



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Hardwick Old Hall

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Hardwick Old Hall is the ruins of an imposing Elizabethan mansion. It was built around the core of an older manor house, which had been the birthplace of Bess of Hardwick, more formally known as the Countess of Shrewsbury.

Bess rose from genteel poverty to solid wealth through a series of four advantageous marriages, the last of which was tempestuous. She separated from the Earl of Shrewsbury, her fourth husband, and moved back to her old home at Hardwick in 1584. The manor house was not grand enough for the Countess and her household and she began a series of changes in about 1587, adding wings at each end of the original building. Each wing had an impressive great chamber for entertaining; one was for use by Bess, the other for her son, the latter chamber designed on such a lavish scale that it may be that Bess planned it in the hope of a royal visit.

In spite of the many changes, Bess was dissatisfied with the overall effect of the building, which was described as haphazard and the result of hurried planning. She decided to begin a more ambitious residence nearby, even before the Old Hall was completed and before the Earl's death in 1590 brought her additional wealth. The New Hall took seven years to build and incorporated several features copied from the old one, such as the large top storey windows, and the style of plasterwork in the great chambers.

After Bess moved out of the Old Hall in 1597, the building continued



Hardwick Old Hall from the front showing the western half of the ruins

to be used by her household and still contained many furnishings. The Old Hall was eventually abandoned in the eighteenth century and left to fall into ruins. Stone and wainscot from the ruins were sold off. The site is now owned by the National Trust and maintained and managed by English Heritage. A visit to the Old Hall can provide many clues about the choices available to Bess and the decisions she took when enlarging and decorating the original building in a manner befitting her status. A visit here can also complement a visit to the New Hall, owned and managed by the National Trust.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE HALL

Lodges, courtyard and north front

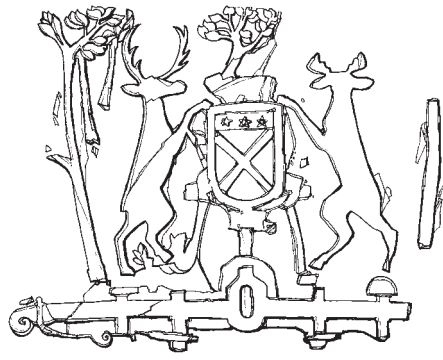
The three-storey lodges at the east and west ends of the entrance court were added in the seventeenth century. In the centre of the north front across the courtyard is the entrance porch and, behind it, the great hall of the original manor house. On each side are the wings added by Bess. The north wall of the east wing was demolished in the eighteenth century, but it is still noticeable that this wing is out of alignment with the rest of the Hall.

The hall

Through the entrance porch is the hall which, by the time of Bess's building programme, was used mostly for servants' meals. At the opposite end there is a large fireplace with the remains of plasterwork depicting a stag, a symbol of the Hardwick family.

The east wing

This part is just a shell, but, by looking up to the fourth floor, the remains of a large room known as the Forest Great Chamber can be seen. It is so called because it has plasterwork over the fireplace which shows a forest scene with deer.



The gallery overmantel shows Bess of Hardwick's coat of arms.

