

The Lodges in and around Ampthill Great Park during and after the reign of Henry VIII

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Introduction

The main building complex in the Ampthill Great Park at the time of Henry VIII with its inner court and bass court has been referred to as Ampthill House, the manor of Ampthill, Ampthill Castle or the Kings Lodge or lodgings at Ampthill.

Between 1533 and 1567 (ref.1) the inner court held lodgings for a variety of persons associated with the court of Henry VIII (ref.3-11) They included the King and Queen, Mr Norris, Mr Kingston, Lady Mary (presumably Princess Mary), Lady Bovington, Master Baynton, Master Long, Sir Francis Bryan, Master Bovington, Master Henage, Master Cofferer, Master Controller, Doctor Chambers, Duke of Norfolk, The clerk controller, the Lord Privy Seal, Dr Batty, and Lady Douglas.

Other persons mentioned as being at Ampthill between 1524 and 1547 (ref.2) include Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Duke of Suffolk, Marquis of Exeter, Lord Sandys, Fitzwilliam, Richard Woleman, Knight, Thomas Hennege, J Russell, John du Bellay (Bishop of Bayonne), Dr John Bell, Lord Vaulx, Antony Sentleger, Henry (Lord) Montague, Earl of Southampton, and Prince Edward. During the muster at Ampthill in 1536 (ref.12).a number of other persons were accommodated in or around Ampthill. The Privy Council met many times at Ampthill and the members of the council would also have been accommodated in the main complex.

This article contains the information found in the Accounts for the King's Manor of Ampthill (ref..3-11) regarding the subsidiary lodges built in and around Ampthill Great Park.

A lodge in the Little Park

In the accounts only one reference was found (ref.3)

1534 Sept/Oct*Item for viii foot quarter of new glass set within the lodge within the little park at v d the foot sum iii s v d 1/4*

A Lodge for the keeper of the Great Park

In 1536 and 1537 (ref.4,5) substantial accommodation was being built there for the keeper of the Great Park. At the same time there were separate references to work on Mr Bryan's new lodging and kitchen. It is unlikely that Mr Bryan, Master of the Toils (ref.12), was the keeper of the Great Park although he obviously had a substantial presence at Ampthill as evidenced by the number of letters he wrote from Ampthill (ref.13). He travelled quite a lot on court business during the 1530's and 1540's and so a more localised person was likely to be the keeper of the Great Park. It is evident from the records that Mr Bryan had a fully equipped lodge at Ampthill.

Looking in detail at these works we find:

1537 May-June

Carpenters *felling and hewing of timber for a frame to be made for a new kitchen with a larder and a stable to be set up at the lodge in the great park with four partitions to be made over the said kitchen, larder and stable for chambers for the keeper of the same park.....*

1537 July

Carpenters*making framing and setting up of a new kitchen a new larder and buttery and a new stable/ with like making and framing of 4 partitions over the said kitchen larder and buttery and stable for chambers for the keeper of the said great park/and making a door for Mr Bryans new kitchen.*

Tilers*more over not only pointing and tiling of Mr Briants lodging/ but like pointing of the hall kitchen.*

Bricklayers *Working as well upon forcing up of a doorway in Mr Bryans new kitchen as forcing the walls to the new door in the same kitchen.... ..*

1537 August

Carpenters*as also making framing and setting up of a new door for Mr Bryans new lodging/*

These entries lead me to think that Mr Bryan was not the keeper of the Great Park but that he had a substantial lodging and presence at Ampthill in or very close to the main complex. He is the only person recorded in the accounts as having a new kitchen and one presumes he must have had an existing kitchen. He was sending letters from Ampthill to Cromwell in 1535 (ref.13). He may have been steward at Ampthill but I found no confirmation of this. In 1536 he was steward of Brogborough (ref.14).

A lodge for the keeper of the New Park

The accounts (ref.3-11) record the start in July 1536 of a substantial lodge being built in the New Park for the keeper of the New Park. Work continued until September 1539. Unfortunately the accounts for 1538 have not been found.

