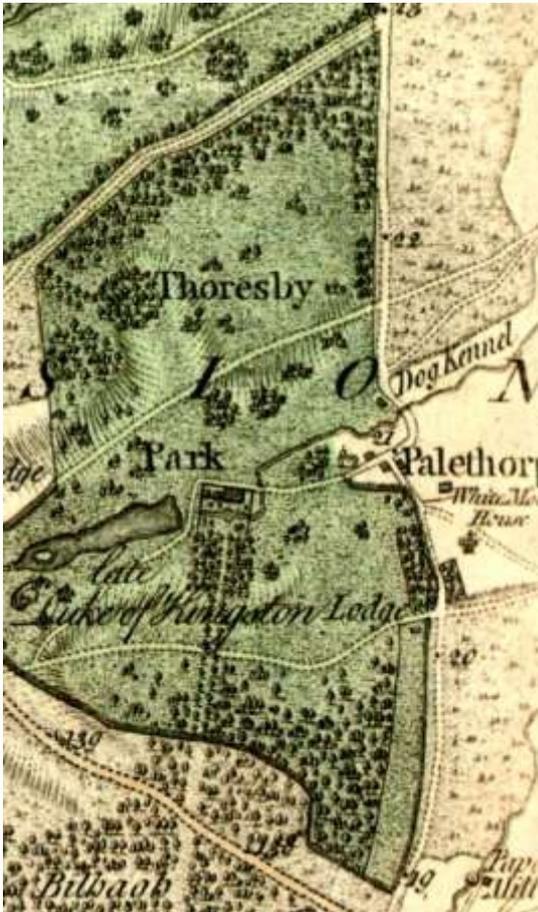


THORESBY

Robert de Pierrepont came over to England with William the Conqueror in 1066. In 1314 his descendant, Henry Pierrepont, married Annora, heiress of the Norman family of Manvers who owned the manor of Holme, later called Holme Pierrepont.

During the Wars of the Roses, another Henry Pierrepont was knighted for services to the Lancastrians by King Edward IV. His son George was knighted by King Edward VI in 1547. George's son, Sir Henry Pierrepont, married Frances Cavendish, daughter of Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury.

Their son Robert, married his cousin, Gertrude Talbot. He was created Lord Pierrepont, Viscount Newark and 1st Earl of Kingston upon Hull in 1628. He was one of the wealthiest and most influential men in Nottinghamshire.



Left: Extract from Chapman's map of 1776

Right: Robert Pierrepont, 1st Earl of Kingston upon Hull



In 1589 Mr William Lodge had a mansion at Thoresby. Thoroton describes him as an alderman of London. Thoresby and Perlethorpe appear to have belonged to various persons until 8 February 1633 when by Deed in Chancery Thoresby was conveyed to Robert Pierrepont. By 23 October 1634 the Earl had given Thoresby to his second son, William, who resided there until his death in 1679.

During the Civil War the Pierrepont family were divided in their loyalties. Robert's sons, Henry and Charles supported the King, and William and Francis were Parliamentarians. Their father at first remained neutral, his loyalty divided between his sons, saying 'When I take arms with the king against parliament or with parliament against the king, let a cannon-bullet divide me between them'. However, by 1643 he had declared himself a Royalist and was made Lieutenant General of the Royalist forces in Lincolnshire, Rutland, Huntingdon, Cambridge and Norfolk. He brought the king 4,000 men, 2,000 to fight and 2,000 to give arms and money to the value of £24,000. He was besieged at Gainsborough and fought bravely but was captured and sent by boat down the River Trent towards Hull. Royalist troops caught up with the boat and began to fire at the Roundheads on deck, inadvertently killing the Earl with a cannon ball.



Henry Pierrepont,
2nd Earl of Kingston

His eldest son, Henry Pierrepont, Lord Newark and Marquis of Dorchester, was the Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire and also a Royalist. Henry's brother Francis was the Parliamentary mayor of Newark and in 1642 had the power to train and exercise forces in the town, enrol volunteers and nominate officers. He raised a regiment of foot with John Hutchinson as its Lieutenant Colonel. He was described by Mrs Hutchinson as 'a good-natured individual although always a trifle aloof and anxious of his dignity'. He represented Nottinghamshire on the War Committee of the Northern Shires set up at York. After the war he disapproved of the Protectorate and refused to serve as sheriff of Nottingham in 1656. In his funeral oration the Rev. John Whitlock praised him as 'a lover of learning and learned men; one who was courteous, humble and just and merciful, and a loyal upholder of the reformed church'.

