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LIKE FATHER LIKE SON: THE ARCHITECTURAL PATRONAGE OF ANDREW FOUNTAINE SR.

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Narford Hall, Norfolk, is at once one of England's most architecturally significant houses, yet also one of its most mysterious. Chief amongst these mysteries is the identity of the architect of the house commissioned at the start of the eighteenth century by Andrew Fountaine Sr. (1634 – 1707). In this article I show that Narford Hall was not the only house to have been built by Fountaine. Brookmans Park, Hertfordshire, was erected to his commission in the 1680s. This house,

destroyed in 1891, has received scant attention from architectural historians. Yet the design of Brookmans casts an interesting light on that of Narford. Here I outline the evidence relating to the building of Brookmans Park and argue that it shows that Andrew Fountaine Sr. was a man with a close interest in architecture and, more speculatively, that he may have been an amateur architect.



Fig. 1: Narford Hall, Norfolk, engraving by E. Roberts, from T. Cromwell, *Excursions through Norfolk*, volume II, (London, 1819); the house built by Andrew Fountaine Sr. from 1702, surrounded by later alterations, consists of the central, pedimented three bays and the two bays on either side. (© Alec Barr)

In last year's *Georgian Group Journal*, William Kelley and I presented a new attribution to Sir Andrew Fountaine (1676–1753) of Narford Hall.¹ The purpose of the present article is to draw attention to the architectural patronage of Sir Andrew Fountaine's father, also named Andrew Fountaine (but never knighted). Fountaine Sr. remains something of an enigmatic figure, whose name is most familiar – for all the wrong reasons – to legal historians. An extended series of lawsuits in which he was involved have become notorious.² From an architectural perspective, Fountaine is remembered only for having commissioned Narford Hall in c.1700 (Fig. 1). Narford – best known for the Palladian and Roman Neoclassical additions designed by Sir Andrew Fountaine, executed between c.1717 and 1740 – was not, however, the first house to

have been built by Andrew Fountaine Sr., who had commissioned Brookmans Park, Hertfordshire, in the 1680s.³ Architectural historians have largely ignored Brookmans ever since its destruction by fire in 1891. The parallels between the rebuilding of Brookmans, and that of Narford twenty years later, are striking. In both cases Fountaine Sr. demolished a pre-existing house and built *ab initio*, according to the latest architectural fashion.

In what follows, having considered the details of Andrew Fountaine Sr.'s biography, I examine the history of his architectural patronage. Commissioning two new houses within a space of twenty years bespeaks a keen interest in architecture on the part of Fountaine Sr.. The paucity of evidence relating to Brookmans and Narford means that the architects of both houses remain unidentified. Fountaine, however, can be seen to have moved in architectural circles, and may even have been involved to some extent in the design of both houses.

THE LIFE OF ANDREW FOUNTAINE SR.

Andrew Fountaine was born in Salle, Norfolk, in 1634, the youngest son of Brigg Fountaine, a barrister, and his wife, Joanna.⁴ Fountaine was himself admitted to the Inner Temple on 29 May 1655, though he was never called to the Bar.⁵ In the seventeenth century this was far from unusual: in Geoffrey Tyack's memorable words, the seventeenth-century Inns of Court served as much to provide 'an agreeable place in which the aristocratic *jeunesse dorée* could prolong their adolescence' as they did to furnish aspiring barristers with a legal education.⁶ Whilst resident at the Inner Temple in the 1650s Fountaine befriended John Coke, another Norfolkman (from Holkham).⁷ This friendship was ultimately to become hostile – resulting in the litigation that plagued Fountaine for a substantial period of his later life – but the two men remained close throughout the 1650s and 60s.

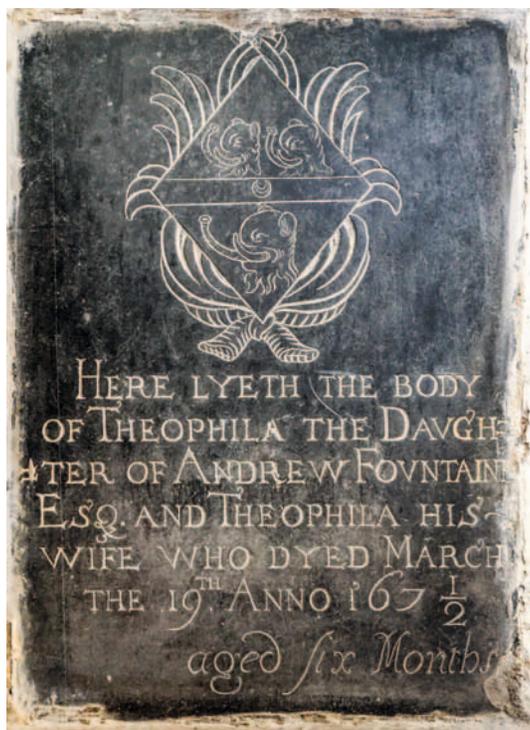


Fig. 2. Memorial to Theophila Fountaine, (1671), St Mary's Church, North Mymms, Hertfordshire. (© Alec Barr)

From 1657 they travelled together abroad, Fountaine even being said to have rescued Coke from certain drowning when they were involved in a shipwreck.⁸ Upon their return to England in 1660, Coke fell out with his father, was forbidden from living in the family home, and was taken in by the Fountaines.⁹ This impasse came to an end with the death of Coke's father in 1661, upon which Coke inherited considerable wealth and embarked on a further period of foreign travel. Philip Skippon met Coke in Florence in 1664, with Coke informing him that he was en route to Constantinople.¹⁰ It is unclear whether or not he made it that far or, indeed, if Fountaine was with him in Italy.

