

## **ALBURY HISTORY SOCIETY - [alburyhistory.org.uk](http://alburyhistory.org.uk) - RECORDING SCRIPT**

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### **[068 Albury Park Mansion by resident Malcolm Lister](#)**

**Albury Village Hall, 20 March 1996**

**There is a set of 51 slides for this talk.**

**33 minutes.**

① House - west - views & arch.

068

## ALBURY PARK - MALCOM LISTER TALK

'Never lose an opportunity to see anything beautiful, beauty is God's handwriting'. Albury Park Mansion set in the beautiful Tillingbourne Valley, there has been a house on this site since 1042, same year as the Saxon Church that stands adjacent. At that time during the reign of Edward the Confessor, the House was owned by one Azor, a Saxon nobleman, who was a cousin of Earl Godwin, hence a member of the Saxon royal family, he also owned estates in <sup>DORSET</sup> Norfolk and Northhamptonshire. At the time of the Conquest, Albury Estate was given to a Robert de Tonbridge, a member of the great de Claire family. During the medieval period the house was owned for five generations by the <sup>Don</sup> ~~Aberdon~~ family, who had their main seat at Cobham, and Albury was leased out to tenants during most of their ownership. After that the Duncombe family also owned the Estate for about 200 years, and it was the Duncombe's that gave a lease in 1639 to Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel & Surrey. Thomas was the grandson of Henry, 4th. Duke of Norfolk, who was beheaded in the Tower because of his association with Mary, Queen of Scots. Paul Rubens described him as 'The father of virtue in England'. He had a collection of over 700 pictures, while his antique marbles, gems, prints and drawings were unequalled - as a connoisseur he was of European status, a rival to Italian Cardinals and Spanish courtiers. It was Thomas who was responsible for the first alterations to the <sup>old</sup> medieval house, and he built a new wing for his retainers. His grandson, who became 6th. Duke of Norfolk, was also a very princely gentleman, and he made extensive alterations having rebuilt the medieval house, using as architect Captain George Evelyn, cousin of the famous John Evelyn, landscape gardener who redesigned the gardens on the Italian pattern for the 6th. Duke. Henry, the 6th. Duke was Ambassador in Vienna and Constantinople during the 1670's, and his brother Philip became Cardinal of Norfolk. He married twice, his first wife was a noblewoman, Anne Somerset, daughter of the Earl of Worcester, on her death he married Anne Beckerton, who had been his mistress, and the daughter of the wine keeper to Charles II. All these considerable alterations to the house during the ownership of the Howard family were mainly destroyed in 1697, when there was a major fire, and the only parts left from that period are the present Library and the Drawing room next door. On the death of the 6th. Duke, his son, the 7th. Duke, sold the house after two years to Heneage Finch, a Solicitor-General to Charles II, and eventually Lord Chancellor. He was known by the sobriquet 'silver tongue', and he was involved in 2 very famous legal cases, the Act of Seclusion of 1684, and the trial of the Seven Bishops in 1688. The Finch family retained Albury until the end of the 18th. century, during that time there were four Earls of Aylesford. The 4th. Earl sold the

② Saxon Church

③ Aberdon  
Don

④ Thomas Howard

⑤ Howard's wife

⑥ Med. House

⑦ Holles garden

⑧ Holles drawing

⑨ Charles II



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to his brother Admiral Finch in 1780, and he in 1800 sold the house to a Samuel Thornton. Samuel Thornton was Governor of the Bank of England, and at that particular time when he acquired the Estate, he had Sir John Soane rebuilding the Bank of England building in Threadneedle Street, and Thornton asked John Soane to come down to Albury, his country estate to make various alterations, and he was responsible for the new staircase and drawing-room. After Samuel Thornton, for a period of seven years the house belonged to a Charles Wall, who sold it in 1819 to Henry Drummond, and the Drummonds retained the house until 1890. Now the Drummonds, of Drummonds Bank, which is now the Royal Bank of Scotland, are well known as wealthy bankers, but their story is not that simple. They were Scottish noblemen, with the titles of Earl of Perth and Viscount Strathallan, but they were Jacobite supporters of the House of Stuart, and at the battle of Culloden in 1746 Viscount Strathallan was killed, and his younger son Andrew came down south and formed the Banking House. It was his great nephew Henry Drummond who was also a partner in the bank, who was looking for a new Estate who bought Albury in 1819. Henry Drummond had three sons and two daughters. The three sons died between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one, so that left Louisa, the eldest daughter, who married a Lord Lovaine in 1845, who eventually became the 6th. Duke of Northumberland, and that is how the Percy family acquired the Estate through marriage, which still retain to this day with the exception of the Mansion and seven acres of gardens which were sold in 1969 to the Country Houses Association as a residence for retired professional people. Infact there are 45 apartments and approx. 50 - 60 residents.

