady Hoby's portrait. Peake died in 1619 so must have painted it at the end of his life.

Margaret Dickinson Room:



Paintings



Above right arch

Thomas Hoby Esq (artist: manner of artist Robert Walker¹²). The painting appears contemporary with those of both Sir John and Sir Edward Hoby and the portrait may be of Thomas Hoby, another son of Peregrine Hoby.



Above left arch

William III (artist: Willem Wissing).

¹² According to an information board once in this room, though the frame says Knapton (George Knapton 1698-1778, who studied under Jonathan Richardson). This painting needs further study.



Far wall

Sir John Hoby (d.1702) (artist Pieter Borsselaer). Son of Peregrine Hoby and brother of Sir Edward whose portrait is in the Vansittart Room.

Sonning Room:

Paintings



Mary II (artist: Willem Wissing), wife of William III whose portrait is in the Margaret Dickinson room.



Portrait of unknown man

-----oO-----

CONCLUDING NOTE

The priory church built by William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury was sufficiently complete by 1344 for him to be buried in it, and it subsequently provided a last resting place for many other Montacutes and then their successors as earls of Salisbury, the Nevilles. However the church was demolished during the suppression of the monasteries; it was already gone by 1552, so subsequent owners of the Bisham estate had to find an alternative. They turned to the nearby parish church of All Saints which succeeding owners extended.

Visitors to the Abbey should therefore try and visit the nearby church.

HISTORY TRAIL OF ALL SAINTS CHURCH, BISHAM

This trail concentrates on the links between Bisham Abbey and the parish church which was extended after the loss of the priory church to provide a burial place for subsequent owners of the Abbey.

Please refer to the church guide book for more details.

THE EXTERIOR



A church existed here in 1086 (Domesday Survey) but the earliest part of the present church, the tower is C12th. The upper part of the tower has brick battlements, with brickwork said to be similar to that at the Abbey.¹³

East End:

Left to right

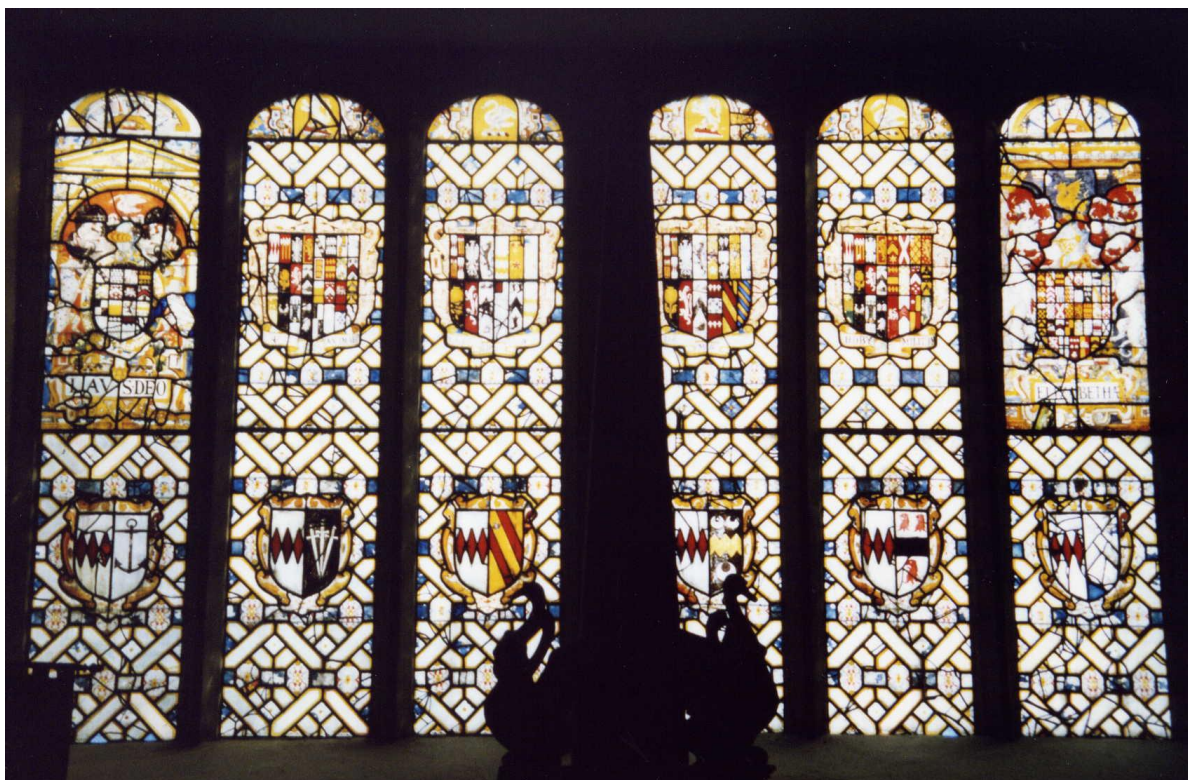
- *Hoby Chapel*, added by Lady Elizabeth Hoby to provide a resting place for her husband Thomas (d.1566) and his half-brother Philip (d.1558).
- *Chancel*, extended in 1849; paid for by George Henry Vansittart (d.1885), responsible for the Vansittart heraldry in the Great Hall and Warwick Room at Bisham Abbey and the incumbent, Rev. Thomas Powell, who designed the present windows in the Great Hall.
- *North aisle*, the Williams Chapel, added in 1878 by Colonel Owen Williams, of Temple House, in memory of his parents and first wife.