We next hear of Andrew Fountaine on the occasion of his marriage to Theophila Welle, a widow, in Norfolk on 15 August 1669.¹¹ This marriage, however, was short lived: Theophila Fountaine died in October 1671. It seems probable that she died as a result of childbirth: six months after his wife's death, Fountaine's daughter, also named Theophila, died aged six months. A memorial in St Mary's, North Mymsms, the parish church for Brookmans Park, commemorates the daughter's premature death (Fig. 2). Andrew Fountaine remarried shortly afterwards, wedding Sarah Chicheley, the daughter of Sir Thomas Chicheley of Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire, at St Giles-in-the-Fields on 29 April 1672.¹² Despite the considerable gap in age between Fountaine and his new bride (she was around twenty years his junior) the marriage seems initially to have been happy. This – and much of the Fountaine family's life over the next twenty years – is documented by a series of letters between Sarah Fountaine's sister Elizabeth, her husband, Richard Legh of Lyme Park, Cheshire, and several other members of the Legh family.¹³ On 1 November 1673, for instance, we learn from Richard Legh that 'my sister Fountain I went to see this morning but she & her husb: went abroad together two hours before, they say she is really very fond of him'.¹⁴ Six days later Legh declared that

'Fount: & Sarah are mighty gracious, I doe beleieve she is fonder of him than any couple are in Towne'.¹⁵ On 8 November Legh wrote to his wife to report that 'this day I was wth my Sis: Fount: who sitts for her picture att M^r Dixons, her husband swears he abuseth her & her face is better than he can draw itt'.¹⁶ The Fountaines' first son, Andrew Jr., was born in 1676.¹⁷ Two further children, Brigge and Elizabeth, survived into adulthood.¹⁸

This happy state of affairs, however, was not to last. The death of Fountaine's first wife in 1671 was a portent of a tumultuous decade. In about 1670 the friendship between Fountaine and John Coke began to turn sour. The immediate cause of this rift was a dispute over money – Coke, using funds inherited on his father's death, had invested in several properties throughout the 1660s.¹⁹ Some of these had apparently been acquired with Coke's money, but in Fountaine's name.²⁰ Coke had, moreover, transferred various sums of cash to Fountaine. Tensions over these transactions first emerged in 1670.²¹ Any possibility that differences between the two men could be resolved amicably disappeared when Coke died in 1671. Several of Coke's heirs launched legal action against Fountaine in an attempt to regain what they perceived to be rightfully theirs. The history of this litigation was long and fraught, and occupied Fountaine's attention up until the early 1690s.²²

The effect of these lawsuits on Fountaine's personal life was disastrous. In the first place he struggled to pay his lawyers' fees.²³ Ongoing appearances in court placed Fountaine under considerable stress. In January 1678/9 Richard Legh wrote to his wife to tell her that 'My Bro^r Fount: is sick of the fretts, & I cannot blame him, he thought to have putt in his business, into y^e Lrd H: & his Councill neglected till itt was too late & now he must pay the money or ly or fly, my sister cry'd sadly about itt yesterd'.²⁴ Fountaine seems to have reacted to this anxiety by turning to drink. In April 1675, for example, Legh wrote to his wife to say that, on visiting the Fountaines, he found 'poor

Sarah overjoy'd to see us, & that beast her husband forcing drinke att that rate upon Masters & serv^{ts} that nothing but him cold have done itt, Att last he concluded his drinke was bad or his company w^{ch} made us refuse itt'.²⁵ Sarah Fountaine's family, by the 1680s, had turned against her husband entirely. In November 1683 Elizabeth Legh's sister-in-law wrote to her to report that:

'poore M^{rs} Fountaine hath obtained the favour from her madd husband to goe to bell bar, to board with her nurse... I dout not, but M^{rs} Langley hath told you the tragedall storys of his drunken ill usedge of her, & now robbing her of what she had left of jewells or any thing she had, yesterday she left the towne before I could see her, & glad she was gone, for he would faine have recanted his leave, & had her lived under his tirany still. his law sutes goe well thars no excuse for his passion now, but he makes himselfe madd with debauchery & drunkenesse. she is a poore miserable creature & wants all our prayers'.²⁶

It is difficult to disagree with the verdict of Lady Newton, the historian of the Legh family, who wrote of Sarah leading 'a most unhappy life' with her husband.²⁷

Over the course of the 1670s and 80s the Fountaines divided their time between Brookmans Park and London. In correspondence from 1686 Sarah Fountaine mentions the family renting a house near the Temple for £5 a month.²⁸ Andrew Fountaine himself retained chambers in the Inner Temple throughout the 1670s and early 1680s.²⁹ His presence in London was made necessary, not only by court appearances, but also by his election as MP for Newton, in two elections in 1679 and a further election in 1681.³⁰ Fountaine obtained this seat because of the patronage of his brother-in-law Richard Legh (who had himself served as MP for Newton in the 1660s).³¹ Sir Thomas Chicheley, Sarah Fountaine's father, had begged Legh to come to the family's assistance in February 1678/9: 'I must desire you to help my son Fountain, for he is a most unfortunate man else'.³² Sarah Fountaine had also written to her brother to implore him to help

her husband in finding a seat in Parliament.³³ Her despair is made plain by the way in which she signed off her letter: 'Methinks I long to hear certainly whethere you can effect the business or noe; for 'tis uneasy to live between hope and feare, though I have been pretty well used to itt since we had to doe with the Law'.³⁴ Fountaine was largely inactive as an MP, suggesting that he had sought election to Parliament for the practical advantage that MPs could not be imprisoned as debtors.³⁵ With mounting legal costs, this threat must have been very real.

The various lawsuits against Fountaine finally finished in the early 1690s. Fountaine relocated to Norfolk, his ancestral county, where he lived out the rest of his days at Narford. He died in 1707 and is buried in St Mary's, Narford.³⁶

ANDREW FOUNTAINE AND BROOKMANS PARK

In 1666 Andrew Fountaine purchased Brookmans Park, in the south of Hertfordshire, from Sir William Dudley.³⁷ The acquisition of the house, located a mere fifteen miles from London, was later to prove a matter of controversy: Lady Astley (one of Coke's heirs) brought litigation in the Chancery courts in 1673, alleging that, although the estate was placed in Fountaine's name, it had been paid for with Coke's money and, consequently, was held by Fountaine on trust for Coke.³⁸ Fountaine disputed this, stating that he had bought Brookmans with his own funds. The court, after some delay, decided in Fountaine's favour in 1676. Fountaine retained the estate until he sold it to Lord Somers for £8,000 in 1702 (the year in which the rebuilding of Narford Hall commenced).³⁹ The house changed owners several more times before coming into the possession of the Gausson family in 1786; it remained with the Gaussons until it was destroyed by fire in 1891.⁴⁰ The burnt out walls of the house could still be seen in 1910 but have since been pulled down.⁴¹ Only the stables survived the fire; they were used initially as



Figs. 3 & 4. The clubhouse and parkland, Brookmans Park (© Alec Barr); the flight of steps and decorative urns can be identified in Fig. 6.

a house and now form the clubhouse of Brookmans Park Golf Club.⁴² The clubhouse, parkland (including two fine cedars), and a flight of steps decorated with urns are the only evidence that there was ever a manor house on the site (Figs. 3 & 4).