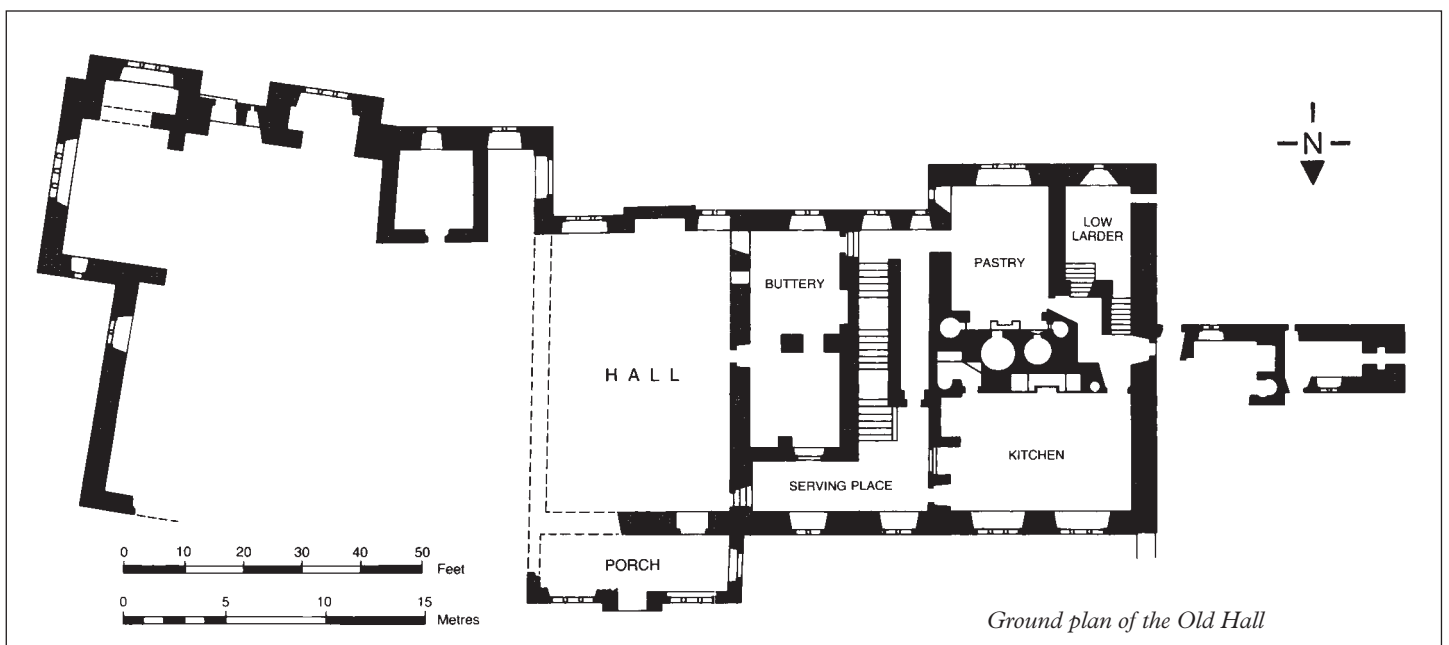
Great chambers were used for entertaining important guests and were designed to show off the owner's fashionable taste and wealth. The plasterwork in the Forest Great Chamber would have been brightly painted, and together with leather wall hangings below a plaster frieze and spectacular views from the large windows this must have been a most impressive room. Other rooms in this wing included Bess's bedchamber, withdrawing rooms and a dining room.

The west wing

This wing was occupied until the end of the eighteenth century. It was planned in three vertical sections: the staircase flanked by the buttery and kitchen sections, each with living accommodation, known

as lodgings, on the first and second storeys above. Occupying most of the third floor at the top is the Hill Great Chamber.

Most of the flooring is missing but the stairs are intact. The buttery is reached through a doorway in the middle of the west wall of the hall. Butts of beer were stored in here, and poured for serving. From here a fireplace on the top floor can be seen; this depicts Bess's coat of arms, two stags on each side of a shield. The main part of the west wing is entered through a doorway in the hall by the entrance lobby. The first area is the serving space where food was collected from the kitchen ready to be taken to the dining areas in each wing. Through the serving space is the kitchen with its arched fireplace where meat was roasted. The kitchen privy is in a recess beside the fireplace. From the kitchen the second floor is visible. On the east wall there is a plaster overmantel with a grotesque face and on the opposite wall an overmantel in the nursery. Details include an angel and defaced figures shown in a room with a table. To the right of the fireplace is the doorway to a lobby off which are larders on two levels and the pastry where the baking was done in four large ovens. From the pastry, more plasterwork on the floors above can be seen; one