William, Robert's second son, was Member of Parliament for Salop and was regarded as one of the wisest counsellors in the House of Commons. Before the Civil War he brought in the Triennial Bill insisting that parliament was recalled at least every three years and that it could not be dissolved by the King until it had sat for 50 days. William tried hard to make peace between the King and parliament. When the Civil War was over he became MP for Nottinghamshire in Oliver Cromwell's parliament. He was close friends with Oliver, and also served as adviser to his son Richard Cromwell. However, he had always felt there should be conciliation between the King and parliament, and in 1660 he was one of the Committee Of State who restored the crown to Charles II and Charles appointed William one of his Privy Councillors in 1667. William died in 1678.

Robert's eldest son, Henry, became 2nd Earl of Kingston. He died without a male heir in 1680 and the 3rd Earl was his great-nephew Robert, who died two years later. Robert's brother William became the 4th Earl. William was given a grant by Charles II in 1683 to create a park at Thoresby out of Sherwood Forest containing 442 acres for which he paid £7,000 for timber and £100 for land:



Thoresby Hall
painted by
Dall

'We yield and grant to the aforementioned William, Earl of Kingston, as well as the aforesaid several parts and parcels of wood and woodland...'

Allowed from the crown for the maintenance of the Forest of Sherwood and the new park p.a.	£1000
Allowed for keepers' wages, hay and other necessaries for use in the new park	<u>£ 200</u>
	£ 800
Remains for the use of the Forest of Sherwood	
Keeping 40 couple of hounds @ £3 3s per week, viz. 4 loads of meal @ 12s per load and 5 horses @ 3s per horse p.a.	£ 163 16s
To Mr Charles Palmer as Huntsman, Deputy Ranger and Forest Keeper, p.a.	£ 60
To Charles Palmer junior as second Huntsman	£ 30
To Cornelius Short as Foot Huntsman and Feeder	£ 6
His board wages @ 4s per week	£ 10 8s
Four Forest Keepers @ £25 each	£ 100
Four Deputy Purlieu Rangers @ £10 each	£ 40
Two Hunting Grooms to ride with the hounds for themselves and horses, being four at least	£ 80
For six hunters for the Deputy Warden or other officer in chief with 2 grooms	£ 150
70 loads of hay for the forest deer @ 30s per load	£ 150
Carriage of hay @ 3s 6d per load	£ 12 5s
For coals and straw and all other necessaries and utensils for the service of the dog kennel	<u>£ 50</u>
	£ 807 9s

In the same year William built a new house at Thoresby. The house was of brick with stone dressings on a courtyard plan with a front of 13 bays and 2 storeys plus an attic covered by a large balustraded parapet. On the ground floor there was a library, a chapel, dressing rooms, Lady Kingston's chamber and breakfast room, servants' rooms including a butler's room and pantry. The best bedchamber was decorated in crimson and gold silk. The Green Drawing Room was hung with tapestries representing Thoresby park and house. There was also the Great Dining Room, the Sideboard Room, and the Great Hall. There were 13 bedrooms on the first floor.



Thoresby Hall, painted by Tillemans in 1720

Below are some of William's accounts in 1686-7:

To a messenger for the glazier at Chesterfield, 2 shillings

To Richard Sudesbury for hooping the hogs' heads and hooping and mending the beer butts £2, 12 shillings.

To William Whitehead by John Fox for cutting 91 cords of wood in Radmanthorpe, £3 9 shillings. To him more, for making weavers and butting, 15 shillings. To him more, for cutting of 1000 hop poles and getting timber for the great house, £2, 3 shillings.

To John Fox for carriage of 20 loads of hop poles from Scarcliffe Park to Thoresby @ 5 shillings 6 pence per load, £5 10 shillings. To him more, for carriage of wood to Langwith to make a fence and two loads to Thoresby, £1, 0 shillings 6 pence.