The presence of the memorial to Theophila

Fountaine in North Mymms Church (from 1671) suggests that Fountaine spent time throughout the 1670s at Brookmans as well as the Temple. However, in the early 1680s, Fountaine initiated rebuilding work on the house that he had owned for some fourteen years. Ongoing construction is made clear

by a letter written by Sarah Fountaine to her brother-in-law in March 1681, in which she states that her husband ‘stays behind awhile to pay his workmen some money to encourage them to go on apace with my house’.⁴³

What was the extent of this building work?

The earliest literary sources all agree that Fountaine built a new house from scratch. Sir Henry Chauncy, the historian of Hertfordshire who died in 1719, wrote of Brookmans that Andrew Fountaine ‘built a very fair House upon this Manor in the Year 1682, from whence you have a pleasant prospect from the front thereof towards the east over Essex, and from the back thereof towards the west into Bedfordshire; it... lies within the Leet of Northmymms’.⁴⁴ Nathaniel Salmon in *The History of Hertfordshire* (1728) repeated Chauncy’s assertion that Fountaine built an entirely new house.⁴⁵ Salmon claimed of Brookmans that Sir William Dudley ‘about the Year 1666, conveyed it to Andrew Fountain of Saul in Norfolk, Esq; who built the Seat that is upon it in 1682. It is handsome and well situated’.⁴⁶ That Fountaine demolished the old house and started rebuilding afresh is further corroborated by a legal document drawn up during the course of the sale of Brookmans to Lord Somers in 1702: this describes the house as a ‘new-erected messuage’.⁴⁷ Henry George Oldfield, who made a series of topographical drawings in Hertfordshire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, stated that Sir William Dudley had owned Brookmans Park, but that he then ‘about the year 1666 conveyed it to Andrew Fountaine Esq who built the seat 1682’.⁴⁸ It was reported, moreover, at the start of the twentieth century (shortly after Brookmans had burnt down) that the date 1680 had been on the spouting of the house.⁴⁹

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts are unanimous in the view that Fountaine demolished the old house at Brookmans and built a new one *ab initio*. Some twentieth-century historians, however, cast doubt on this, suggesting that Fountaine simply

altered a pre-existing house. *The Victoria History of the County of Hertford*, edited by William Page, was the first modern work to question the earlier consensus.⁵⁰ Of the few subsequent architectural historians to have considered Brookmans, J. T. Smith, without citing any evidence beyond the *Victoria History*, considered it probable that Fountaine ‘only altered and enlarged’ the house already on site.⁵¹ Most accounts, however, continue to favour the view that Fountaine built a new house at Brookmans. The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments took this stance, as did Sir Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry in *The Buildings of England* volume on Hertfordshire.⁵² Two studies of Brookmans Park by local historians also adopt the earlier position.⁵³ Paul Hunneyball, in *Architecture and Image-Building in Seventeenth-Century Hertfordshire* (2004) dated Brookmans Park to the end of the seventeenth century, rather than the 1630s.⁵⁴

Which of these conflicting positions does the evidence support? The *Victoria History* based the belief that Fountaine only altered a pre-existing house on a survey of the Brookmans estate. This survey, made at some point in the second half of the 1630s,⁵⁵ described Brookmans as a ‘faire house new built with brick with all convenient and well contrived roomes, as a faire hall, two parlors, kitchin, buttery, milk house, divers convenient Cellers with faire upper chambers, most of the roomes well wainscoted strongly built...’⁵⁶ The valuation also notes that one John Walker was paying the relatively modest sum of £2 a year ‘for the old mansion house Tenant at will’.⁵⁷ The *Victoria History* repeated the standard view that Fountaine bought Brookmans in 1666 and ‘is supposed to have pulled down the old mansion and erected a new one’.⁵⁸ An accompanying footnote, however, introduced an element of scepticism, stating that ‘From a survey of the house and lands of Brookmans, taken in 1638, it seems more probable that the house was built at about that time, for in this survey are enumerated the various rooms “of a fair house new built with brick”, for

which Mr Pinder paid yearly £36⁷.⁵⁹ The *Victoria History* says nothing more of the architecture of Brookmans, beyond noting that the house burnt down at the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁰

The survey – dating from the 1630s – cannot by itself act as evidence as to the extent of the rebuilding of the early 1680s. The distinction drawn between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ houses is mysterious. However, in the context of the overwhelming consensus on the part of sources compiled *after* Fountaine had acquired Brookmans, the *Victoria History*’s supposition, based exclusively on a document dating from around thirty years before Fountaine bought the estate, does not appear credible. The idea that Fountaine would not have gone to the bother of demolishing a pre-existing house in order to rebuild according to his own taste – as implied by

The Victoria County History – is disproved by the fact that he did precisely that, a second time, twenty years later.⁶¹ At Narford, Fountaine had the old house (which he had acquired in 1690) demolished in 1702, so that he could erect a new one on its site.⁶²

Furthermore, the architectural evidence supports the view that Fountaine built a new house in the 1680s. This consists of a topographical drawing by Henry George Oldfield (Fig. 5), produced towards the end of the eighteenth century, and a series of photographs taken of the house shortly before it burnt down (Figs. 6, 7, 8 & 9).⁶³ Whilst the earliest of these depictions dates, admittedly, from a century after Fountaine’s building work (such that subsequent alterations and enlargements are probable), all of them point to a house that was built in the 1680s, rather than the 1630s.⁶⁴ The house



Fig. 5. Topographical Drawing of Brookmans Park, Henry George Oldfield, late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century. (© *Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies*)

shown in Oldfield's drawing and the photographs is almost a perfect example of the type of gentry house that became popular under Charles II. Such houses, as Giles Worsley has written, were astylar and were influenced by the country house architecture of Sir Roger Pratt and Hugh May. In Worsley's words, Pratt's work from the 1660s (notably at Kingston Lacy, Dorset, and Horseheath, Cambridgeshire) can be seen to have 'established a standard design for the country house – a double-pile, two-storey, tripartite, pedimented house with raised basement, hipped roof and dormers – which...[became]... the standard pattern for larger country houses in the decades after the restoration'.⁶⁵ These houses, pioneered by Pratt and May, spread rapidly throughout England, as is made clear by their prevalence in *Britannia Illustrata* (1707), which features seven examples of this kind of house, all constructed between 1670 and 1692.⁶⁶ This trend did not bypass Hertfordshire, where, in Paul Hunneyball's words, a form of house

became popular from the 1680s which 'amounted to little more than a rectangular, barely ornamented two-storey box with a hipped roof, each storey of approximately equal height, and with the central three bays slightly projecting and surmounted by a pediment'.⁶⁷ This corresponds perfectly to Oldfield's drawing of Brookmans. Moreover, of the features identified by Worsley as defining the archetypal gentry house of the 1680s, Brookmans lacks only a raised basement and (in Oldfield's drawing, at least) dormers.