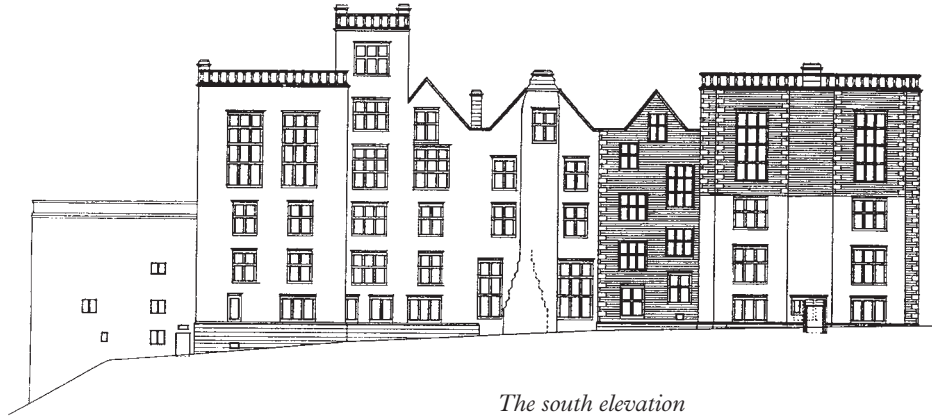
Ground plan of the Old Hall

overmantel has a strapwork pattern and another depicts water, one of the four elements which Elizabethans believed were essential to life, the others being air, fire and earth.

Access to the floors above is via the staircase, not as wide as the one in the New Hall, but still impressive with its long flights of steps. At first-floor level are the rooms of William Cavendish, Bess's son, and the nursery and the wardrobe (the room where table and bed linen was stored). Up the stairs to the second-floor are rooms which were allocated to two of Bess's senior staff, Mr Reason and Mr Digby. The top servants in a household were often of gentle birth themselves; Mr Digby was later knighted. The themes on the plaster overmantels here show air, another of the four elements, and a man milking a sheep or goat. Looking down, the overmantel in William's room, depicting a man struggling with a deer is visible. At the top of the next landing is the Hill Great Chamber. This is an exceptionally grand room; the large stone fireplace has survived and above it is a massive overmantel. The giant figures are possibly Gog and Magog, representing the forces of evil, on each side of a figure of Desire, modelled on a Dutch engraving. The Little Gallery across the landing led to the best apartment over the hall, now completely disappeared, which comprised a bedchamber and withdrawing chamber.

The south Front

This is best seen after leaving the Hall and courtyard. It is reached by turning right and continuing around the east pavilion to the south side. This is much more complete than the north front and shows the combination of gable ends in the central portion and flat roofs with balustrades like those at the New Hall, at each end. The small arched building in front of the Hall contained a lead water cistern which supplied water to the Hall.



The south elevation

The Society of Antiquaries

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Bess of Hardwick

A woman of masculine understanding and conduct, proud, furious, selfish and unfeeling. She was a builder, a buyer and seller of estates, a moneylender, a farmer and a merchant of lead, coals and timber; when disengaged from these employments, she intrigued alternately with Elizabeth and Mary, always to the prejudice and terror of her husband.

Edmund Lodge, Illustrations of British History, 1790.

This description reflects Bess's talent for managing her affairs and her passion for building projects, but it is less likely to be a rounded assessment of her character given that she attracted four husbands and reared six children. Ask pupils to work out if Lodge could ever have known Bess personally (he was writing 80 years after her death). Where else might Lodge have got his information from? One source was likely to have been the papers of her last, disenchanted husband (whose children from a previous marriage showed more affection to Bess than to their father). Did Lodge feel uncomfortable with the idea of a woman having the ability to be business-like and successful? Does the design of the Old Hall shed any light on Bess's character?

Extracts from the Old Hall Building Accounts

1587 May 20: To Robert Ashmore for the digging of the foundation and taking down



Liz Hollinshead

Bess of Hardwick's tomb in Derby Cathedral. This effigy was commissioned by Bess who approved the result.

The stairs in the west wing



the old chimney 4 shillings and 9 pence.
1588 Nov 26: To Snidall the glassier for thirty and nine foots of glasse for seven Cassmont panes (casements were frames forming a window) and one great pane with a little Cassmont in yt at 5d the footts 16 shillings and 3 pence.

1588 Dec 8: To Thomas Hollingworth and to the Rest of the wallers for the wallinge of 24 Roodes of walle of the forth story £4 16s.

1589 5 July: To John Beighton for hand for the mackinge of the great lead Rooffe over the great Chamber and the little turrett over the stayres that Smyth shold have done £3 Remayninge.

