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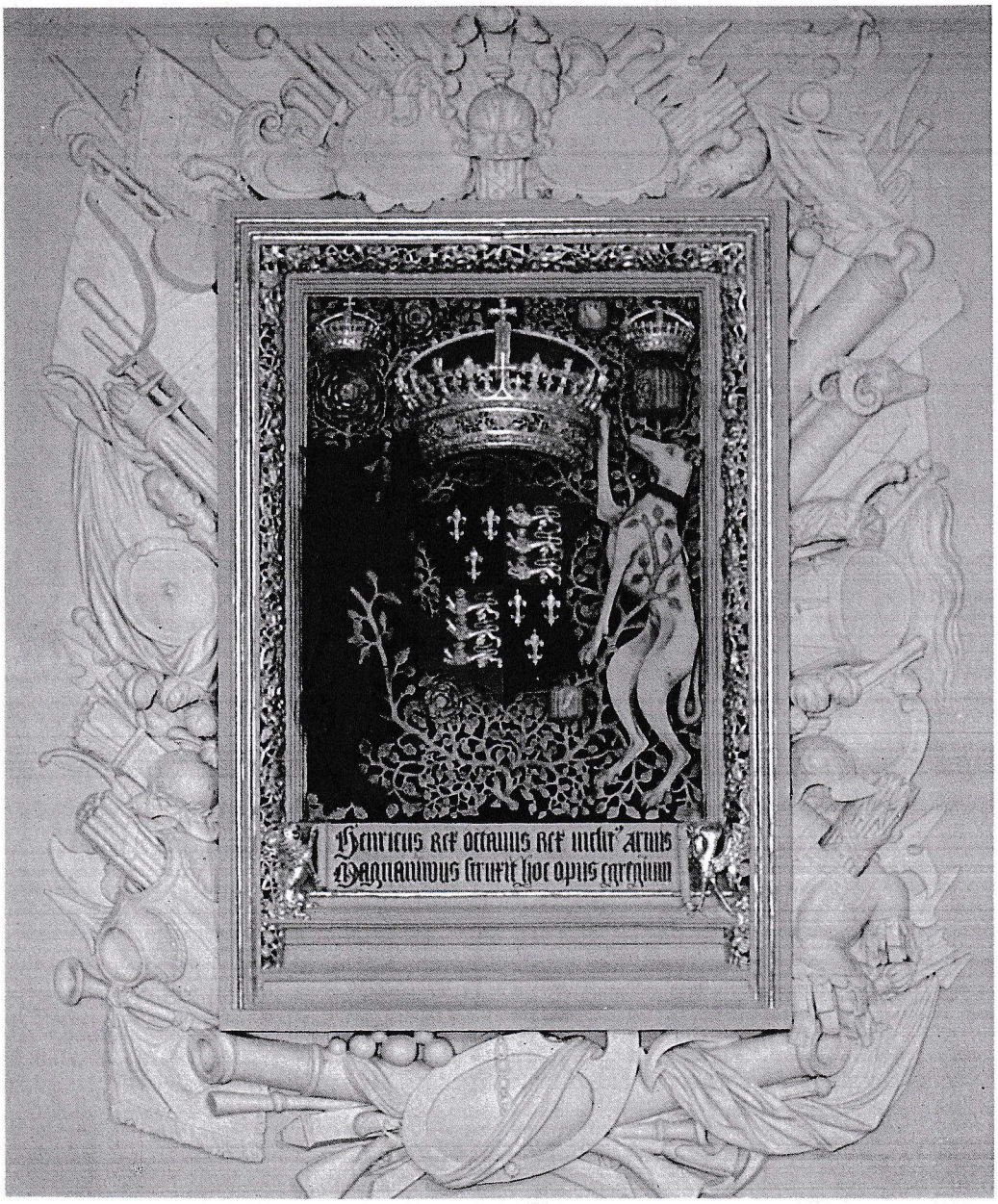
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The Royal Arms of King Henry VIII, from the gatehouse of New Hall, Essex (*E. Nixon Payne*).