¹³ See church guide, Jones, revised by Sim & Burstall p3. The brickwork here is dated C15th but is more likely to be C16th when bricks were used extensively by the Hoby brothers at the Abbey.

THE INTERIOR

On the wall under the tower a woodcut showing the church after the Hoby Chapel was added but before the chancel was extended and the Williams aisle added.

Hoby Chapel Window:



It is suggested that Lady Elizabeth Hoby¹⁴ designed the window which was completed by her son Edward.

Latin wording under the main coats of arms can be translated as:

Praise be to God. Pray for the souls of Philip and Thomas Hoby Knights and for the souls of Elizabeth the mother and Margaret the wife of Edward Hoby Knight 1609

Armorial achievements in the upper row, left to right:

- Henry Carey, Lord Hunsden, father-in-law of Sir Edward Hoby
- Sir Edward Hoby & first wife Margaret Carey
- Sir Philip Hoby & Elizabeth Stonor
- Sir Thomas Hoby & Elizabeth Cooke
- Sir Edward Hoby and second wife Elizabeth Danvers
- Henry Danvers, Edward's brother-in-law.

Smaller shields below for Edward's brother, Thomas Posthumous Hoby and other relatives.

¹⁴ She is known locally as Lady Hoby, rather than Russell - her surname after her second marriage in 1574.

Monuments in Hoby Chapel:



On left

George Kenneth Vansittart Neale (d.1904 of appendicitis aged 14) (the small window above the Hoby armorial glass, the Vansittart Neale coat, also commemorates him).



On right

Lady Elizabeth Hoby (d.1609), surrounded by her children from two marriages (second marriage to John, Lord Russell, heir to Francis Russell, 2nd Earl of Bedford¹⁵). The dress of her effigy is the same as the portrait in the Great Hall of the Abbey suggesting they were done around the same time. The epitaph on the front of her monument says, in Latin and Greek, *Let no one honour me with tears nor perform my funeral with weeping. Why? I go alive through the stars to God.* She composed this epitaph and those on the reredos of the monument of Sir Philip & Sir Thomas Hoby, her husband.¹⁶



Sir Philip and Sir Thomas Hoby (Philip nearest the wall). Note the Hobby bird emblem on their armour and at their feet. Under the ledger of the tomb is a frieze inscribed by Lady Hoby as follows:

East End Sr Philip married dame Elizabeth daughter to Sr Waltr Stonor / and after worthy service done to his prince and his country / died without issue 31st May 1558 being of the age of 53 / at his house in London and from the(re) was conveyed hither

Front Syr Thomas Hoby married with dame Elizabeth / daughter to Syr Anthonye Cooke Knighte / by whom he had issewe fower children / Edward, Elizabeth, Anne and Thomas Posthumus, / being ambassador for Queene Elizabeth in Fraunce / died at Paris the 13 of July 1566 of the age of 36 /

West End leaving his wife great with child in a strange country / who brought hym honourable home, built this chappell / and laid him and his brother here in one tombe together / vivat post funera virtus

Poem on front panel by Thomas, Lord Buckhurst T.B.

¹⁵ He unfortunately predeceased his father, making Elizabeth's status as Dowager Countess of Bedford debatable. See Laoutaris for her legal activity in this regard. She made sure her effigy was wearing a Countess's coronet.

¹⁶ For heraldry & epitaphs see Greening Lamborn; Spokes; Begent; & Phillippy (who also reproduces letters).



In front of east window

Swan monument for *Margaret Carey*, (d. 1605) first wife of Sir Edward Hoby¹⁷.



Underneath the east window

Plaque in memory of the last Hoby, Sir Philip Hoby (d.1766), Dean of Ardfert in Ireland; erected by Sir John Mill, a cousin, who took the name of Hoby.



