

The More Revisited

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In the early 1990s three articles were published on various aspects of the history of the manor of the More in Rickmansworth (Herts).¹ In the light of recent research, it has become apparent that parts of the More's history need to be rewritten.² First, the original discussion of the building of the fifteenth-century house had been founded on one particular document and had overlooked another that was far more relevant. Secondly, the contemporary claim that by 1598 the house was a ruin had seemed somewhat extravagant whereas now there is a convincing explanation for its ruination. The earlier articles were written in good faith, and most of their contents still hold true, but the time has come to update both the origin and the disappearance of the More.

Apart from the outlines of some ornamental ponds, there are no visible remains of that once important house which, together with most of south and west Hertfordshire, had once belonged to the abbey of St Albans.³ Even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Rickmansworth was within easy reach of London, consequently several influential political figures of their day, such as Archbishop George Neville and Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, had found it convenient to reside at the More. As a result, numerous documents were written there; indeed, in August 1525, following diplomatic negotiations between England and France, a peace treaty known as the Treaty of the More was signed in the house.⁴ In the early 1950s the site of the More had been excavated. Based on the remains that they had uncovered and on their subsequent documentary research, the archaeologists had been able to produce a comprehensive report.⁵ Later some of their deductions had been modified or overturned by historians working on other more detailed documentary sources.⁶ The published articles on the More had taken into account these subsequent revisions, particularly the findings of Simon Thurley, but more recently a query has been raised concerning the identity of the builder of the fifteenth-century brick-built house, which the archaeologists had suggested resembled Hertsmonceaux castle in style and appearance, although the More was somewhat smaller.

One purpose of the articles had been to rescue the More from relative obscurity; another had been to refute the assertion made by John Warkworth that it was George Neville who had 'bylde [the More] ryghte comodiusly and plesauntly'.⁷ In 1426, the then tenant of the More, William Flete, together with

¹ In the early 1990s, Margaret Wilson, founder of the South West Herts group of the Society, suggested that I should research the More because I lived in Rickmansworth and because little was then known, let alone published, about this significant medieval and Tudor house. Indeed, when I began my research one local 'historian' even told me – quite erroneously – that its actual site could not be located. Sadly Margaret died in September 2007, following a painful but stoically borne illness, and so I wish to record here my debt to her: the roots of all of my subsequent academic achievements can traced back to Margaret's original encouragement. Heather Falvey, 'The More: Archbishop George Neville's palace in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire', *The Ricardian*, vol. 9 (1991-93), pp. 290-302; Heather Falvey, 'The More: Rickmansworth's lost palace', *Hertfordshire's Past*, 34 (Spring 1993), pp. 2-16; Heather Falvey, 'William Flete: More than just a castle builder', *The Ricardian*, vol. 10 (1994-96), pp. 2-15.

² Since writing those articles my research interests have moved into other areas, both chronologically and geographically, nevertheless whilst visiting various repositories and libraries, I have kept alert for references to the More. Perhaps more importantly, my palaeographical skills have improved considerably and so I have now read the original documents of which previously I had read only extracts quoted by earlier historians.

³ The Ordnance Survey grid reference for the site of the More is TQ/082940. The site is privately owned and is not accessible to the public, although a good view of it is available to travellers on Chiltern Railways or on the Metropolitan Line between the stations of Moor Park and Rickmansworth or Croxley.

⁴ J.F. Brewer *et al.* eds, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, 22 vols, London 1862-1932, vol. 4, item 1600.

⁵ Martin Biddle, Lawrence Barfield and Alan Millard, 'The excavation of the Manor of the More, Rickmansworth, Herts', *Archaeological Journal*, vol. 116 (1959), pp. 136-99. The excavation was carried out by members of the Merchant Taylors' School Archaeological Society and was supervised by various qualified archaeologists. Martin Biddle has since become a renowned and highly respected archaeologist.