AMPTHILL, BEDFORDSHIRE

The manor of Ampthill came into the hands of Henry VIII in 1524, apparently by purchase.[1] It was an attractive acquisition, for it included a well-wooded park and a fine castle, 'standing stately on an hille'. This castle, as Leland tells us, had been built by Lord Fanhope, 'a man of great renowne in the reigns of Henry the V and Henry the syxte,.... out of such spoiles as it is said that he wanne in Fraunce'.[2] Fanhope had married Henry IV's sister Elizabeth, widow of John, Duke of Exeter, and Leland conjectured that this royal marriage might have been 'a great cause of the sumptuous building there'.

According to Leland, Fanhope's castle contained '4 or 5 faire towers of stone in the inner warde, beside the basse-courte'. Nothing now remains of it, but an Elizabethan plan among the Cecil Papers at Hatfield House has recently been identified as a survey of Ampthill (Fig. 3)[3]. The orientation is uncertain, for none is indicated on the original drawing. The principal buildings, including hall and kitchen, formed one (probably the north) side of a spacious rectangular court entered through a large gatehouse. Several stair-turrets projecting from the walls of the courtyard at irregular intervals may be identical with the 'faire towers of stone' noted by Leland, but by the reign of Elizabeth the building evidently had the character of a large manor-house rather than of a fortified castle. Some large bay-windows are indicated in the private apartments at the upper end of the hall, and capacious 'jakes-houses' project from the outer walls. In an inner courtyard behind the kitchen there is a well protected by a well-house. Outside the gate there is an irregular outer courtyard defined by a long range of lodgings and stables.

From 1524 onwards Henry VIII was a frequent visitor to Ampthill, where he rejoiced in 'marvellous good health and cleanness of air'.[4] In 1533 it was at Ampthill that Catherine of Aragon was permitted to live during the divorce proceedings, but Henry resumed his visits in company with Anne Boleyn, and from 1534 onwards the Works accounts contain many references to repairs carried out 'against his maiestie's comyng unto his said mannor'.[5]

In the autumn of 1534 the floors of the king's and queen's chambers were repaired where necessary, and 'divers faults' in the leads over the queen's great chamber and elsewhere in the inner court were mended. Galyon Hone, the king's Chief Glazier, supplied a good deal of new glass for various rooms, including the king's dining chamber (where there was a 'great bay window'), the queen's 'reaying chamber', the queen's closet and the queen's bedchamber. Hone also supplied four of the new queen's badges, which were set in the windows of the king's dining chamber,the queen's bedchamber, the queen's 'reaying chamber' and the king's bedchamber. The queen's standing in the Great Park was also repaired and glazed with 19 feet 3 inches of new glass.[6]

[1] *V.C.H. Beds.* iii, p. 272.
[2] *Leland's Itinerary*, ed. L. Toulmin Smith i (1907), p. 102.
[3] Cecil Papers, Maps I. 14.
[4] *L. & P.* iv (2), 4507.
[5] E.g. B.M., Add. MS. 10109, f. 186.
[6] Bodleian Library, MS. Rawlinson D. 776, ff.235–241.

In 1536 more glass was bought from Galyon Hone. It included two panes of new glass for the king's presence chamber, one pane for his watching chamber, and two badges of his arms for his bedchamber. The king's and queen's arms and badges were also set in the queen's dining chamber, and some new glass was inserted in the windows of her bedchamber and privy chamber. At the same time tilers were busy ripping and retiling the roofs of the great hall and all the lodgings on the south and east sides of the inner court, while plasterers were repairing broken places on the north and east sides of the base court. The carpenters had two main tasks: one was the conversion of an old barn into lodgings for the Lord Privy Seal (Thomas Cromwell) and the courtier Sir Francis Bryan, who held the post of steward of Ampthill; the other the erection of a new timber-framed kitchen in the 'Wellhouse Court', where labourers had been 'digging and carrying away of the great hills of earth ...for that the new kitchen might be set up there'. The carpenters were also felling timber in the park in order to 'make and frame 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'.[1] This 'new park' appears to be identical with the Little Park of later documents, which lay to the south of the road from Ampthill to Woburn.[2] Work on the new lodge continued into the following year, when it was enlarged by adding a parlour to the east side and throwing the original parlour into the hall. At the same time its hall was provided with a great bay window. At the Manor House the principal improvement in 1537 was the construction of a bowling alley for the king. It was defined by turfed banks upon which seven wooden seats were set. At each end there was a boarded area surrounded by railings.[3]