Albury Park Mansion externally is the creation of Augustus Welby Pugin, the famous Victorian architect, when he worked for the then owner Henry Drummond between the years of 1848 & 1852. All that you can see around the courtyard are the creation of that particular time, the former coach-house is now used as residences and also the porters-lodge. Looking closer at the building we can see the cartouche on top of the roof. This represents the coat-of-arms of the Drummonds and the Percy's, the last two owners of the house. Topped by a ducal crown, the arms of Drummond represent in two quarters the arms of Scotland - the Royal arms of Scotland, and the other two quarters with what appears to be wavy lines that represent the sea. This is part of the Drummond legend, that the first Drummond was a gentleman called Boris of Hungary crossed the sea with Margaret of Scotland, hence the wavy lines. Here we have represented part of the building structure which is the brick-work and the ironstone taken from the local hill, surrounded by small sections of ironstone in



(20) *iron gate* what is known as 'galeting', and in the entrance to the gardens of the House we have the iron gates that were put there in 1850 by Henry Drummond, and they were brought over from a convent in Hungary.

(21) *hallway* Entering the hallway of the house the room is 100 per cent Augustus Pugin, and very typical of his style of work. The panelling and the ceiling, doorways, even the wallpaper which isn't actually a Pugin wallpaper, but is contemporary with when the new hall was built in 1852.

(22) *Mantle* The wooden panel over the mantle of ~~the~~ fire-place is much older than the room, as this was brought down from Scotland by the Drummonds from their original home in Perthshire, and the carving in high relief represents trophies of war from the Roman times up until the late 17th. century, it was carved by a Dutchman called ..... who also worked at Holyrood House.

(23) *barney* Passing from the hall into the staircase, this particular staircase was put in by Pugin when he was making the external alterations in the mid 19th. century, and this is the only staircase that goes the full height of the house to the tower on the top, and is very similar to the staircase in his own home, the Grange in Ramsgate. We now pass to the inner hall where you see there is a cantilevered staircase, put in by Sir John Soane in 1800. At that time the house was owned by a Samuel Thornton, Governor of the Bank of England, and John Soane was working in the new Bank building, which is now the oldest part. For Samuel Thornton, John Soane ~~removed~~ <sup>re-modelled</sup> the exterior of the house, giving it the appearance of a severe Palladian house, square in form with pallisters as the only decoration. As well as installing the new staircase he also re-modelled the great-room into a Library, and also made -- created a new drawing-room, these rooms we will see later.

(24) *Pugin staircase* The Library was originally known as the great-room and is the room that was used for functions, banquets and balls, the Coronation Ball for George II took place in this room in 1762. The pictures in the room are two of the school of Van Dyke, that is Charles I and his wife, Henrietta Maria. The originals of these paintings are in the Duke of Grafton's house, Euston Hall in Suffolk. The other painting is of Frederick, Prince of Wales, eldest son of George II and father of the future George III, he was known as Poor Fred, because of the fact that he died at the age of 32 as a result of playing tennis, not lawn tennis as we play, but real tennis and he received a hit in the side of his head and died as a consequence of that.

(25) *Grange drawing room* The fireplace is the original fireplace put in the room when it was created in 1673, and the designer of this room, the Library, was Captain George Evelyn, who was a relative of John Evelyn, the famous landscape gardener who designed the gardens seen from the Library. Later on when John Soane was working on the house he asked to convert the ~~great~~ room into a new library, so he installed bookcases all round the room, of which we only have one section left, because the others were removed to Sion House when the Duke of Northumberland sold the house.