⁶ See, for example, H.M. Colvin ed., *History of the King's Works*, 6 vols, London 1963-82, vol. 4, *1485-1660 part II*, pp. 164-69; Simon Thurley, 'The domestic building works of Cardinal Wolsey', in S.J. Gunn and P.G. Lindley, eds, *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art*, Cambridge 1991, pp. 76-102.

⁷ John Warkworth, *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, Camden Society, London 1839, p. 25.

various feoffees, had been granted a charter permitting them to ‘enclose, crenellate, enturret and embattle, with stones, lime and “brik” their manor of More in Rykmersworth, and also to empark 600 acres of land in wood in Rikmersworth and Watford’.⁸ Given this charter and the possible dating of the scant building remains that they had found, the archaeologists had argued that it was Flete, rather than Neville, who had caused the brick house to be built. Flete died in 1444. In 1456, Sir Ralph Butler, Baron Sudeley, rented several manors from the abbot of St Albans, including the manor of the More.⁹ On 5 May 1458, Henry VI granted Butler a general pardon for ‘his trespasses in crenellating without licence’ his manors of Sudeley (Gloucestershire) and the More.¹⁰ From this pardon it can be deduced that whereas Flete had been given licence to build a crenellated manor house, Butler had been pardoned for actually having had such a house built.¹¹

The archaeologists had calculated that the fifteenth-century house at the More was a quadrangular building, approximately 140 feet by 120 feet, surrounded by a moat, which was entered, via a drawbridge, by a towered gatehouse in the south wall.¹² If, as the documentary evidence suggests, Butler did have this house built, his architect and builders must have worked particularly fast since less than eighteen months elapsed between the time when he acquired the More and the time when the pardon was issued. In addition to Henry VI’s pardon, however, there are at least three other factors that suggest that neither the identification of Butler as the builder nor the short time-scale are improbable.¹³ Firstly, as the holder of various offices under Henry VI, including treasurer, king’s chamberlain and steward of the king’s household, Butler certainly had the financial resources to build new properties.¹⁴ Between 1441 and 1458 Butler had had a castle constructed at Sudeley, which included an inner court measuring approximately 148 feet by 117 feet. Although the inner entry range has since been destroyed, the ‘conjoined outer court is still approached through [Butler’s] square-towered gatehouse, formerly protected by drawbridge and moat’.¹⁵ Similarity with the plan of the More is striking, thus suggesting that Butler had both houses built.¹⁶ Secondly, the archaeologists had likened the plan and composition of the More to those of contemporary collegiate buildings, arguing that it was closely comparable with Queens’ College, Cambridge.¹⁷ Emery has endorsed this comparison and noted that the fact that Queens’ was built during the years 1448 to 1449 indicates that such a project could be completed within a short space of time. Thirdly, there is a convincing financial argument that Butler had had the castle built. When Butler had acquired the More in 1456, the abbot of St Albans had agreed that he should pay a token annual rent of 1d; in 1460, following the death of his only son and heir, Thomas, Butler sold the manor back to the abbot for 3,000 marks (£2,000).¹⁸ This sizeable sale price suggests that the property had increased dramatically in value: the construction of a high status brick-built castle would account for such an increase. Thus it appears that it was during the ownership of Ralph Butler, rather than of William Flete, that the crenellated house was built.

⁸ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1422-1429*, p. 351.

⁹ Variant spellings of Butler include Boteler and Botiller. The details of the terms of Butler’s tenancy of the More and the other manors can be found in H.T. Riley, ed., *Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Wbhamstede Secunda*, Rolls Series, London 1872-73, vol. 1, pp. 216-46.

¹⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1452-1461*, p. 422. For the first suggestion that it was Butler who built the castle at the More, see Anthony Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales 1300-1500*, vol. 2, *East Anglia, Central England and Wales*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 278-79. I am grateful to Dr Jonathan Foyle for bringing this book to my attention.

¹¹ Like the archaeologists, I had also argued that Flete had built the new house. There is a great deal of evidence to show that he was indeed living at the More during the 1420s and 30s. (See Falvey, ‘William Flete’, *passim*.) It is now clear, however, that he was living in an earlier house, artefacts from which the archaeologists were able to recover.