In 1539 the repairs and improvements included the pointing of various buildings, including 'both sides of the hall roof', 'the offices in the Outer Court' and 'the side of all the king's lodgings in to the park and the side of the king's lodgings within the inner court', new making a great bay window 7 feet high and 7 feet wide in the king's privy chamber, making 'two new portalls', one in the presence chamber, the other in the king's raying chamber, making close stools 'to stande in the chambres where as the ladys and allso the gentyllwomen doth lye', and mending cracks in the leads 'over the great tower standing on the west side of the Manor'. Galyon Hone supplied 18 feet of new glass for the king's 'banketyng chamber', and some for the chamber beneath.[4]

The repairs carried out in 1540 were for the most part unimportant. In the chapel a closet was made 'for the King's Grace to hear Mass in'. The plumbers' work included repairing 'all the gutters and tyrretts about the Manor'. Galyon Hone repaired the glass in the king's presence chamber, the queen's raying chamber, the chamber next the queen's raying chamber, the queen's stool chamber, the Lord Privy Seal's lodgings, Master Comptroller's lodgings, Master Cofferer's lodgings, the king's standing in the Great Park, the Duke of Norfolk's lodgings and the clerk comptroller's lodgings. The arms of the king and queen were set in one of the

[1] Nottingham University Library, Newcastle MS. 02; Longleat House, MS. Misc. XXX, f. 18.
[2] Both Great and Little Parks are shown on a fragment of a sixteenth-century map of Ampthill in the Public Record Office (MPB 13). The Great Park was to the north of the same road, with the Manor House in its midst.
[3] Bodleian Library, MS. Rawlinson D. 780, ff. 218–245.
[4] Nottingham University Library, Newcastle MS. 03