To the chimney sweeper for cleaning 16 chimneys, 8 shillings.

To Edward, stone miller, for dung and thatch bought by Mr Ross and for grinding marl, £11 17 shillings 6 pence. To him more, for repairs of the farm house, £10, 2 shillings 4 pence.

To Thomas Kirack and William Cooper for getting 10 loads of roots in Ozland, 10 shillings.

To Richard Jony for yeast to brew with in March last, 2 shillings.

To John Kirciak for helping him to brew 10 days in March last, 4 shillings.

To Mr Silverton, vicar of Edwinstowe for hops, 13 shillings 4 pence.

To Richard Hutchinson, the ratcatcher, for killing the rats and mice at Thoresby, £2.

To John Freebarrow, Samuel Hindson and other labourers for ditching and quick setting the break taken in Palethorpe Forest, £14, 1 shilling, 9 pence.

To Simon Stephenson for sharpening and other repairs of Langwith Mill, 11 shillings 2 pence.

To Richard Goacher for getting stone at Whalley quarry, 16 days, himself and brother, 17 shillings 4 pence.

To Thomas Crosswell, house painter, for painting window frames and sashes 16 weeks, £4, 16 shillings.

To Benjamin Onion and Thomas Halliwell for carrying door boards out of the yard and setting them up in Thoresby House, £2, 7 shillings.

To labourers for getting and mixing earth for the orange house, £5, 12 shillings 3 pence.

To Richard Cotts for repairs of the furnaces house at Orton, £3, 2 shillings 9 pence. More, for thatching the boat house at Thoresby, £1 12 shillings.

To David Simpson, the gardener, to Lady Day 1687, £29.

William had no children when he died in 1690 and the title of 5th Earl of Kingston upon Hull went to his brother Evelyn, who was created Marquis of Dorchester in 1706 and Duke of Kingston upon Hull in 1715. He married Lady Mary Fielding who died in 1697. His second wife was Isabella Bentinck, daughter of the 1st Earl of Portland.

Evelyn's eldest daughter from his first marriage became Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu who accompanied her husband to Constantinople, where he was ambassador. She became a famous writer and celebrity and she introduced to England the idea of inoculation against smallpox, which she had learnt about in Turkey, persuading the Prince of Wales to have some of his children inoculated.



William Pierrepont,
4th Earl of Kingston upon Hull



Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu
wearing Turkish costume

In Turkey in 1716 Lady Mary wrote that she 'was enchanted with that paradise of the senses ...and luxurious people'. She described the Sultana: 'I never saw anything so gloriously beautiful: the unutterable enchantment of her smile! Her eyes! Large and black, with all the soft languishment of blue. Her dress: a caftan of gold brocade, flowered with silver, well fitted to her shape, and showing to admiration the beauty of her bosom. Her drawers were pale pink; her waistcoat green and silver; her slippers white satin, finely embroidered; her lovely arms adorned with bracelets of diamonds; her broad girdle set round with the same; upon her hand a rich Turkish handkerchief of pink and silver; her own fine black hair hanging a great length of waving masses, and one side of her head a bodkin of jewels. I do not think all nature could have furnished such a scene of beauty.' Mary often adopted this style of dress herself, even after she had returned to England.

The 2nd Duke of Kingston with his sisters

The 1st Duke of Kingston's son William died before his father and the title passed to his grandson, Evelyn, who became the 2nd Duke in 1726. When Charles Stuart landed in Scotland, Evelyn raised a Regiment of Light Horse and fought at Culloden as Colonel of the Regiment in 1745 the accounts for which are given below.



The Battle of Culloden, 1745

'Account of the money raised by subscription in the County of Nottingham October 1 1745 for the immediate defence of the county and support of his Majesty's person in the late rebellion and of the charges of raising, clothing and arming the regiment of light horse under the command of his Grace, the Duke of Kingston and other expenses attending the same.