1590 Nov 7: Pd for halff a thousand of 2d nayll for abram to sett cassments.

These extracts show first of all that Bess decided to demolish part of the old manor, and then the speed at which the Hall was built. By the end of 1588, possibly less than two years after the work began on the new wings, the top storey was under construction. By the following summer the walls were completed and a roof covered the great chamber, enabling work on the interior of the building to begin. The accounts hint at the success or otherwise of some of the workers: Hollingworth was employing other wallers, but Smyth was unable to complete work on the roof. One of the most skilled workers was Abram -
The Old Hall as it looked in the mid-seventeenth century from an illustration held at Audley End House, Essex.

Abraham Smith who had already been employed by Bess as a plasterer and mason at Chatsworth, another of her houses which she built before Hardwick. The nails were needed to construct window frames and wooden frames as bases for plasterwork created by Abraham. The accounts also show how the workers were paid according to the amount of work done whether it was making nails or glass, or building walls. One shilling is the equivalent of 5p, and the average wage for a labourer at the end of the sixteenth century was 4d a day, roughly equivalent to 1.5p. The wallers' work was measured in roods. At that time a rood was 7 yards long by 1 yard high by 1 yard wide. One yard is 91.44cm

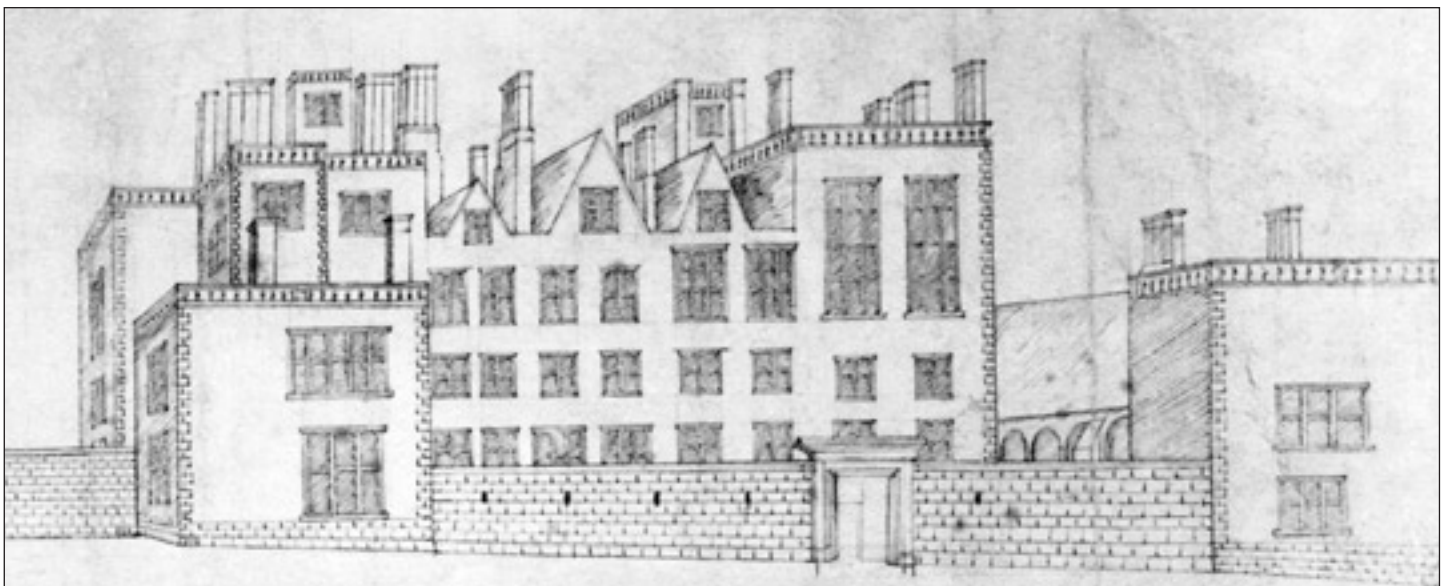
Extract from the Inventory of Hardwick Old Hall, 1601

In the Forest great Chamber: sixe peeces of lether hanginges gilded and paynted seaven foote and a half deep, a Long table the frame and postes being Carved, a Carpet of grene cloth for it, a lyverie cubberd inlayde, a Chare of Cloth of golde with golde and silk freeze, a stoole of Cloth of golde and grene and black velvet, a joyned stoole inlayde, an Iron to set in the Chymney, waynscott under the windowes.

