

## **BRIGSTOCK MANOR HOUSE**

The Manor House is thought to have been built originally as a royal shooting lodge in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It would have been situated with the rest of the village in a clearing in Rockingham Forest.

The first connections of the Montague family with the manor of Brigstock are uncertain, but it appears that Thomas Montague had a son Edward, born at Brigstock in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Edward later became Speaker of the House of Commons and died at Boughton. One of his younger sons was known as Roger of Brigstock and it was to him and his heirs forever that James I granted the manor of Brigstock of 125 acres, with rights of enclosure, for the s of £230 and a yearly rent of 40s 6d. This was granted on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1607. Roger died without children and the manor passed to his nephew, Sir Edward Montague, afterwards made Lord Montague of Boughton.

It is probable that the hall and the early part of the Manor House were built by Thomas Montague and the late portions by Roger Montague. It may also be stated that Thomas was involved with the large works being executed at that time on the church in Brigstock and possibly in the erection of the south east chantry chapel.

Built of random rubble, the original Manor House consisted of one large room 34 feet by 15 feet. It had a stone flagged floor. The ancient garden porch is, presumably, the original front entrance.

The work of the 15<sup>th</sup> C (1480-90) which still exists comprises the hall on the ground floor, with the two porches and the solar or upper hall above it. The buildings of this date probably extended much further both ways than now. The original fireplaces remain in the hall and the solar. The solar is a very fine room, lit by four long, two-arched windows. The Northern entrance is the more ancient of the two and has richly moulded doorways. This portion of the building, however, underwent some alterations when the new works of Roger Montague's time were in hand, that is the early 1600s.

The tops of the walls of the solar were rebuilt and a new roof erected with arched principals of oak, and the entrance porch was raised so as to form a small bay window room on the same level as the solar. The other porch was also raised so as to obtain a room above it. The hall block northwards was partially rebuilt, but preserving a four-light Elizabethan window and embattled chimney.

The whole of the building westward of the hall was entirely rebuilt. They were built with low mullioned windows, gabled dormers and chimneys of the period. It was a much better style of masonry than the earlier more roughly built walls. The interior fortunately escaped modernisation. In all the rooms the arched stone chimney pieces and shelves remain, as do the fine old oak staircase and handrail, and the old wooden doors and their beautifully made wrought iron hinges.

The house had become very dilapidated when the work of restoration was decided upon by the Duke of Buccleuch in the last half of the nineteenth century. Whole portions of the gable wall had to be rebuilt and minor modifications were made in the internal and external arrangements. The ancient upper hall had been made into two storeys by a floor level with eaves and had been used as a granary. The weight of the corn had caused the walls to bulge and so it was necessary to remove the inserted floor and to reinforce the arched principals with iron bolts. A portion of the floor was, however, repaired and forms a gallery where the ancient one was.

Some remains of the old screens still existed in the lower hall and this was made good with oak panelling found in the house. The hall and smaller sitting rooms were panelled with fine old oak panelling from Warkton Church.

Considerable additions were constructed to make the building into a manor house. The chief features are:-

The Library: 16' X 16' with a stone flagged floor, old stone fireplace and heavy oak doors.

Boudoir: Situated over the library and has Chinese panels.

Adonis' Dining room: 24½' X 15½' is decorated in classical style with finely carved period marble walls.

Solar: Situated over the above room it has a vaulted roof, old oak beams and panelled walls.

Moat: The property was surrounded by a moat fed from the waters of Harper's Brook which flows through the garden. The moat is in a good state of preservation. In places it has been walled with old stone and the base is now grassed over.

Staircase: There is a very old oak carved staircase which gives access to the first floor.

The last addition to the Manor House was made about 65 years ago in order to provide servant accommodation. Both additions were in harmony with the old work and the gardens in this latter period were carefully laid out and considered to be a showpiece.

One of the most attractive features of the Manor House is the extensive area of gardens. There is an old sundial situated in the middle of one of the lawns. Along one side of the gardens is Harper's Brook making the whole site most picturesque. Across the brook is an old wooden bridge.

The Manor House has, in recent years, been owned and used by British Steel. The gardens are maintained to a very high standard and it is a pleasure to walk and sit in them on warm summer afternoons.

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