Thus, early literary sources, a legal document dating from the start of the eighteenth century, and the architectural evidence all suggest that Andrew Fountaine demolished the old manor house at Brookmans Park and built a new house from scratch. The fact that he did the same thing when he subsequently acquired Narford Hall lends further support to this view.



Fig. 6. Brookmans Park; the house viewed from the gardens; the flight of steps survives today (Fig. 4), photograph from the second half of the nineteenth century. (From the archive of *Historic England*, AA85/00164)

**BROOKMANS PARK AND NARFORD HALL:
ANDREW FOUNTAINE SR. AS
ARCHITECTURAL PATRON**

The similarities between Narford Hall and Brookmans Park are not confined to the circumstances in which they were constructed.

Narford, as rebuilt from 1702, is another example of the Pratt/May country house which flourished in the decades after 1680. According to early depictions of Narford Hall – which include a plan of the house from c.1700, two topographical drawings by Edmund Prideaux from the 1740s, and several engravings from the early nineteenth century (Fig. 1) – the house built in 1702 was tripartite, formed of a three-bay, pedimented centre, flanked by side wings of two bays.⁶⁸ Although surrounded by later alterations, this part of the house survives. A seven-bay house, with a pedimented three-bay centre, was the same formula that had been used at Brookmans Park. Given that the same individual commissioned the two houses

twenty years apart, this similarity is unsurprising.

The architects of both Brookmans and Narford remain unidentified. Steven Parissien, John Harris and Howard Colvin, in their 1987 report on Narford, mooted the possibility that Henry Bell, the gentleman architect best known for the Customs House in King’s Lynn, might have been responsible for the house.⁶⁹ This attribution was based exclusively on the proximity of Bell’s hometown (King’s Lynn) to Narford, and on certain stylistic similarities.⁷⁰ These similarities, however, are far from overwhelming, and there is no documentary evidence to connect Bell – who, in any case, is better known as an architect of town houses, public buildings and churches than he is of country houses – to the design of Narford.⁷¹ Given the paucity of evidence relating to Brookmans, no architectural historian has even attempted an attribution.

Once the connection between Brookmans and Narford is made, however, several hypotheses



Fig. 7. Brookmans Park; the house viewed from the exterior, photograph from the second half of the nineteenth century. (From the archive of Historic England, AA85/00166)

emerge. In the first place, twice going to the trouble (and considerable expense, particularly for a man facing financial difficulties) of demolishing and building a new house according to the latest fashion reveals a keen interest in architecture on the part of Fontaine Sr.. At the very least he can be seen to have been a patron with an enthusiasm for architecture. More speculatively, as both houses are so similar, it is possible that Fontaine had some say in their design, either overseeing, and co-operating with, an architect (who may or may not have been the same person at Brookmans and Narford), or himself taking the initiative in design, leaving the details of construction to an executant builder. There is no known documentary evidence to distinguish between these alternatives. The details of Fontaine's life, however, suggest several sources for his interest in architecture.⁷²

Fontaine Sr. counted fellow architectural enthusiasts, and even amateur architects, in his immediate family. Sir Thomas Chicheley, Fontaine's father-in-law by his second marriage, was an acknowledged authority on architecture. On 27 August 1666 John Evelyn noted that Chicheley's advice had been sought on the state of repair of St Paul's Cathedral.⁷³ The fact that the other men consulted included Evelyn, Pratt, May and Sir Christopher Wren demonstrates the esteem in which Chicheley's opinion was held.⁷⁴ Robert Hooke's diary also makes mention of Chicheley having acted as an architectural consultant for Richard Busby, the Head Master of Westminster School, on 'Solomon's Porch', part of the north transept of Westminster Abbey.⁷⁵

It is possible that Chicheley was himself the architect of Wimpole Hall, as rebuilt from c.1640.⁷⁶ The house attracted considerable attention, even as it was being constructed, because of the novelty of its layout. John Layer, the historian of Cambridgeshire who died in 1640, noted that at Wimpole Thomas Chicheley 'is now erecting an extraordinary curious neat house near the antient site'.⁷⁷ Wimpole Hall was amongst the first English houses to drop the



Fig. 8. Brookmans Park; the house viewed from the gardens, photograph from the second half of the nineteenth century. (From the archive of *Historic England*, AA85/00167)

conventional H-plan, whereby a central great hall is flanked by two side wings at a perpendicular angle.⁷⁸ At Wimpole, Chicheley developed an arrangement in which the side wings ran parallel to the main part of the house, rather than at a right angle.⁷⁹ In the words of David Souden, from Chicheley's house plan it was 'but a small step... to the true "double-pile" house'.⁸⁰ Wimpole Hall, for Souden, 'contributed to the development of the typical later Stuart country house'.⁸¹ Pratt, a friend of Chicheley's, remarked in passing (without expressing judgment) that he was familiar with Wimpole Hall in his notebooks.⁸²

Wimpole Hall was not the only significant country house with which members of Fontaine's immediate family were associated. His uncle

Robert Henley (who was only ten years older than Fountaine) had commissioned a new house at The Grange, Hampshire, from William Samwell in the 1660s.⁸³ As Howard Colvin has written, Samwell was ‘a gentleman architect of the same sort as Hugh May and Roger Pratt, and his houses are excellent examples of the type which became fashionable in England immediately after the Restoration’.⁸⁴ Ongoing construction work at The Grange throughout the 1670s might have inspired Fountaine’s decision to rebuild Brookmans in a similar style the next decade.