In a Chamber at the side of the Forest greate Chamber: a bedsted with postes, a tester bedes head and vallans of white damask imbrodered with braunches, the valans fringed with white, red and grene silk frenge, a mattriss, too fetherbedes, a bolster, a pillowe, too blanketes, a tapestrie

Counterpoynt, a Close stoole, a stoole pan, a Chamber pott...In the kytchin: Foure long boardes, a brass pott, a lead cestern. In the Larder: a Save of Heare to Keepe meate in, too tables, tenn shelfes. In the lowe Larder: too bordes. In the pastrie: three long bordes. In the Chamber above the Larder a bedsted.

Considering the size of the Forest Great Chamber, it was sparsely furnished with only a table, cupboard, chair and two stools. The livery cupboard probably contained silverware with the family crest on it. The sumptuous effect of the room came from the gilded and painted leather hangings below the plaster frieze and the textiles: a green carpet too precious to be placed on the floor, and as was the custom at the time, used as a table covering, gold silk on the chair and green and black velvet with cloth of gold covering a stool. The description of the bed with all its contents, in the room beside the Forest Great Chamber, provides an interesting contrast to how beds are made up nowadays, which pupils can be asked to discuss. In this room we can get an idea of the toilet arrangements. To avoid smells, Bess designed her quarters without built-in toilet facilities, but instead, as in this room, close stools were used. Close stools contained a pan which a servant could remove when necessary. Chamber pots were also used. The kitchen has remarkably few contents. Cooking utensils were stored in another room.



EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

A visit to Hardwick Old Hall can be of particular interest to pupils at Key Stage 2 when studying the Tudors or an aspect of local history such as life in a country house. For pupils at Key Stage 3, a visit can relate to the Making of the United Kingdom given that Hardwick Old Hall was occupied throughout the seventeenth century. In all Key Stages, Hardwick Old Hall provides opportunities for work in a range of National Curriculum subjects.

Preparation should include a planning visit to the site by staff. Before the visit pupils can:

- find out about the life of Bess of Hardwick
- look at a ground plan of the Old Hall and compare it with that of the New Hall
- look at pictures of Elizabethan houses and furniture

On site, help pupils to understand the overall layout of the rooms. Point out to them the hall beyond the entrance porch in the middle of the building, which formed part of the original manor. To the east (left of the porch) is one of the new wings whose north wall no longer survives. To the west is a second wing with the kitchens below the family's rooms. Pupils can identify different floor levels in the east wing by looking for clues such as: fireplaces, windows, corbels (stone supports jutting out from walls on which floor beams could rest), joist holes and doorways. Pupils can identify those clues which show that the walls must have faced the inside of the building.

History

The documentary extract shows how Bess provoked strong partisan reactions long after her death. Yet the Building Accounts not only show regular payments to her work-

ers, but also additional payments periodically to help their families - not the actions of a selfish and unfeeling person. Buildings themselves can provide many clues to their occupants' characters. The decisions made about design are clear for all to see. Pupils can discuss the evidence of such decisions in present day housing, for example, colour of paintwork, type of window coverings, and door furnishings, as well as reflecting on the choices they have been able to make about the appearance of their own rooms.

At Hardwick pupils can look for clues to try to describe Bess's taste and personality. Focusing on the overall size and shape of the building and then the details of the plasterwork and fireplace design, pupils could select words from the following pairs or choose their own: timid/adventurous, strong/weak, unassuming/confident, mean/lavish, proud/humble, ignorant/educated, careful/reckless, dainty/bold, masculine/feminine. The subject matter of the plasterwork provides specific clues about the Elizabethan taste for imagery and symbols. Pupils could list the subject matter of the plaster overmantels and group them according to themes, for example designs which promoted Bess's family, designs based on the four elements, designs which reflected rural scenes, others reflecting myths and yet others which were simply decorative.

Having moved into the Old Hall in 1587, Bess decided within three years to build a completely new hall. From the remains of the Old Hall, pupils could identify any features of the design which might not have satisfied Bess when compared with the design she chose for the New Hall. What does the decision to build the New Hall add to our understanding of Bess's character? After the visit pupils could compare their findings with other descriptions of Bess and pictures of her.