South wall of Hoby Chapel

Memorial to *Sir John Hoby Mill* (d.1780) and his wife. He is buried under the nearby floor slab.



On floor of chapel

Floor slab (somewhat battered) in front of Lady Hoby's monument, for her two daughters, Elizabeth and Anne who died within a few days of each other in 1571, aged 9 & 7; bears Latin epitaphs written by their mother. Their portraits with that of their brother Edward are at Stonor. Ashmole recorded the floor slab in front of the tomb of Philip & Thomas Hoby.



Floor slab for *Elizabeth* (d.1694), Countess of Stirling, daughter of Sir Edward Hoby (d.1675) (his portrait in the Vansittart Room in the Abbey).

¹⁷ For epitaphs see Begent.

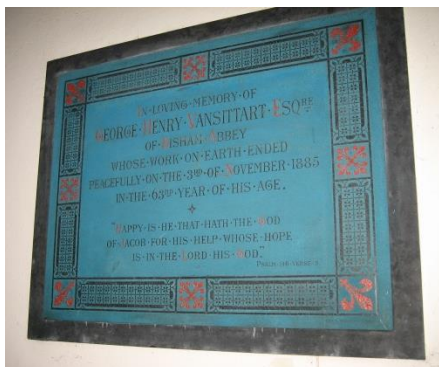
Monuments in Nave:

South Aisle Wall

Many memorial tablets for the Vansittarts and their descendants, including:



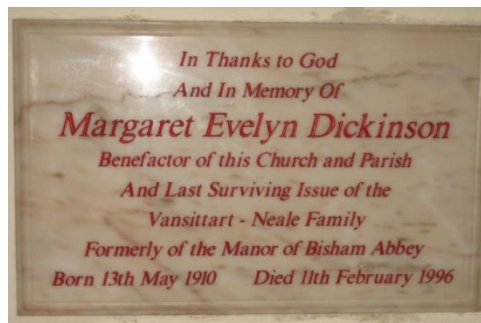
George Vansittart who bought the Abbey from the last Hoby, his wife Sarah & their son General George Henry Vansittart and his wife.



George Henry Vansittart, the General's son who extended the chancel, renovated the great hall in the Abbey adding Vansittart heraldry to the C13th lancets in the great hall at the Abbey and installed a heraldic fireplace in what is now the Warwick Room.



Berkeley & Guy Paget who died in World War II. Their death led to their aunt Phyllis Vansittart Neale loaning the Abbey to the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) as a memorial to them. Their mother, Elizabeth Paget, sold to CCPR (now Sport England) in 1963 with the idea of perpetuating the use of the place for the youth of England.



Margaret Dickinson, the last Vansittart descendent to live at the Abbey who took a great interest in its history, and bequeathed the Vansittart papers to the Berkshire Record Office. She also donated the Bondig Bank on the Thames opposite the Abbey to the River Thames Society.

North Aisle Wall



Henry Windsor, 8th Earl of Plymouth (d.1843) and his wife Ann (d.1850) who lived at Bisham during the minority of George Henry Vansittart. The earl's portrait is in the Elizabethan Room at the Abbey and his armorial occurs in the heraldic scheme in the Great Hall put up by George Henry Vansittart.

East Window of Chancel



Along the base of the window see Bisham Abbey flanked by the coats of past owners. Window given in 1914 by Miss Edith Vansittart-Neale to commemorate members of her family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge Steve Nelson and Claire Broomby of Serco, who currently manage Bisham Abbey for Sport England, for their help in the organisation of Heritage Open Day (HODS) at the Abbey in 2014 and 2015 for which this history trail has been written.

We would like to thank Patricia Burstall, historian of All Saints Church, Bisham for her encouragement and support, and both Patricia and Dr Chris Laoutaris for helpful comments on the draft trail. We are also very grateful to the Baylis Trust for a grant in 2014 for the printing of the history trail.

HODS is a Council of Europe initiative, organised in 2015 by the National Trust and Civic Voice, supported and sponsored by Historic England and the People's Postcode Lottery.