From the limited details we know of his life, moreover, it is apparent that Fountaine moved in the same circles as many gentleman architects. Living, on and off, in the Temple for some twenty-five years from the 1650s would have afforded him the opportunity to meet many of the leading architectural practitioners of his day. Sir Roger Pratt lived in the Inner Temple throughout the 1650s and 60s, retaining Chambers there until the 1670s (though he spent increasing amounts of time at Ryston, his estate in north Norfolk, upon inheriting it in 1667).⁸⁵ Pratt was not the only architect to have read for the Bar and to have resided in the Temple: William Samwell, Robert Henley’s architect at

The Grange, had lived in the Temple from 1648 to 1656.⁸⁶ Roger North was largely based at the Temple throughout the 1670s and 80s, designing a new classical gateway for the Middle Temple in 1683–84.⁸⁷ The Temple, one of the centres of London’s book trade, acted as an intellectual hub in the second half of the seventeenth century. It would have been the perfect milieu in which to absorb the latest architectural ideas, not least whilst the City of London was being rebuilt by Wren, Hooke and others after the Great Fire in 1666.⁸⁸ The Inner and Middle Temple were themselves substantially rebuilt in a restrained classicism in the aftermath of the Great Fire, and of several smaller fires in the 1670s and 80s.⁸⁹

In his writings on architecture Sir Roger Pratt suggested two criteria which an aspiring amateur architect ought to meet. Such an ‘ingenious gentleman’, according to Pratt, should, first, have travelled abroad and thereby ‘been somewhat versed in the best authors of arch: viz. Palladion, Scamozzi, Serlio etc’.⁹⁰ Fountaine, as we have seen, had enjoyed a considerable period of foreign travel in the 1650s. We do not know for certain where he travelled, but it is probable that Italy, France and the Low Countries would have been on his itinerary (John Coke, his

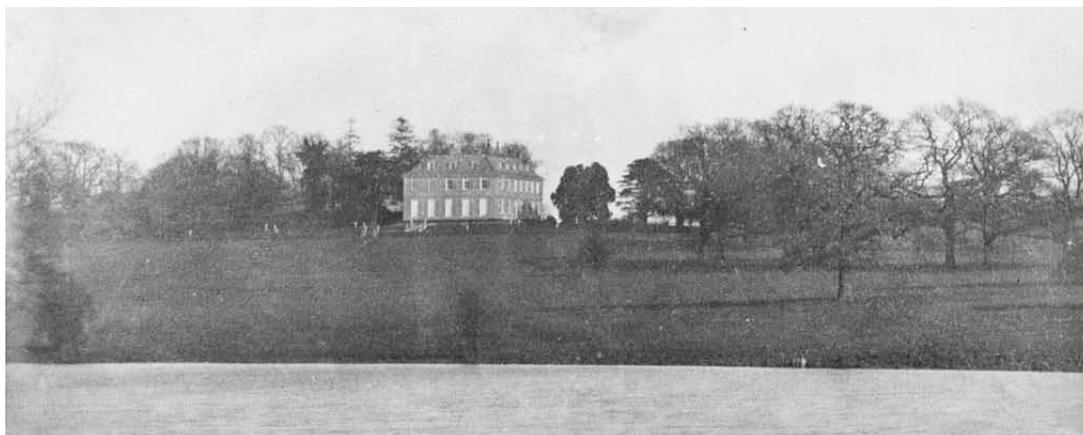


Fig. 9. Brookmans Park; the house viewed from the west, photograph from the second half of the nineteenth century.
(From the archive of *Historic England*, AA85/00165)

companion, embarked on a second period of travel, possibly accompanied by Fountaine, in the 1660s, during which he visited Italy).⁹¹

Pratt recommended, secondly, that the would-be architect make a close study of architectural books.⁹² The earliest known catalogue of the library at Narford Hall dates from the second half of the eighteenth century.⁹³ Sir Andrew Fountaine, a dedicated bibliophile, was renowned as a collector of books by his contemporaries. But is it not possible that Sir Andrew was adding to a collection that had already been started by his father? The library catalogue does not note the date at which the books listed came into the Narford library. Most of the key architectural books available to an amateur architect in the second half of the seventeenth century feature in the catalogue, including the major works of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy (Palladio, Scamozzi, Serlio and Alberti) and France (Perrault, Desgodetz, Androuet and De L'Orme) as well as multiple editions of Vitruvius.⁹⁴

A final link between Fountaine and many gentleman architects of his day was his ancestral county. It is striking how many amateur architects hailed from, or moved to, Norfolk: from Sir Roger Townshend rebuilding Raynham Hall to his own designs in the 1620s, through to Pratt, Bell and North in the second half of the seventeenth century (and subsequently John Buxton and Sir Andrew Fountaine in the 1700s), there was a strong tradition of amateur architectural practice in the county.⁹⁵ As a prominent family, with roots in Norfolk stretching back to the fourteenth century, it seems probable that the Fountaines would have associated with other families from a similar background.⁹⁶ It is particularly likely that Fountaine knew Sir Roger Pratt, for the two men were connected through the Inner Temple, Sir Thomas Chicheley and north Norfolk.

CONCLUSION

Where exactly Andrew Fountaine Sr. lay on the spectrum between the patron with an interest in architecture, and practising architect, is unclear. His having commissioned two new houses in his lifetime, both built according to contemporary taste, when his personal finances were tight, demonstrates that he had more than a passing interest in architecture. The details of his life, and the circles in which he moved, mean that a closer involvement in the design process is a possibility. As with so many late seventeenth-century houses, unless further documentary evidence emerges, it is impossible to formulate anything beyond a speculative attribution as to the architects of Brookmans Park and Narford Hall. As far as Andrew Fountaine Sr. is concerned, even if more extensive documentary evidence were to come to light, establishing the dividing line between an enthusiastic patron and an amateur architect is notoriously difficult.⁹⁷ This difficulty is compounded in a period when buildings were often, in A.P.W. Malcomson's words, 'the products of *ad hoc* consultation among gentlemen...informed by shared acquaintance with the pattern-books and by personal inspection of promising prototypes, and then carried into execution by a "judicious builder" or architect, whose plans and instructions were in turn liable to be either improved or confused by the ad-libbing of the individual craftsmen employed on the job'.⁹⁸ The fact that the future Sir Andrew Fountaine spent his childhood surrounded by construction work is also significant. Perhaps an early curiosity in architecture was prompted by the building activity at Brookmans throughout the 1680s, an interest then cultivated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, under Dean Aldrich.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION

I am grateful to Joshua Bennett and Richard Hewlings for their comments on drafts of this article. This article is dedicated to the memory of Rory Allan (1991 – 2016).