Even in its ruined state, the Old Hall offers clues about how a

Countess's family expected to live at the end of the Tudor period. Pupils could first identify where the grandest rooms were in each wing, looking for features such as the height, width and length of the rooms, the type of windows and the quality of the surviving decoration. How did visitors obtain access to these rooms - could they simply walk into them through the front porch, or if they had to go to an upper floor, what type of staircase was there - spiral, narrow steps or a wide staircase with several flights? What were the advantages of having the grandest rooms where they were? (Imposing approach to them, well away from the service quarters, glorious views.) How would family members and servants behave in the Forest Great Chamber and the Hill Great Chamber? From the inventory of 1601 pupils can learn how little furniture there was in the Forest Great Chamber. Who would sit down? How would they sit - lounging, curled up or bolt upright? Although part of a home, these state rooms were places of formality and decorum, emphasising Bess's status, with servants only entering when bidden. On site pupils can sketch what they can see of the Forest or Hill Great Chambers, then in class add decorative details and furniture from reference books and the inventory. If a visit to the New Hall is planned, they can complete their drawings by referring to the furniture and fittings of Bess's Great Chamber there.

The extent of the service quarters gives some idea of the size of the household. Although Bess and her immediate family might number fewer than six, they depended on servants to tend their horses, grow vegetables, prepare and cook food, clean the house, wait on them and help in the running of the estate. All these people had to be fed. Pupils could first identify the spaces where food and drink were stored: the buttery, pastry and larders. What facilities were there for baking bread and cooking meat and vegetables? These

facilities could be compared with those in schools or homes: how is food stored and cooked? What hygiene measures are taken in kitchens now (types of surfaces, disposal of waste, refrigeration, facilities for washing hands) compared with the likely standards in the Hall's kitchen and store rooms?

Geography

The orientation of the hall can be a starting point for various exercises: how were the two great chambers aligned, E-W or S-N? Is the overall alignment of the Old Hall the same as that of the New Hall? Which rooms would be lit by early morning sunshine? From which windows would there be the best view of the setting sun? Was the arrangement of the service rooms such that food could be stored away from the heat of the midday sun?

The Old Hall is built on the crest of a hill. Using maps in class, and then complementing their findings by site work, pupils could work out the advantages and drawbacks of this location at the end of the sixteenth century under these headings:

- access to building materials (limestone quarries on the hill itself)
- access to food supplies
- access to water supplies
- view from the building
- privacy

What might be the advantages and drawbacks of living on this site today? Bess owned other property and travelled to it regularly. In class pupils can work out which routes she might have taken from Hardwick to Wingfield and from Hardwick to Chatsworth. During their own journey to Hardwick, pupils could identify which features

of the landscape might have changed little from Bess's time.

Art

Enough of the plasterwork has survived to see a range of designs. Pupils could make a class catalogue of all the different subject matter featured in the plaster work, with each pupil drawing one of the designs. The designs could be accompanied by suggestions as to why the topic might have been chosen in Elizabethan times and what the pupils' views are on the composition of the designs. Why were these designs fitted over the fireplaces? Pupils could consider what makes the focal point of rooms nowadays which do not have a fireplace. After the visit, drawings of the designs could be used in a variety of ways. Pupils could make a tactile version of their drawing to enable people with little sight to feel the shape of the plasterwork design. This could be in the form of a clay tablet or a collage using shapes cut from different textures, or outlines of shapes made from string. The plasterer at Hardwick may have used branches to provide a base for designs in the Forest Great Chamber. Pupils could make their own composition using leaves and twigs glued to card, paint over them then mount them in a line round the

top of the classroom wall to create a frieze. If a visit can also be made to the New Hall, pupils could compare the plasterwork there with that at the Old Hall. Some of the plasterwork designs in the Old Hall feature strapwork, patterns which look like leather straps. Pupils could compare this with the stone moulding on the boundary wall of the New Hall to see if there is any similarity in the shapes. Pupils could make a model of the Forest Great Chamber using drawings or photographs made on site and the inventory. Using the inside of a cardboard box with the lid and one side removed, pupils could draw on it the windows and wall decorations. Then having checked in reference books, or seen the furniture in the New Hall, cut out drawings of the furniture leaving a hinge at the base and stick these in appropriate places on the floor of the model.