1536 July-August

Carpenters *and working upon making and framing of a new hall and parlour and buttery and larder and gallery and a kitchen to be set in the new park for a lodge for the keeper of the said new park and also working upon framing and making of five partitions upon joists for 5 chambers for the said lodge by the king's commandment.* This carpentry work continued through until May-June 1537 when other trades started working. Tilers started lathing and tiling followed by bricklayers and plasterers in July 1537.

1537 July

Bricklayers...*and not only working upon making of two double chimneys at the new lodge in the new park/ but likewise underpinning the ground platte of the same lodge.*

Plasterers *Working as well upon new lathing pargetting and whiting of the walls and roof of the hall, parlour, gallery, pantry and buttery/ the walls and roof of a gallery and 4 chambers over the said hall, parlour, pantry buttery and kitchen at the lodge in the new park with like lathing, pargetting and whiting of the walls of the said kitchen.*

1537 Jul-Aug

Carpenters *Working as well upon making and finishing of a new pair of stairs for the new lodge in the new park*

Bricklayers *Working as well upon making and finishing of two double chimneys with a great oven and jaques at the lodge in the new park.*

1537 Aug-Sept

Carpenters *also taking down partitions between the hall and the parlour at the lodge in the new park to enlarge the said hall/ making of a new gallery with the said hall door leading to the stairs going to the chamber over the said hall/ with the boarding of the said 4 chambers over the hall, buttery, larder, and over the kitchen and not only making of windows and doors for the said new lodge making of a square hawpar without the said lodge hall door/ but like wise trussing up of a somer over the said hall at the lodge in the new park with 2 bolts and 2 plates of iron for that the said somer shall not settle nor sink*

Bricklayers *as also under pinning the said gallery at the lodge in the new park.*

1537 Sept-Oct

Carpenters *Working as well upon felling, hewing and squaring of timber ready for a new frame to be framed/ and set up for a parlour with 2 stories high joining to the east end of the lodge set up in the new park there.*

1539 February

Cable rope *To Richard Hawyed [Howard?] of Bedford for a cable rope for a gin to raise the new lodge in the new park price* 11s 8d.

1539 *To him (Robert Covington of Ampthill) more for making of 19 casements for the new lodge at 20d the piece* 31s 8d.

Glazing *To him (John Atwoode of Silsoe glazier) more for 2 hundred 23 foot of new glass of him had and employed at the new lodge in the new park at 5d the foot sum* 4£ ??....

This is clearly a more substantial building than that built for the keeper of the Great Park and later became known as the Great Lodge.

In 1542 Sir Francis Bryan was made keeper of several neighbouring parks including Comes Park sometimes called the New Park or the Park in the Hole. (ref.15) The lodge built in the New Park has been identified as the Great Lodge and more than likely became the lodge occupied by Bryan and in later years became the forerunner of the present Park House.

Simon Houfe writes in “The Building of Ampthill Park” (ref.16) that in the Commissioners survey of 1649 the Great Lodge is described “situate & being in or about ye middle of ye said park” and consisting of “one large hall 26 foot of assiz in length & 14 foot of assiz in breadth & a faire porch 10 foot & ½ inch in hight entering into ye said hall, 2 parlos at both ends of ye sd hall, whereof one is wholly wainscotted & ye other half wainscotted.” There were three storeys as well as an entrance porch and “five stack of fayre brick chimneys”

Gladys Scott-Thomson in Ampthill: Honour, Manor Park 1542-1800 (ref.17) gives further information, “there were four other chambers on the ground floor. Below were the necessary offices. Mounting to the first floor by a wide staircase there was to be found a large dining-chamber, two parlours corresponding to those downstairs, and six other chambers. Above the stairs were a number of convenient cupboards. Under the east end of the house was a brick cellar”. She continues “Besides this house there was another adjoining it, or really part of it. This building contained the household offices and the rooms for the servants. In addition there was a small brew-house. A brick stable with a hayloft over it, a granary, and a small hay-barn. To the south of the house was a courtyard; to the west a garden or young orchard; to the east a kitchen garden.” At first she thinks the Great Lodge was sited at the Grange south of the Woburn Road but later in her article she identifies it more correctly as the forerunner of the present Ampthill House to the north of the Great Park and Woburn Road.