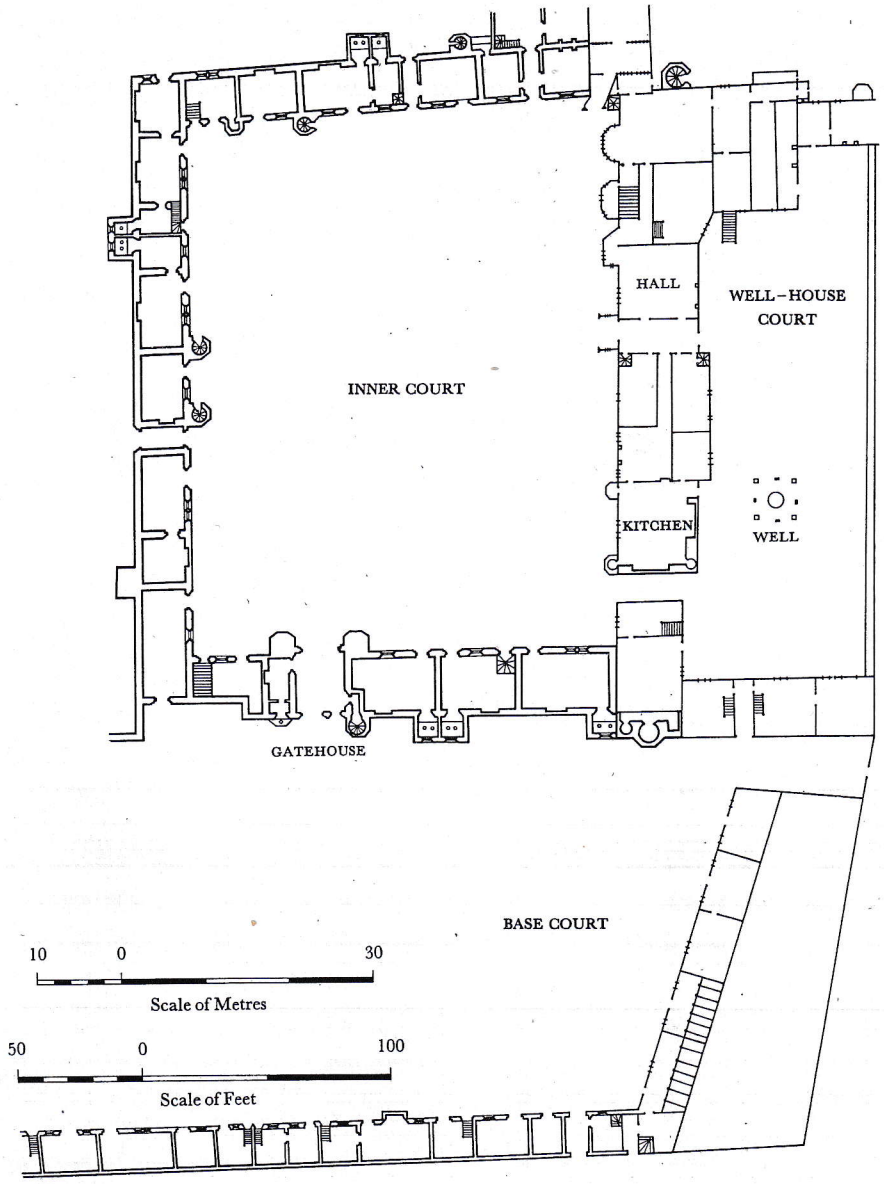


Fig. 3. Ampthill House, Bedfordshire, as surveyed *circa* 1567, with unexecuted proposals (3A) for a new royal apartment and lodgings (redrawn from Hatfield House, CPM I.14).

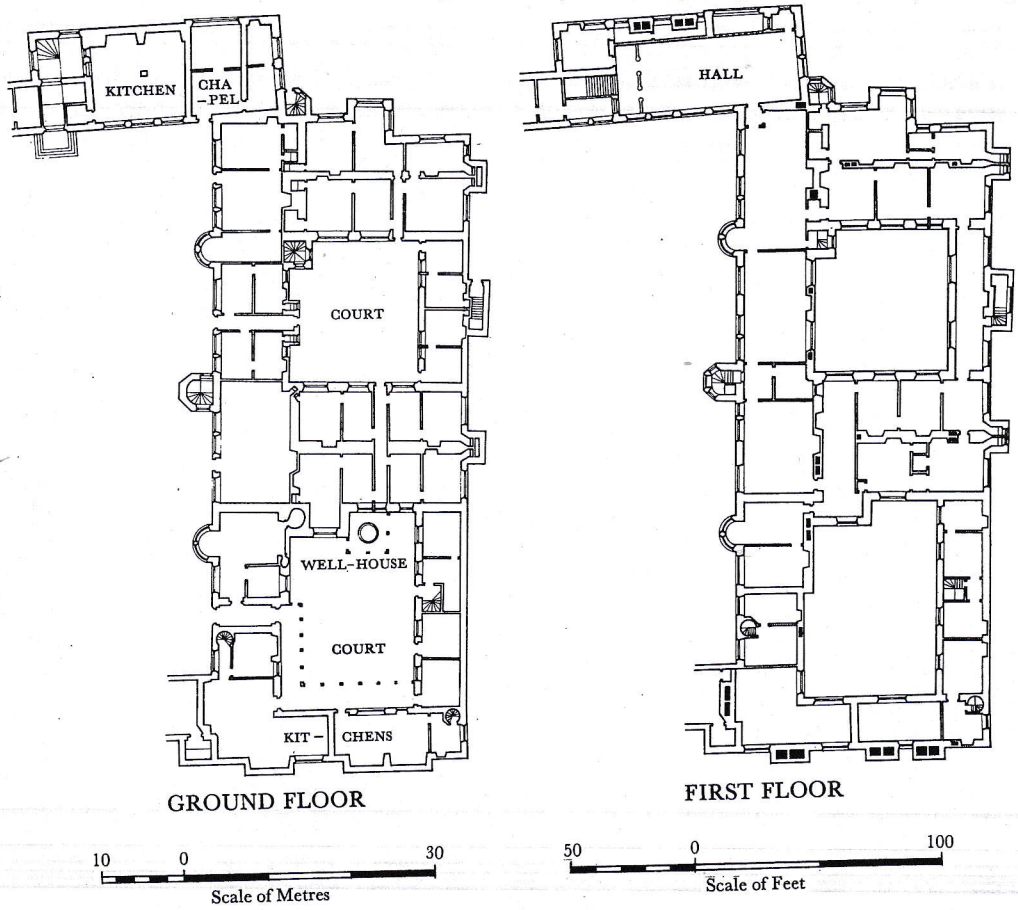


Fig. 3A.

windows of the queen's presence chamber and a crown was set over the king's badge in the glazing of the queen's privy chamber. Further glass for Dr. Chambers's lodgings, Mr. Long's chamber, Mr. Heneage's chamber and the wardrobe of the beds was supplied by John Otway of Silsoe.[1].