English

A visit to the Old Hall can help pupils to extend their vocabulary by learning some specialist terms to describe architectural features such as: balustrade, buttery, casement, chamber, frieze, niche, overmantel, porch and wings. As a result of looking at extracts from the Building Accounts and the 1601 Inventory pupils can see how



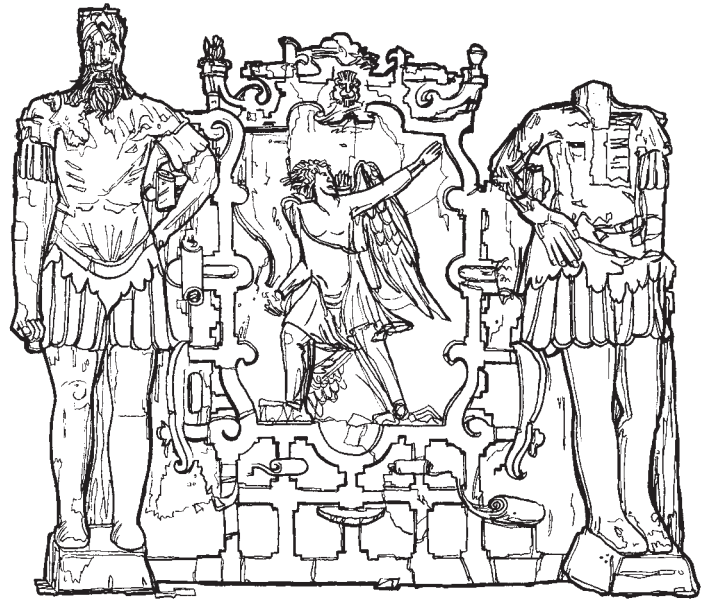
The overmantel in the Forest Great Chamber.

spellings were not standardised in Tudor times and how our written language has developed, for example replacing 'y' with 'i' and dropping the final 'e'.

Among topics for discussion are whether pupils would like their own homes to be decorated with any of the designs in the Old Hall's plasterwork. Which designs do they like and which do they find repulsive? Do they prefer a building like the Old Hall which grew in a rather haphazard way, or one planned along symmetrical lines? Pupils could describe the room in the Hall they would most like to have seen in its original condition at the end of the sixteenth century and explain why. Choosing one of the plasterwork designs, pupils could write a detailed description of it in the manner of a specification for a copy which they would like to order. Finally, pupils could write about what they think should happen to the ruin. As the family who owned it let it fall into a ruin, and as the New Hall has survived close by, what are the arguments for and against ensuring that the ruin does not deteriorate any further?

Maths

Using the remains of the windows on the south front, pupils could work out how many different combinations of window lights there once were, for example, 4x3, 3x2, 1x3. Lights are the stretches of glass, in small panes, held by stone mullions (vertical supports) and transoms (horizontal supports). Pupils could look for signs of mullions and transoms around the stone window frames as clues in some of the empty windows. Pupils can be directed to think about what it might have been like to live at the house by asking if important guests arrived at Hardwick Old Hall how long might it have taken them walking at a solemn, dignified pace to get from the entrance porch to the