ENDNOTES

- 1 A. Echlin & W. Kelley, 'Nicholas Hamond's School, Swaffham: A new attribution to Sir Andrew Fountaine of Narford Hall', *The Georgian Group Journal*, 24 (2016), pp. 35–52.
- 2 M. Macnair, 'Coke v Fountaine (1676)', in *Landmark Cases in Equity*, ed. C. Mitchell & P. Mitchell (Oxford, 2012), pp. 33–61.
- 3 *Ibid.*; S. Parissien, J. Harris and H. Colvin, 'Narford Hall, Norfolk', *The Georgian Group Report and Journal* (1987), pp. 49–61.
- 4 W.L.E. Parsons, *Salle: The story of a Norfolk parish: its church, manors & people* (Norwich, 1937), p. 204.
- 5 The Inner Temple admission records have been digitized and are available online: <http://www.innertemplearchives.org.uk/detail.asp?id=13885>; website accessed in December 2016.
- 6 G. Tyack, 'The rebuilding of the Inns of Court, 1660–1700', in J.E. Archer, E. Goldring & S. Knight (eds.), *The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court* (Manchester, 2011), p. 199.
- 7 Macnair, 'Coke v Fountaine', p. 38.
- 8 A.K.R. Kiralfy, *A Source Book of English Law*, (London, 1957), pp. 271–6.
- 9 Macnair, 'Coke v Fountaine', p. 38.
- 10 E. Cruickshanks, 'Coke, John I (1635–71)', in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1660–1690*, ed. B.D. Henning (London, 1983), II, p. 100.
- 11 'England Marriages, 1538–1973', database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NFGG-751> : 10 December 2014), Andrew Ffountain and Theophila Welle, 15 Aug 1669; St. Edmund, Burlingham, Norfolk, England, 3; FHL microfilm 1,526,737; website accessed in December 2016.
- 12 *London Marriage Licenses, 1521–1869*, ed. J. Foster (London, 1887), p. 505.
- 13 The Legh letters are held at the John Rylands Library, Manchester; Manchester Central Library; Stockport Archive Service and in a Private Collection; excerpts from several of the letters have been published in Lady Newton, *The House of Lyme from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century* (London, 1917); and in *Lyme Letters, 1670–1760*, ed. Lady Newton (London, 1925).
- 14 Legh Correspondence, Private Collection, Letter 11.
- 15 *Ibid.*, Letter 12.
- 16 *Ibid.*, Letter 13; 'Mr Dixon' presumably refers to Nicholas Dixon, the painter who had become Royal Limner in 1673, see M. Edmond, 'Nicholas Dixon, Limner: And Matthew Dixon, Painter, Died 1710', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 125, (October 1983), pp. 610–12.
- 17 It appears that the future Sir Andrew Fountaine was born in London (not Salle, as is often suggested), see *A List of Eton Collegers, 1661–1790*, ed. R.A. Austen Leigh (Eton, 1905), p. 15; *The Eton College Register, 1441–1698*, ed. Sir Wasey Sterry (Eton, 1943), p. 128.
- 18 F. Blomefield and C. Parkin, *An essay towards a topographical history of the county of Norfolk* (Fersfield, 1739–1775), III, p. 523.
- 19 For the background to the case see Macnair, 'Coke v Fountaine', pp. 37–42.
- 20 *An answer to a reflecting paper, (entituled, The case of Andrew Fountaine Esq; in relation to a bill under the name of Sir Charles Holt bart.)* (London, 1695); Macnair, 'Coke v Fountaine', pp. 37–42; Kiralfy, *Source Book of English Law*, pp. 271–6.
- 21 C.W. James, *Chief Justice Coke: His Family and Descendants at Holkham* (London, 1929), p. 107.
- 22 Macnair, 'Coke v Fountaine', pp. 42–56; *The Eleventh Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1887–88), part 2, pp. 115–18.
- 23 Richard Legh wrote to Elizabeth on 1 May 1675 to tell her that 'att 4 this afternoon we came to My Lrd Keepers to have heard the tryall betwixt Bro Fount: & Cooke, but 'tis againe putt off, till the next weeke, Fount: sayes itt hath cost him 300^{li} in a moneth's time, & every day he Fees his Councell': Legh