In 1542 Ampthill was formally constituted an 'Honor' by Act of Parliament, and a number of royal estates in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire were annexed to it.[2] According to the Act, the king's intention was 'to erecte, buylde and edifie upon his Grace's mannor of Ampthill, in the Countie of Bedford, sumptuous, statelye, beautyfull, and princelye buyldings and edyfices'. There is, however, no evidence

[1] Foljambe MS., ff. 224–233.
[2] *V.C.H. Beds.* iii, p. 271.

that any extensive new works ensued. In August and September 1543 carpenters were engaged, under the supervision of Lawrence Bradshaw, in 'making a new pair of winding stairs going up to the king's privy chamber', in making three new standings in the Great Park for the king's grace, and in replacing six rafters in the hall kitchen that had been accidentally burned, but the total expenditure amounted only to some £60.[1]

After Henry VIII's death Ampthill and its appurtenances did not at once cease to be a place of royal resort. Accounts survive for works in the neighbouring park of Brogborough 'for the Kyng's Maiestye to take hys pleasure & pastyme in at hys Gracy's comyng thether in the fyrst & second years of the reainge of our Sovereigne Lord Kyng Edward the vjth'. They included the making of butts, cutting turf for the bowling alley, and the purchase of hooks and hinges for the 'banketyng house'.[2] These works were paid for out of local revenues, but the accounts of Lawrence Bradshaw as Surveyor of the Works show that in 1552 he spent £63 3s. 3d. on unspecified works at Ampthill[3]. This may, however, have been the last time that any repairs were carried out. A survey taken only three years later show that the house was already falling into decay:

> The manor house of Ampthill in most part of the inner court is sore decayed in tiling and leading and the battlements of stone sore decayed and most of the glass windows clean gone, and the stone walls much shaken and chiefly the great kitchen and diverse spouts of lead broken and some clean gone.
>
> Item in the outer court there, all the timber of all the roofs of the houses must be new, for some of them are clean fallen down, and the tile broken, and the roof ready to fall.
>
> Item the old barn in the outer court is ready to fall down because the timber work is rotten and part of the tile broken and gone.[4]

According to a survey of the royal houses made soon after the accession of Queen Elizabeth, 'divers' portions of Ampthill had been 'taken down [and] the stone glass iron and lead laid up in store'. 'The rest', it was added, 'must be taken down for there is no recovery of it'[5]. Nothing appears to have been done until 1567, when the Works accounts contain 'charges for taking down some parts of the house', while Richard Rowlands and John Vincents were paid at the high rate of 2s. a day for twelve days spent in 'drawing and making a platte of the house'.[6] This 'platte' is almost certainly the drawing, already mentioned, which shows the house much as it was left by Henry VIII.[7] Some of the plan is drawn in full detail but other parts are in outline only and it was these, no doubt, that were being demolished. Attached to the outline portions are two superimposed hinged overlays showing the new

[1] B.M., Add. MS. 10109, ff. 186–192; E101/504/2. Bradshaw was paid 16d. a day as 'overseer and setter owte of the works'.
[2] E 314/29, f. 44.
[3] E 351/3326.
[4] G. Scott Thomson, 'Ampthill: Honour, Manor, Park 1542–1800', *Jnl. of the British Archaeological Assn.* xiii (1950), p. 17. The document cannot be found in the P.R.O. in E 314/25, the reference given in the article from which it is here quoted.
[5] SP 12/4, no. 57.
[6] E 351/3203.
[7] Cecil Papers, Maps I. 14; R. A. Skelton and J. Summerson, *A Description of Maps and Architectural Drawings ... at Hatfield House* (Roxburgh Club 1971), p. 80.