Nov 19 Total of the subscription money received by Mr Abel Smith of Nottingham, Treasurer of the Subscription	£8,526 08s 08d
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Oct 15 1746 Received of Lord Robert Sutton for 176 horses belonging to the Regiment when it was broke at Nottingham	£ 554 08s 00d
Total charge	£9,081 06s 08d

The accounts include

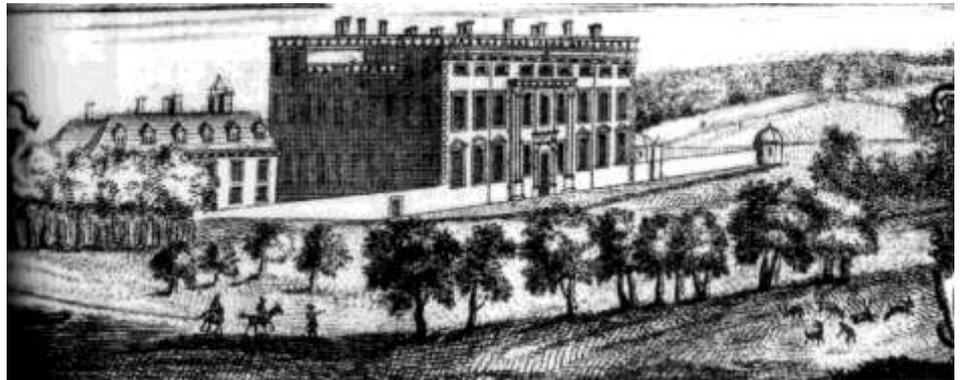
Nov 19 1745 Paid to Cornet George Brown for 41 horses for His Grace	
The Duke of Kingston's own troop @ £10 per horse	£ 410 00s 00d
To 1 grey horse for the kettle drum	£ 10 00s 00d
To Lieut.Col. Mordaunt for 41 horses for his troop	£ 410 00s 00d
To Major Hartropp for 41 horses for his troop	£ 410 00s 00d
To Lord Robert Sutton for 41 horses for this troop	£ 410 00s 00d
To Capt Evelyn Chadwick for 41 horses for this troop	£ 410 00s 00d
Feb 26 1746 To William Wilson for clothing of private men	£ 1178 00s 00d
To Henry Slade for silver laced hats	£ 1921 16s 00d
To Thomas Mason for Carbine buckets, straps etc	£ 122 00s 00d
To John Cadwoll for 60 pairs of boots	£ 45 00s 00d
To Benjamin Holmes for iron skull caps	£ 34 07s 06d
For 252 sets of cross belts	£ 94 10s 00d
For 252 leather shoulder straps	£ 6 06s 00d
For 252 pairs of spurs @ 8d	£ 8 08s 00d
For the Kettle Drums, oilskin cases and pack cases	£ 8 08s 00d
For carriage of clothing, arms & sundry bills	£ 80 19s 06d
For 14 chests of arms	£ 9 00s 00d
For several fees paid at the Tower for the arms	£ 10 03s 06d
For a pair of embroidered standards and a case	£ 20 18s 06d
For new grinding and fitting up of broad swords	£ 12 12s 00d
To Mr Pringle for the medicine chest furnished for the Regiment	£ 18 04s 00d
To Jos Smallpage for curry combs, brushes, straps hair cloths etc	£ 8 08s 00d
To John Storer for 2 hoops for the standards	£ 0 06s 06d
To John Perry for 41 pairs of tanned leather gloves	£ 2 14s 08d
To Richard Hanson for 82 pairs gloves and 3 dozen sword strings	£ 5 11s 00d
Oct 15 1746 Paid 221 Troopers on disbanding the regiment a gratuity of three guineas each man	£ 696 03s 00d
June 4 1747 Balance remaining in Mr Smith's hands	£ 3054 19s 08d
Out of which has been returned to the subscribers	
A dividend of seven shillings in the pound	£ 2775 15s 10d'



Thoresby Hall in 1725 painted by Tillemans

Evelyn served in the army for the rest of his life, becoming a General in 1772.

In 1745 there was a serious fire at Thoresby which destroyed the house and much of its contents. The second house was designed by John Carr and built between 1767-71. It was of red brick with seven bays and a central feature of four Ionic columns holding a two storey stone portico with the Kingston arms on the pediment.