- Correspondence, Private Collection, Letter 21. A letter sent from Richard Legh to Elizabeth on 4 May 1675 tells us that ‘Bro fountains busines is againe putt of till Tuesday after Whitsun weeke’: Legh Correspondence, Private Collection, Letter 22.
- 24 *Ibid.*, Letter 27.
- 25 *Ibid.*, Letter 19.
- 26 *Ibid.*, Letter 52. Part of this letter is also reproduced in Newton, *The House of Lyme*, p. 310.
- 27 *Lyme Letters*, ed. Newton, p. 29.
- 28 Newton, *The House of Lyme*, p. 340.
- 29 *A Calendar of Inner Temple Records*, ed. F.A. Inderwick (London, 1901), III, pp. 133, 152–4.
- 30 I. Cassidy, ‘Fountaine, Andrew (c.1637–1707)’, in *The House of Commons 1660–1690*, ed. B.D. Henning, II, p. 350.
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 John Rylands Library, Manchester, Legh of Lyme Correspondence, Box 4, Folder 13, Sir Thomas Chicheley to Richard Legh, contains the letter quoted here and several other letters in which Sir Thomas asks Legh to come to Fountaine’s aid; see also Newton, *The House of Lyme*, p. 29.
- 33 John Rylands Library, Manchester, Legh of Lyme Correspondence, Box 4, Folder 15, Sarah Fountaine to Richard Legh; Newton, *The House of Lyme*, pp. 291–2. Sarah Fountaine, writing to Richard in March 1681, assured her brother that her husband was ‘sensible of his obligation to you’: John Rylands Library, Manchester, Legh of Lyme Correspondence, Box 4, Folder 15; *Lyme Letters*, p. 99.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 292. Legh also exercised his patronage in favour of Sir John Chicheley, his wife’s brother, who was elected as MP for the borough at the same time as Fountaine: I. Cassidy & G. Jaggard, ‘Chicheley, Sir John (c.1640–91)’, in *The House of Commons 1660–1690*, ed. B.D. Henning, II, pp. 53–54; M.W. Helms & I. Cassidy, ‘Legh, Richard (1634–87)’, in *The House of Commons 1660–1690*, ed. B.D. Henning, II, pp. 728–29.
- 35 Cassidy, ‘Fountaine, Andrew (c.1637–1707)’, p. 350.
- 36 Blomefield and Parkin, *An essay*, p. 522–3.
- 37 Sir H. Chauncy, *The Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire*, first published in 1700; this edition (London, 1826), II, p. 440; R. Clutterbuck, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Hertford* (London, 1815), I, p. 454.
- 38 ‘The Lady Bridget Astley and others, Coheirs of John Cook Esq. deceased v Andrew Fountaine Esq.’ (1673) Reports Temp. Finch 4; MacNair, ‘Coke v Fountaine’, pp. 47–8.
- 39 Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Hertford, DEGA/23812; DEGA/23813; P. Kingsford, *A Modern History of Brookmans Park, 1700–1950* (North Mymms, 1983) pp. 9–10. Somers died at Brookmans Park in 1716: W.L. Sachse, *Lord Somers: A Political Portrait* (Manchester, 1975) pp. 219, 341–5.
- 40 The history of the estate is detailed in Kingsford, *A Modern History of Brookmans Park*; J.T. Smith, *Hertfordshire Houses: A Selective Inventory* (London, 1993), p. 136; The fire was reported in *The Hertfordshire Mercury*, no. 2951, vol. LVII, Saturday, 18 July 1891, p. 2.
- 41 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An inventory of the historical monuments in Hertfordshire* (London, 1910), p. 159.
- 42 Kingsford, *A Modern History of Brookmans Park*, p. 23; Smith, *Hertfordshire Houses*, p. 136.
- 43 The continuing presence of builders, the letter implies, further contributed to the disruption of the Fountaines’ family life. Sarah Fountaine wrote of the construction work that ‘I much fear it will not be done before I shall want it, for the first floor will not be done this month yet; but I shall call for more Workmen and get the floors where we are to ly wainscoted, and put off the painting till after I am up again, for that stink soe near will much offen my vapouring brain’: John Rylands Library, Manchester, Legh of Lyme Correspondence, Box 4, Folder 15, Sarah Fountaine to Richard Legh; *Lyme Letters*, ed. Newton, p. 100.
- 44 Chauncy, *Historical Antiquities*, pp. 440–1.
- 45 N. Salmon, *The History of Hertfordshire* (London, 1728), p. 64; it should be noted that Chauncy’s *Historical Antiquities* appears to have acted as a key source for most subsequent historians of Hertfordshire. Robert Clutterbuck cites Chauncy when he states that Fountaine rebuilt Brookmans Park: Clutterbuck, *The History and Antiquities*, p. 454.
- 46 Salmon, *The History*, p. 64.
- 47 Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, DEGA/23813.
- 48 Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Oldfield Collection, Volumes of topographical

- drawings by Henry George Oldfield, DE/Of/5/70, pp. 70–71; H.C. Andrews, M.A., ‘Henry George Oldfield and the Dimsdale Collection of Herts Drawings’, *East Herts Archaeological Society Transactions*, 11/3 (1942), pp. 212–24.
- 49 M. Phillips, ‘Folly Gates’ Near Potters Bar’, *The Home Counties Magazine*, 4 (1902), pp. 124–6.
- 50 *The Victoria History of the County of Hertford*, 4 vols (London, 1902–1914), II, p. 256.
- 51 Smith, *Hertfordshire Houses*, p. 136.
- 52 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An inventory*, p. 159; N. Pevsner & B. Cherry, *The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire* (Harmondsworth, 1977), pp. 112–3.
- 53 D. Colville, *North Mymms: Parish and People* (Letchworth, 1972), p. 73; Kingsford, *A Modern History of Brookmans Park*, p. 10.
- 54 P. Hunneyball, *Architecture and Image-Building in Seventeenth-Century Hertfordshire* (Oxford, 2004), p. 17.
- 55 The National Archives, London, SP 16/408, item 142.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 *Ibid.*
- 58 *The Victoria History of the County of Hertford*, II, p. 256.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 *Ibid.*
- 61 Parissien et al, ‘Narford’, pp. 49–50.
- 62 *Ibid.*
- 63 A further photograph of Brookmans is reproduced in Colville, *North Mymms*, facing p. 80.
- 64 Brookmans benefitted from the furniture and some of the interiors of nearby Gobions House when it was demolished in 1838: Colville, *North Mymms*, p. 75. The account of the fire that destroyed Brookmans in *The Hertfordshire Mercury* mentions that Andrew Fountaine built the house which ‘with recent enlargements’ was lost in the blaze.
- 65 G. Worsley, ‘William Talman: Some Stylistic Suggestions’, *The Georgian Group Journal*, 2 (1992), p. 7; See also: N. Silcox-Crowe, ‘Sir Roger Pratt’, in R. Browne (ed.), *The Architectural Outsiders* (London, 1985), pp. 18–20; J. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain: 1530 to 1830* (New Haven and London, 1993), pp. 136–41; 173–76; H.M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600–1840* (New Haven and London, 2008), pp. 685–88; 827–29; J. Bold, ‘Pratt, Sir Roger’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; J. Bold, ‘May, Hugh’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
- 66 G. Worsley, *Classical Architecture in Britain: The Heroic Age* (New Haven and London, 1994), pp. 26–32; J. Kip & L. Knyff, *Britannia Illustrata or views of several of the Queen’s Palaces as also of the principal Seats of the Nobility and Gentry of Great Britain* (London, 1707).
- 67 Hunneyball, *Architecture and Image-Building*, p. 125.
- 68 The early seventeenth-century plan is published in Parissien et al, ‘Narford’, p. 50. Prideaux’s topographical drawing is reproduced in J. Harris, ‘The Prideaux Collection of Topographical Drawings’, *Architectural History*, 7 (1964), pp. 32, 79 and pl. 63.
- 69 Parissien et al, ‘Narford’, pp. 49–50. This suggestion is repeated in J. Harris, ‘Some Thoughts on the Amateur Intervention in English Architecture’, in J. Harris & R. Hradsky (eds), *A Passion for Building: The Amateur Architect in England 1650–1850* (London, 2007), p. 10.
- 70 Parissien et al, ‘Narford’, pp. 49–50.
- 71 David Higgins, in the most comprehensive account of Bell’s life and work, states that the attribution of Narford Hall to Bell is one that ‘can be discounted or adjudged unlikely’, see D. Higgins, *The Ingenious Mr Henry Bell: His Life, His Work, His Legacy, His King’s Lynn* (King’s Lynn, 2005), pp. 78; 83. For Bell, see also: H.M. Colvin & L.M. Wodehouse, ‘Henry Bell of King’s Lynn’, *Architectural History*, 4 (1961), pp. 41–62; Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, pp. 115–17.
- 72 On the amateur tradition in English architecture see H. Colvin, ‘What we mean by amateur’, and G. Worsley, ‘The gentleman-professional’, in G. Worsley (ed.), *The Role of the Amateur Architect* (London, 1994), pp. 4–6, 14–20; J. Harris, ‘Some Thoughts...’, in Harris & Hradsky, *op. cit.*. For a recent overview of amateur architectural practice in Ireland, see A.P.W. Malcomson, *Nathaniel Clements, 1705–77: Politics, fashion and architecture in mid-eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2015), pp. 178–212.
- 73 *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E.S. De Beer (Oxford, 1955), III, pp. 448–49.