buildings proposed at two levels (Fig. 3A). They comprise a large block of lodgings containing two small courts, to be built on the site of the range forming the right side (seen from the main gate) of the main court. The overlays are L-shaped so that a new building is also shown replacing part of the block opposite the main gate. This contains on the ground floor a kitchen and a chapel and on the first floor a new hall to replace the old one in the range to be demolished. Beyond the hall in the adjoining range are three large rooms which probably form the principal royal apartment. These and the adjoining rooms present to the courtyard an almost perfectly balanced front in the centre of which is an octagon-form tower containing what were probably the privy stairs. It is impossible to say why Ampthill should have been chosen for a project of this rather ambitious kind unless it was to establish a house of access in a part of the country notably less well provided with such amenities than Kent, Surrey or the Thames Valley. The queen had not, so far as we know, visited Ampthill before 1567, though she may have had a sight of the old house when she stayed with Sir Henry Cheney, on progress, in 1564.[1]

Of these proposals nothing more is heard. The old house gradually fell into ruin. Then, in 1605, the idea of rebuilding suddenly revived, this time in the form of a hunting centre for the new king, James I. The Earl of Dorset, as Lord Treasurer, took the matter up with great energy and the letter he wrote to the officers of the Works gives a remarkable picture of the initiation, at the highest level, of a work of this kind. The original letter is lost, but a copy, certified by Dorset himself, remains among the Hatfield muniments:

> I have received significacon of his Maiesties express pleasure for the building of a fitt and convenient house upon the Ruines of *Ampthill* in which his Maiestie may be lodged, though not in State, yet sufficient to serve for the injoying of his pleasures of *Huntinge* and *Hawkinge* by the attendaunce of all such necessarie officers and no more as are requisite for his Roiall person to have. And herein also must be remembered that Place must be provided for the Queenes Maiestie the noble Prince, if haply it shall please his Maiestie to desire theire cominge to him while he is theare, not lodgings of State but lodgings of necessitie. And because it may be that some occasion maie require the attendance of some of his Councill upon his Maiestie there, I wishe also that some convenient Roomes for half a dozen privy Councillors besides the Lord Chamberlaine, the Treasurer, the Comptroller, Master of the Horse and Principal Secretarie be likewise appointed, such as are of necessitie, not any of pleasure. Thus much as I conceave it touchinge the King's pleasure in generall. But touching the particular: *ffirst*, I require you the Surveyor and comptroller with all speed possible to make your repaire to the said house at *Ampthill* and there to viewe and Survey not only the stately place where the old ruines *Ampthill* do remaine but also any other place (if any such there be) which may be found fitter and more Convenient in respect of water or any other Comoditie for the seate of a house there for his Maiestie in your opinion; but nevertheles to proceede in makinge of your presente plott upon the ruines of the old house. And yet as I saie if you find any other far better, only to be redy to inform his Maiestie thereof and then his Highnes to take his choice of that which shall be most to his Roiall contentacon and pleasure but to make the presente plott upon your old, and to make an estimate of the Chardge of the said plott.

[1] E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, iv (1923), p. 81.

The letter goes on to require the Master Carpenter to take stock of the timber available in the royal woods within thirty miles of Ampthill and to instruct the Sergeant Plumber to 'seeke to inform yourself of any fitt place from whence water maie be had to be brought to serve the said house ....and to make an estimate what will be the chardge to bringe the same in leade pipes'. It concludes by urging all concerned to use their utmost endeavours to accomplish buildings which were 'so greatly to the Contentacion of his Maiestie and the preservacion of his health and the Continuacon of his pleasures'.

To this copy of the letter, the earl appended the following note:

> I have written a like letter to a very excelent surveyor M[r.] Thorpe who shall not only survey it but make verie faier plots therof, I mean the 7 parts at Ampthill. T.D.[1]

The first part of Dorset's instructions are to the Surveyor and Comptroller jointly. The Surveyor at this time was Sir David Cuningham whose active participation in the Works was somewhat dubious;[2] and it is probable that Simon Basil, the Comptroller, who was to succeed as Surveyor in the following year, was the man to whom Dorset would look for the implementation of his orders. The two officers were to study the site, suggest alternatives if they thought fit, and produce a design.