Thoresby Hall, engraved before the fire of 1745

Evelyn Pierrepont, 2nd Duke of Kingston

The cost of the building was mentioned in a memo of 1805. Mr Carr's estimate for the house, exclusive of the offices, was £11,000 but the actual expense totalled £17,000. The cost of building stables, greenhouse, engine house, engine works with alterations and repairs of various other offices amounted to £13,000 more.

Furniture purchased and brought from His Grace's house in London came to £4,000. The Saloon, more usually called the dome, was a sky-lit room on the first storey at the end of the main staircase. The walls, floor and 14 pillars were in imitation marble that cost £1000. The marble chimney cost £850. John Carr was paid £850 for his architectural drawings and measurements. Humphry Repton landscaped the grounds at this time



Thoresby Hall
in 1854

The house was described by Edwin Eddison: 'The basement storey is of rusticated stone, with two storeys of brickwork above, the principal front having a tetrastyle portico of the Ionic order, in ornament. The window frames are richly gilt externally. From the Entrance Hall a double staircase, surmounted by a dome, leads to the upper rooms, and a very rich effect is produced by the light entering upon it through windows, yellow stained. The octagonal Drawing Room is richly hung with crimson damask. The rooms are well furnished and in the Dining Room is a recess divided from it by four elegant pillars spirally fluted, with gilt capitals.'

When the 2nd Duke died in 1773 he left his estate to his wife Elizabeth Chudleigh. She had married Augustus John Hervey, Earl of Bristol, in 1744 and had been the mistress of the Duke of Kingston for ten years before marrying him in 1769. There were no children of their marriage and the title became extinct. However, Evelyn's will was contested in 1776 when the Duke's nephew Philip Meadow brought Elizabeth to court where she was tried and found guilty of bigamy, having never obtained a divorce from the Earl of Bristol.

The trial of the Duchess took place in April 1776, described by Robert White was 'attended by Queen Charlotte and the young Prince of Wales, and others of the royal family, crowds of peeresses and foreign ambassadors. During the trial the Duchess was remarkably composed, but when his Grace spoke, she fainted and was carried out of the court. She afterwards resided on the Continent, and 22 years later on 26 August 1788 died in Russia. All the peers found her guilty but one – the Duke of Newcastle – who declared 'upon his honour, that she was legally, but not intentionally, guilty.' She was allowed to keep the Duke's estate. However, when she died in Paris in 1786 her main heir was Charles Meadows, Philip's younger brother.



Elizabeth Chudleigh

From the Duchess of Kingston's Will, dated October 7th 1786:

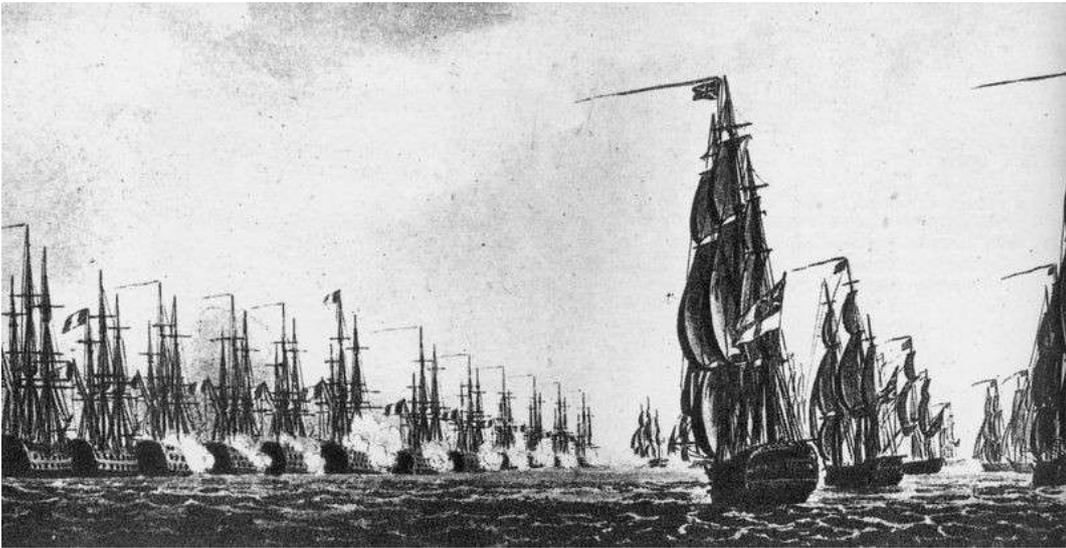
'I also give and bequeath to the said Charles Meadows all the communion plate which belonged to the chapel at Thoresby and which were taken away with the other vessels and sent by mistake to St Petersburg in Russia and my gold desert plate with a case of knives, forks and spoons and four golden salt cellars all engraved with the arms of Kingston and also a large salt cellar called Queen Elizabeth's salt cellar, together with my gold and gilt plate, either for use or ornament and likewise the following plate:

- 1 large cistern with ornaments, weight 3,606 ounces
- 2 large silver vessels to put wine in, weight 632 ounces
- 2 large tureens with covers, weight 1,342 ounces
- 2 tureens with handles, weight 592 ounces
- 2 corner tureens together, weight 650 ounces
- 2 soup dishes, weight 171 ounces
- 4 ice pails together, weight 252 ounces
- 2 cups together, weight 266 ounces
- 2 cups together, weight 158 ounces
- 6 cups together, weight 278 ounces
- 6 cups together, weight 188 ounces
- 2 cups together, weight 44 ounces
- 2 cups together, weight 70 ounces
- 8 cups plain round together, weight 234 ounces
- 8 deep cups together, weight 184 ounces
- 4 corner cups together, weight 76 ounces
- 6 sauce boats together, weight 182 ounces
- 5 dozen plain plates together, weight 1,441 ounces
- 6 dozen wrought plates together, weight 1,437 ounces

I also give him my 9 dozen moco handle knives and forks mounted in gold which I bought at Rome and likewise the whole length portrait of the late Duke of Kingston and of the present Duchess of Kingston to be put up at Thoresby which as well as all the plate shall be reputed as an heirloom of the said house; and I also give him the several pieces of cannon, ships and vessels on Thoresby Lake etc etc.'

Charles Meadows, the son of the 2nd Duke's sister Francis, succeeded to the estate in 1786 and took the name and arms of Pierrepont by Royal licence, becoming Viscount Newark, Lord Pierrepont and in 1806, 1st Earl Manvers. He served in the Royal Navy until 1763.

His son Charles Herbert, born in 1778, became the 2nd Earl Manvers in 1816. He married Mary Letitia Eyre of Grove in 1804 and had five children. He also joined the Royal Navy and took part in the Battle of Nile under Nelson when in 1798 he was described as 'commander of the Kingfisher, a brig mounting 18 six-pounders, with a complement of 120 men, he captured, after a smart action, La Betsey, a French ship privateer of 16 guns and 118 men, nine of whom were killed and wounded; the Kingfisher having only one man wounded. Whilst in the same vessel, he also captured Le Lynx of 10 guns and 70 men; L'Aventivia Ferolina, of 1 gun and 26 men; and L'Espoir, of 2 guns and 39 men. He was made a Post Captain of the Spartiate, one of the prizes taken by Sir Horatio Nelson in Aboukir Bay December 24 1798.'



Battle of the Nile, painted by Thomas Whitcombe

The family's naval background was reflected in the park, described by Edwin Eddison in 1854: 'The house stands in the centre of a wide park, 10 miles in circumference. To the west of the house is a lake, formed by the river Medin, sometimes adorned with a handsome miniature vessel. This broad and magnificent sheet of water is protected at its eastern extremity by a mimic battery, consisting of a mortar and guns, some of the latter apparently of Spanish origin. At the western side on a commanding and picturesque eminence, is the residence of 'the sailor' an old naval companion of his Lordship's, a modern erection known as Fort William and protected in like style. On the south margin of the water is a monument to the memory of two former inhabitants of Edwindstowe, one a mariner called Neil, the other, Bridesall, who were drowned while crossing the lake on a stormy evening on 29 January 1800 in a canoe. Several of the woods and groves around are named in memory of naval heroes'.