(26) *Grange drawing room* We are now in the John Soane drawing-room, this was created by Sir John Soane in 1800 when he was making the alterations on behalf of Samuel Thornton. The predominant colour is yellow, this is known as Soane yellow, he favoured this colour very much, particularly in rooms facing east, because when the sunlight floods in, in early morning it is a blaze of gold.

(27) *Charles & Henrietta* The pier glasses on either sides of the windows came originally from Northumberland House, the town-house

(28) *Charles & Henrietta*

(29) *Frederick*

(30)

(31)

(32)

(33)

(34)



of the Percy family, which was demolished in 1874 to make way for Northumberland Avenue, following the construction of The Embankment. There are several other features in the mansion that came from Northumberland House. The chandelier is a very fine Waterford chandelier. The fire-place, designed by Sir John Soane, was carved by John Flaxman and had many interesting details. The French 2nd. Empire clock was hand-made in Paris in 1853, and represents the Empress Eugenie and the Emperor Napoleon III, and was hand-made as a souvenir of their wedding. The large portrait of the lady in blue is of Lady Marjoriebanks, her second wedding was to a Mr. Hogg, and their son, Quentin, is the present Lord Haylsham. The copy of Sir Peter Laylie's portrait is of Charlotte Fitzroy, natural daughter of Charles II, she married a gentleman called Bright, this didn't suit the King that his favourite daughter should be known as Mrs. Bright, so the King created her husband Earl of Lichfield. No relation to the present Lichfield family which were a later creation and are of the Anson family. The modern portrait of the lady of strong character is of a Victoria Chappell, she was fashion editor for The Daily Mail both in London and in Paris, and she was the first woman war correspondant to go into Paris and Brussels when these cities were liberated at the end of the second great war. Victoria Chappell was arranging to become a resident at Albury Park in 1980, unfortunately she died before she moved into the House. But the family wanted some of her possessions to be kept at Albury and certain items of furniture - plus this picture, are now in the House. During the time that Augustus Pugin was working on the house, he was asked by Henry Drummond to cover-in the central courtyard and to create for him a billiards-room, at a later date this room was converted into a music-room by one of the Duchess's, here you see the room in an old photograph when it was used as a billiards-room. Since 1971, this has been the dining-room for the residents of the House. In this next picture, which is taken from an old postcard of about 40 years ago, you see the dining-room, the original dining-room, laid out for a meal during the time of the residence of the Duke. The corridor we are looking at now is known as the Pugin corridor, because this is a 100 per cent his work. When he was asked to cover over the central courtyard, as already mentioned, he had to enclose the original entrance to the court-yard, so he created this corridor. It is very typical of his style of work with many Gothic arches and also the type of mock beams on the ceiling that he rather favoured, and the recessed medieval style windows. All over the house there are Gothic arches as you can see here, this is the public telephone box.

We are now on the east side of the house, facing towards Shere, you have here the work of two Victorian architects, on the left a small section of Sir John Hakewell's work, which was undertaken for the 6th. Duke in 1869. On the right, we have Augustus Pugin's work. In the construction of this side of the house you see the mixture of brickwork and ironstone, and also let into the brickwork in Gothic writing, is the quotation from the 127th. Psalm - "Unless the Lord build the house, their labour is but in vain that build it". This was Pugin's idea, with the agreement of the then

Griffins & Wyverns.  
(48)  
(49)  
(50) Worst view  
(51) Summary

owner to incorporate this into the wall. Up on the pinnacles you can see the figures of Griffins, or Wyverns, mythical beasts that were much favoured by Pugin as well, particularly on his ecclesiastical buildings. This view shows the house seen from the south bank during the spring, when there is a glorious display of Rhododendrons and Azaleas. Finally, we have a view taken from the hill looking directly down on to the house, showing the famous 63 chimneys designed by Pugin. They are not original designs, they are copies from Hampton Court, Burleigh House and Hatfield House, but all are different.

"What is a house if not a temple too, where the aspiring soul may seek repose in its long pilgrimage through the vast universe".

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ALBURY HISTORY SOCIETY

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