Two plans exist which appear to have been made in response to Dorset's orders. One, in the Hatfield collection, is a very rough free-hand sketch showing a perfectly symmetrical house with a hall (30 feet by 60 feet) on the main axis, porticos at front and back and two courts, a grand staircase and a gallery exactly duplicated on each side. It is endorsed 'Draught of Ampthill' with the date 1603.[3] For this date it is a remarkably classical conception, but amateurishly rendered. The second plan is by John Thorpe and is included in his manuscript book of architecture now in the Soane Museum.[4] This a development of the sketch-plan, with the same symmetry, a hall of the same dimensions, grand staircases and (on the upper floor) galleries duplicated as before but with only one courtyard on each side of the axis. It is, in fact, a reduction and rationalisation of the sketch. Thorpe calls his plan 'Ampthill old howse enlardged per J. Thorpe', but as there is no convincing sign of any compromise with an existing structure, 'enlardged' must be taken to mean simply that more accomodation is being placed on the old site. It is tempting to regard the sketch plan as a preliminary study by Thorpe himself but the handwriting is certainly not his. The sketch-plan seems to be the work of a sophisticated amateur which Thorpe reduced and rationalized.

It does not seem, from Dorset's letter, that Thorpe was expected to make a design, but only a drawn survey of the existing house and in June 1606 a warrant issued for payment to him for 'drawing down and writeing fair the plottes' of Holdenby, Ampthill and Burghley.[5] The design must represent a separate initiative. Thorpe's survey is not known to exist and there are, in fact, indications in the form

[1] Hatfield MS. 111/151, dated from Dorset House, 3 August 1605 (Hist. MSS. Comm., *Cecil*, xvii, p. 349).
[2] Vol. iii, pp. 105–6, of this work.
[3] Cecil Papers, Supp. 37 (CP 111/1).
[4] J. Summerson (ed.) *The Book of Architecture of John Thorpe* (Walpole Soc., xi, 1966), pls. 120–1.
[5] E 403/2726.

of supplementary figured dimensions that the survey of 1567 was used by those concerned with the project of 1605.

Another plan in the Hatfield collection, not named but significantly dated September 1605, has been suggested by Dr. Girouard as possibly a response by one of the officers to Dorset's instructions.[1] This is a highly complex creation, incorporating ideas from Serlio, developed with bizarre ingenuity. As a 'conceit' on paper it is attractive but as a practical answer to the conditions so straightforwardly set out by Dorset it is almost ludicrous. It may well be a proposal for Ampthill, but whether by either of the officers concerned is doubtful.

On 30 September 1605, a warrant was directed to the Exchequer to provide 'such sumes as are required' for building the new house, the amounts to be certified by six members of the Privy Council in writing.[2] Dorset's instruction to the Master Carpenter and Sergeant Plumber were duly carried out but are not reflected in the accounts till 1609–10 when £404 15s. 5½d. was paid for tree-felling, brick-making, masonry, and other preparatory work.[3] By that date 283 trees had been felled, and 168,000 bricks made; timber, stone and tiles from the old house had been taken down and stored for re-use; the Sergeant Plumber had investigated springs; the masons had prepared windows and doorways. All these things are described in the accounts as being 'for the buildinge *intended* at the Manor of Ampthill' and it is obvious that by then the whole scheme had been abandoned. In 1607, having acquired Theobalds, James I had no need to look elsewhere for a place which would 'serve for the enjoying of his pleasures of hunting and hawking.' So Ampthill was abandoned; and when, in November 1649, the parliamentary surveyors made their report on the Great Park they stated that 'the ancient Cappitall Messuage house that was in the said park is totally demolished.'[4]

ASHRIDGE, HERTFORDSHIRE

After the dissolution in 1539 of the College of Bonshommes at Ashridge, near Berkhamstead, its buildings were retained by the Crown. Their situation on high ground among the Hertfordshire woods was evidently considered to be healthy, and the royal children were frequently in residence here.[5] Few alterations appear to have been found necessary, and a survey made in 1575 shows that the aisled church and its cloister were still standing intact. The survey mentions and gives the dimensions of the great hall (66 feet by 28 feet), the great chamber (46 feet by 26 feet), the chamber of presence (apparently the same size), the privy chamber (28 feet by 18 feet) and the bed chamber (48 feet by 24 feet). The chamber of presence was above the great chamber, the privy chamber was above 'a certain chapel', and the bed

[1] Hatfield C.P.M. II/ 8 and 17; M. Girouard, 'Designs for a Lodge at Ampthill', *The Country Seat*, ed. H. Colvin and J. Harris (1970), p. 13.
[2] E 403/2561, f. 90v.
[3] E 351/3244.
[4] E 317/Bedford, No. 10.
[5] *V.C.H. Herts.* ii, p. 209.