It is most likely that the New Park lay to the north of the Great Park and was eventually incorporated into the Great Park and thus the substantial lodge in the New Park may well have been roughly in the middle of the extended park and become called the Great Lodge, the predecessor of Ampthill House.

A new lodge in the Great Park

Gladys Scott-Thomson also gives (ref.17)

.....“Also inside the park was the Little Lodge which served as a dwelling house for one of the park servants..... It was four-roomed and had its own little orchard.”

This lodge is likely to be that referred to in Ayrshire archives GB244 - ATD 5 (ref.18) as being built by Margaret Nicolls, widow of Francis Nicolls (ref.19), in 1631 whilst she was living in the Great Lodge.

The building of a new lodge in the great parke of Amthill.

*Paid unto **Margarett Nicholls widdowe** the summe of one hundred marks in full discharge and satisfaction of the summe of one hundred & fortie six pounds seventeen shillings and six pence by her disbursement for and towarde the new buildinge of a lodge in his majesties greate parke of Ampthill in the County of Bedfordshire over and above sundrie summes of money formerly paid and allowed unto her for the said work which summe of 66-6-4 is paid and allowed by the said commissioners warrant dated 30 March 1631, £66-6-4.*

Also another reference was found regarding Margaret Nicolls (ref.20).

Margaret Nicolls widow keeper of the great Park of Ampthill for sundry necessary disbursments for and towards the repairing upholding and amending the lodge pales

rails and fences of the said park for four whole years ended the twentieth day of May 1634 the sum of four score and thirteen pounds sixteen shillings and eleven pence.

This lodge is probably the forerunner of Russetts Lodge in the Great Park.

References

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Transcript in modern English of Manuscript MS.Don.c.206 folios 224-232 held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.
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- 12. The Muster at the King's Manor of Ampthill in 1536**
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- 13. Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII,**
1535 27 Feb, 28 Feb, 1 Mar, 1 June.
- 14. Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII,**
1536 26 Aug.
- 15. Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII,**
19 Jan 1537, 23 Nov 1538, 28 June 1542 Augmentation Book 235f. 57.
- 16. The Building of Ampthill Park,** Simon Houfe, Beds Magazine Vol.13,
No.98,p.72-80.
- 17. Ampthill: Honour, Manor Park 1542-1800** Gladys Scott-Thomson, Journal of
British Archaeological Association, Third Series. Vol XIII, 1950, pages 14-23.
- 18. The Building of a new Lodge in the Great Parke of Ampthill** Ayrshire archives
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- 19. Ampthill – A Goodly Heritage,** Andrew Underwood, p.43, 9 Notable
Townsmen.
- 20. Ampthill 1634** David Cunningham account – Kew E101/439/2.

Notes on Sir Francis Bryan in letters and papers

1531 Bryan in Paris
1533 Bryan to French King
1535 27 Feb, 1 Mar, 1 June letters to Cromwell from Ampthill
1536 26 Aug Steward of Brogborough
1536 Bryan at Ampthill, my lord steward
1537 July 17, Oct 2
1538 May Bryan entertains abbot in bedchamber
1538 17 Nov deer to new park
1538 23 Nov
1539 15 September
1541 27 Nov Bryant master of the toils
1542 June Bryan to be keeper of various parks including the Little Park and the Park in the Hoole alias Comes Park
1547 Brogborough

in accounts

1540 Aug/Sept ...one pair of hinges with hooks and a plate for Master Bryans buttery door weighing 10d pound....20d