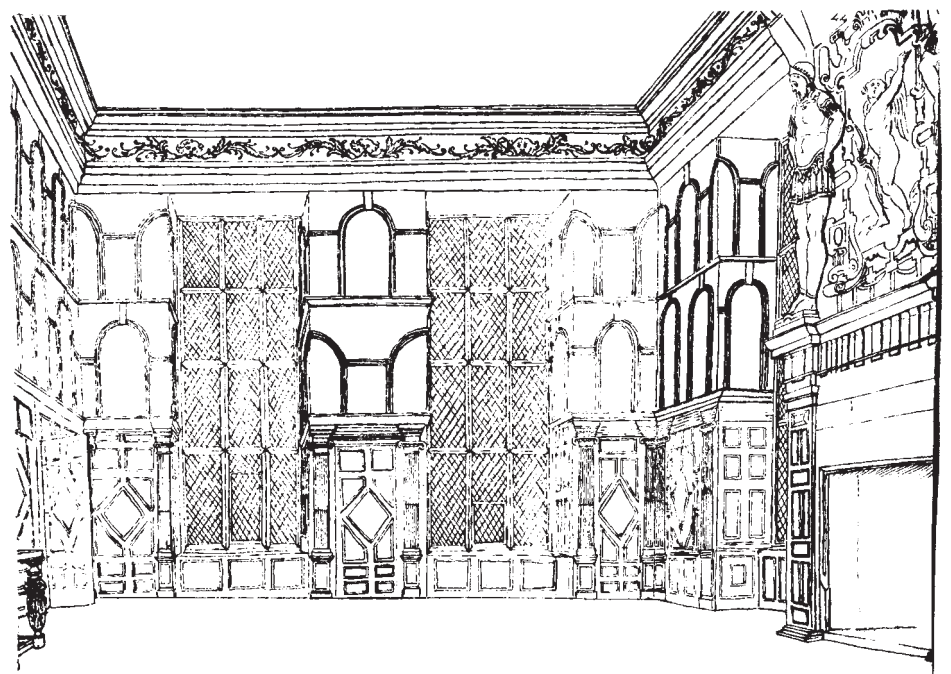
The overmantel in the Hill Great Chamber, showing Gog and Magog, the forces of evil, with Desire between them.

doorway of the Hill Great Chamber? If the guests wished to have refreshments, how long might it have taken a servant to walk, also at a dignified pace, from the Chamber to the kitchen to pass a message to the kitchen staff?

Science

The visit can help pupils to understand how materials change over long periods of time. How has the surface of the building stone altered over time? Pupils could look at stones in different parts of the Hall to see if they have worn in the same way. How can they account for any differences? Pupils could look to see

if there are any traces of timber left where the floors joists fitted into the walls. Why was wood much less likely to survive than stone? What evidence is there that some of the stonework has been replaced as part of conservation of the building? What effect has weathering had on the plasterwork? After the visit, pupils could notice if buildings in their own locality have been affected by weathering. They could consider what action can be taken to stop modern buildings decaying, and what can be done to prevent historic ruins from suffering further damage.



The Hill Great Chamber in 1785 by Samuel Heironymus Grimm

MAKING A VISIT

Opening hours

1 April to 30th September,
Wed - Sun, 11.00am to 6.00pm;
1st October to 31st October,
Wed - Sun, 11.00am to 5.00pm;
1st November to 31st March,
Sat and Sun, 11.00am to 4.00pm
(Weekday bookings for school
parties from 10.00am throughout)

Booking procedure and information

Contact:
Education Bookings
English Heritage
Hazelrigg House
33 Marefair
Northampton NN1 1SR
Tel: 01604 730336
Educational visits are free but must
be booked at least two weeks in
advance. It is essential, if the most is
to be made of the visit, for teachers
to make a preparatory planning
visit. When your booking is con-
firmed, you will be sent a permit for
a free preparatory visit. The
maximum group size for the Old
Hall is 60 pupils, and there should
be one adult to 15 pupils.

Bookings for the New Hall

Information about booking, charges
and the hours of opening may be
obtained from:

The Property Manager
The National Trust
Hardwick Hall
Doe Lea
Chesterfield
Derbyshire S44 5QJ
(01246 850430)

How to get there

Off the A6175 9.5 miles south east
of Chesterfield. Approach from M1,
Junction 29. (OS Map 120; ref SK
463638.)

Bus: No's 737 and 747

Chesterfield - Nottingham to within
1.75 miles. Tel: 01332 292200.

Train: Chesterfield Station 9.5
miles



Bess of Hardwick by an unknown artist

Facilities

Parking: the car park is adminis-
tered by the National Trust. The
charge made is refundable if a visit
is made to Hardwick New Hall.

Wheelchair access: exterior only.

Toilets: in New Hall car park.

Accessible to wheelchair users.

Shop: books, post cards, souvenirs.

Picnics: on site.

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Videos

The Archaeological Detectives, English
Heritage, 1990, 79 minutes. Suitable
for KS 2 and 3.

Shows two children learning how to
interpret physical evidence. Can be
shown in sections.

Using Museums, Fulcrum

Productions Ltd, 1995, 60 minutes.
Suitable for in-service and
initial teacher training. Shows learn-
ing strategies for all Key Stages for
use on sites and with objects.

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