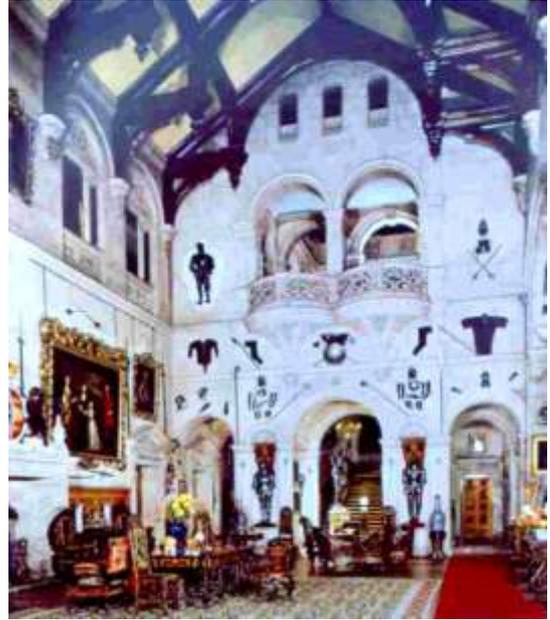
Thoresby Hall,
engraved about
1830

On the death of the 2nd Earl in 1860, the title went to his second son, Sydney William Herbert, the 3rd Earl Manvers, born in 1825. He married Georgine, daughter of Auguste Louis de Franquetot, Duc de Coigny in 1852 and was Lt Colonel Commandant of the Sherwood Foresters Regiment in 1868. The 3rd Earl Manvers completely rebuilt the house between 1865 and 1875. Thoresby New House was described as a good example of modern Elizabethan style, built of Steetley stone.

Thoresby Hall
after 1875



The house was designed by Anthony Salvin. It was described by Robert White in 1874 as having a 'Great Hall 65 feet long, 31 feet wide and 48 feet high to the apex of the open hammer beam roof'.



The Great Hall

'The Dining Room is 40 feet by 25 feet.'



The Dining Room

'The Library is 44 feet long and 25 feet wide with panelling in light and dark oak with wainscot bookshelves and the walls hung with red damask.'

The Library



'The Drawing Room is 53 feet by 25 feet, the walls hung with light blue damask with graceful silver grey figures with a frieze of gold. The panelled ceiling is coffered and ornamented in pale salmon and light blue. Lady Manvers' boudoir is 20 feet by 19 feet with the panels having carved frames filled with tapestry. The chimneypiece originally stood in a palace in Milan and is elaborately carved in statuary marble with three cupids on each side holding fish and birds. There are 29 rooms on the first floor including 11 bachelors' rooms, 14 servant rooms and a mezzanine floor of 10 bedrooms and bathrooms for the ladies' maids'.



The Drawing Room





Thoresby Hall about 1910

'The terrace is tastefully laid out with ornamental flowerbeds. There is an octagonal fountain in the centre with 4 smaller ones around it. At each end of the terrace are octagonal gazebos surmounted by Elizabethan stone decorations. To the east of the hall are the gardens which cost £4,000 covering 8 ½ acres'. In 1875 the Duke of Westminster described it 'as one of the grandest houses in England, and in the midst of a forest', although the house was only used by the family between August and January when they entertained large shooting parties. The rest of the time the family remained in London.



Thoresby Hall about 1910

When the 3rd Earl Manvers died in 1900 the title went to his son Charles William Sydney, born in 1854, who became a lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards. His son Evelyn, the 5th Earl, died in 1940. Gervase Evelyn Pierrepont, the 6th Earl Manvers was the grandson of the 3rd Earl Manvers. He and his wife Marie Louise Roosevelt and their daughter Frederica Rozelle Ridgeway came to Thoresby in 1940. The 6th Earl died in 1955 and the title became extinct, although the estate remained in the family. The house was purchased by Warner Hotels and opened as a hotel in 2000.



Thoresby Hall in 2000 before restoration

Thoresby Park is situated off the A614. In Thoresby Courtyard is an art gallery and craft shops, open 10.00 – 17.00 daily, admission free.

Thoresby Park, Nr Ollerton, Notts, NG22 9EH. 01623 822009. Email enquiries@thoresby.com

Source Material

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