- 74 *Ibid.*
- 75 *The Diary of Robert Hooke, 1672–1680*, ed. H.W. Robinson & W. Adams (London, 1935), p. 239; E. Walford, *Old and New London* (London, 1878), III, p. 413.
- 76 *Wimpole Hall*, ed. G. Jackson-Stops (London, 1989), pp. 5, 49–51; D. Souden, *Wimpole Hall* (London, 1991), p. 7; D. Adshead, *Wimpole: Architectural Drawings and Topographical Views* (London, 2007), pp. 11, 40–41.
- 77 W.M. Palmer (ed.), *John Layer (1586–1640) of Shepreth, Cambridgeshire: A Seventeenth-Century Local Historian* (Cambridge, 1935), p. 111.
- 78 Souden, *Wimpole Hall*, p. 7.
- 79 *Ibid.*
- 80 *Ibid.*. Adshead refers to Chicheley’s Wimpole Hall as ‘a proto double-pile house’: Adshead, *Wimpole*, p. 10.
- 81 *Ibid.*
- 82 R.T. Gunther (ed.), *The Architecture of Sir Roger Pratt, Charles II’s Commissioner for the Rebuilding of London after The Great Fire* (Oxford, 1928), pp. 60–62.
- 83 D. Brock, ‘John Webb, William Samwell and the Grange’, *English Heritage Historical Review*, 4 (2009), pp. 98–121. See also E. Mercer, ‘William Samwell and the Grange, Hampshire’, in H.M. Colvin & J. Harris (eds.), *The Country Seat: Studies in the History of the British Country House* (London, 1970), pp. 48–54; J. Redmill, ‘A House Ahead of its Time: The Grange, Hampshire – I’, *Country Life*, 8 May 1975, pp. 1166–8; J. Geddes, ‘The Grange, Northington’, *Architectural History*, 26 (1983), pp. 35–41.
- 84 Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 895.
- 85 Gunther (ed.), *The Architecture of Sir Roger Pratt*, pp. 2–3; 15; Silcox-Crowe in Browne (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 2; K. Skelton, ‘Reading as a Gentleman and an Architect: Sir Roger Pratt’s Library’, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, 53 (2009), p. 16.
- 86 Redmill in *Country Life*, 8 May 1975, p. 1167; Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 895. David Brock believes that the connection between Henley and Samwell was ‘most likely their common membership of the Society of the Middle Temple’: see *English Heritage Historical Review*, 4 (2009), p. 114.
- 87 H. Colvin & J. Newman (eds.), *Of Buildings: Roger North’s Writings on Architecture* (Oxford, 1981), pp. xi-xiv; xx-xxi; Tyack, ‘The rebuilding of the Inns of Court’, in Archer, Goldring & Knight, *op. cit.*, pp. 204–7. North also became an MP in 1685, the year that Fountaine left the House of Commons: P. Watson, ‘North, Hon. Roger (1653–1734)’, in *The House of Commons 1660–1690*, ed. B.D. Henning, III, pp. 154–56.
- 88 L. Jardine, *On a Grandeur Scale: The Outstanding Career of Sir Christopher Wren* (London, 2002), pp. 247–67; M.A.R. Cooper, *A More Beautiful City: Robert Hooke and the Rebuilding of London after The Great Fire* (Stroud, 2003), pp. 95–220; C. Stevenson, *The City and the King: Architecture and Politics in Restoration London* (New Haven and London, 2013), pp. 136–47.
- 89 G. Tyack, ‘The Buildings of the Inner Temple’, in C. Rider & V. Horsler (eds.), *The Inner Temple: A Community of Communities* (London, 2007), pp. 65–69; Tyack, ‘The rebuilding of the Inns of Court’, in Archer, Goldring & Knight, *op. cit.*, pp. 199–213.
- 90 Gunther (ed.), *The Architecture of Sir Roger Pratt*, p. 60; For Pratt’s foreign travel see J. Stoye, *English Travellers Abroad, 1604–1667* (New Haven and London, 1989), pp. 143–44.
- 91 Cruickshanks, ‘Coke, John I’.
- 92 Silcox-Crowe in Browne (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 3; For Pratt’s own library, and his use of architectural books, see K. Skelton in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, 53 (2009), pp. 15–50.
- 93 National Art Library, London, 86.ZZ.160.
- 94 *Ibid.*
- 95 L. Campbell, ‘Documentary Evidence for the Building of Raynham Hall’, *Architectural History*, 32 (1989), pp. 52–67; Gunther (ed.), *The Architecture of Sir Roger Pratt*; Silcox-Crowe in Browne (ed.), *op. cit.*; Higgins, *The Ingenious Mr Henry Bell*; Colvin & Newman (eds.), *Of Buildings: Roger North’s Writings on Architecture*; A. Mackley (ed.), *John Buxton, Norfolk Gentleman and Architect: Letters to his Son* (Norwich, 2005); Echlin & Kelley in *The Georgian Group Journal*, 24 (2016), pp. 35–52.
- 96 Parsons, *Salle*, pp. 197–210.
- 97 J. Harris, ‘The importance of the amateur in innovation’, in Worsley (ed.), *The Role of the Amateur Architect*, pp. 40–43.
- 98 Malcomson, *Nathaniel Clements*, p. 204