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF HOLDERS OF BISHAM “ABBEY”

DATE	MONARCH	HELD BY
Pre-1066	Edward the Confessor	Bondi
1086 (Domesday)	William the Conqueror	Henry de Ferrers, a Norman and one of the Domesday Commissioners.
1135-1154	Stephen	Robert Ferrers, Earl of Derby, who gives Bisham to the Knights Templar.
1266	Henry III	A later Robert Ferrers, Earl of Derby, suffers forfeiture and his estates, including Bisham, given by the King to his younger son Edmund Crouchback, Earl of Lancaster. Bisham still held by the Templars.
1278,1288,1303	Edward I	General Chapter held at Bisham in these years.
1307	Edward II	Templars suppressed and king puts in Keepers. An inventory of their goods is made in 1309. Templars' assets supposed to go to the Knights Hospitallers but instead Edmund's son, Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, reclaims Bisham.
1322	Edward II	Lancaster executed for rebelling against King. Bisham given to king's favourite, Hugh Despenser the younger.
1326/7	Edward II	Despenser executed. The king deposed and later murdered. Edward III crowned king but country ruled by Roger Mortimer, lover of Edward's queen, Isabella until 1330.
1334	Edward III	Bisham granted to Alice, widow of Thomas, earl of Lancaster & her husband Ebulo L'Estrange .In the following year reversion of Bisham given to William Montacute by the king.
1337	Edward III	Montacute made Earl of Salisbury and establishes a house of Austin Canons at Bisham and builds a priory church probably with help from his brother-in-law John Grandison, Bishop of Exeter. Grandison later in this year founds a collegiate church at Ottery St Mary that is a replica of Exeter cathedral. Bisham Priory church also mirrored Exeter. He probably also builds a quadrangle onto the end of the Templar great hall, one side of which includes a great chamber.
1344	Edward III	Murimuth (version 2) states Salisbury injured at a tournament to celebrate a new order of chivalry dedicated to King Arthur and dies shortly after. Buried in Bisham Priory church.
1428	Henry VI	The last Montacute, Thomas, Earl of Salisbury, is shot in the face at the siege of Orleans. His daughter Alice marries Richard Neville who becomes Earl of Salisbury in right of his wife.
1463	Edward IV	Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, executed in 1460 is reburied at Bisham with great ceremony by his son Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. An armed man on horseback enters at the west end and rides down the centre of the church to the chancel where he receives offerings.

1536-38	Henry VIII	Suppression of the monasteries when the priory church where all the Montacutes and Nevilles are buried is demolished.
1541	Henry VIII	The last Neville holding Bisham, Margaret Countess of Salisbury, is executed in the Tower of London. Bisham taken into King's hands and given to his wife, Anne of Cleves
1552	Edward VI	At the king's wish Anne exchanges Bisham with lands in Suffolk owned by Philip Hoby who has a survey done and begins to build at Bisham. He dies (1558) and Bisham is inherited by his half-brother Thomas who continues building. Stone buildings including three sides of the quadrangle are demolished and the stone reused. Rooms added to either side of the Templars hall. Thomas modifies the great chamber and in 1562 makes a <i>gallery with noble men's arms</i> , most likely putting up rescued armorial glass for the Montacutes and Nevilles.
1566	Elizabeth I	Thomas dies and his wife Elizabeth (née Cooke) builds the Hoby chapel onto the nearby All Saints church to house an elaborate alabaster monument to both brothers.
1609	James I	Elizabeth Hoby dies and her memorial (to her own design) is installed next to that of the brothers. Her son Edward puts up a memorial window in the chapel to Thomas and Philip Hoby, his mother Elizabeth and his wife Margaret.
1664-6	Charles II	Elias Ashmole visits the Abbey then owned by Peregrine Hoby, natural son of Sir Edward. Ashmole records the armorial glass then at the Abbey that now includes armorials for James I and his Queen & Sir Thomas Cecil and his wife; probably put up by Edward.
1780	George III	The last Hoby descendent sells Bisham to George Vansittart.
1849	Victoria	George Henry Vansittart, his grandson, helps fund the extension of the church's chancel; probably when armorial glass for James I and his queen was removed from the chancel to the Abbey.
1856	Victoria	The south aisle of the church is rebuilt and the western wall of the Hoby Chapel removed. Many memorials to the Vansittarts and their descendants occur here.
1859	Victoria	George Henry restores the great hall, uncovering the Templar windows, subsequently adding to them an armorial scheme for the Vansittart family. He inserts a chimneypiece adorned with his family's heraldry in the dining room (now the Warwick Room). His guardian, Henry Windsor, 8th Earl of Plymouth (d.1843) who lived at the Abbey is credited with bringing the James I overmantel to the great hall of the Abbey. Both fireplaces have tiles with the Vansittart crest amongst the bricks.
1947-2014	George VI – Elizabeth II	Phyllis Vansittart-Neale loans the Abbey to the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) as a memorial to her two nephews, Berkeley and Guy Paget, killed in World War II. After her death her sister Mrs Elizabeth Paget inherited and sold it the CCPR with the idea of perpetuating the use of the place for the youth of England. The CCPR became the National Sports Council, now Sport England

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