¹² Biddle, Barfield and Millard, ‘Excavation of the More’, pp. 150-54, plan on p. 151.

¹³ These factors were first suggested by Emery in *Greater Medieval Houses*, p. 279.

¹⁴ Butler was treasurer from 7 July 1443 to 18 December 1446; king’s chamberlain from 1441 to 1446; and steward of the household from 3 February 1447 to 20 July 1457, E.B. Fryde, D.E. Greenway, S. Porter and I. Roy eds, *Handbook of British Chronology*, third edition, London 1986, pp. 77, 106.

¹⁵ Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses*, p. 279. For a brief description of Butler’s building work at Sudeley, see A. Emery, ‘Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire’, in A. Emery, ‘Ralph, Lord Cromwell’s manor at Wingfield Castle’, *Archaeological Journal*, vol. 142 (1985), pp. 334-35.

¹⁶ The fact that Sudeley was constructed of stone and the More of brick is simply a reflection of the nature of the local building materials that were available.

¹⁷ Biddle, Barfield and Millard, ‘Excavation of the More’, p. 154.

¹⁸ Riley, *Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Wbhamstede Secunda*, pp. 357-67. In return for the More, in addition to giving Butler 3,000 marks, the abbot also agreed that the abbey would pray in perpetuity for the souls of Butler, his wife and son.

During the following seventy years various people occupied, or at least had possession of, the More.¹⁹ Whereas some of them probably did not even visit the house, others, notably Neville and Wolsey, carried out further building work there. The majority of the evidence for their work comes from the report on the archaeological excavation rather than from documentary evidence.²⁰ Considerable additions to the house built by Butler had been made by Wolsey in the form of an outer court around the buildings inside the moat, a base court to the south of the moat and a gallery some 253 feet long over the moat to the north.²¹ In 1529, following Wolsey's fall from favour, the More became a royal residence. During the subsequent fifty years various records generated on behalf of the crown provide evidence of expenditure on this royal property, consequently historians have been able to reconstruct not only changes made to the More but also its general state of repair.²² For example, in the 1530s and 40s the lodgings in the outer court were improved and redecorated.²³ Surviving documentary evidence, however, includes not only accounts submitted by various craftsmen for work completed at the More, but also an inventory of the contents of the house and several surveys of the fabric and site of the building. The inventory, which was taken just after the death of Henry VIII, indicates that the house was at least partially furnished, presumably in case it needed to be occupied in a hurry.²⁴ By 1556, however, when the house was annexed to the duchy of Lancaster, the building was 'verie muche decaied aswell in Tylinge as in glasse leade and waterworke'.²⁵ Evidently by this time it had become unfit for habitation and the necessary restoration would be so costly that 'the repairinge whereof [was] referred to the Judgement of the Maistere and Surveyors of the kinge and Queenes maiesties workes'. Three years later, William Paulet, Marquess of Winchester, reported to William Cecil that when he had last visited the More 'yt was well tyled butt the walls [were] so rent and torne that it ys not possible for the howse to stand by meanes of the evill grounde yt standith on. A gallery of two hundred foote longe is Lyke to fall with other ruens'.²⁶ Given that there were more than thirty royal houses and palaces in and around London, it would be scarcely surprising if neither Mary nor Elizabeth were prepared to lavish money on the More.²⁷

In 1568 a report by surveyors employed by the duchy of Lancaster provides a detailed description of the More at that time.²⁸ For example, in the east and west ranges the 'lodginges and towres are in great Decaye and would be repayred the Flowres to be bourded the stayres to be new repayred in sundry places the wales & sellinges plaistered the windowes glazed the roofes tyled the leades & gutters repayred'.²⁹ Evidently this formerly sumptuous house was now in a state of considerable disrepair mainly because the extra weight of the additional buildings constructed during the first half of the sixteenth century had caused the foundations to shift. The site is low-lying and close to the River Colne, hence the Marquess of Winchester's observation that the main cause of the More's decay was 'evill grounde yt standith on'.³⁰ According to the surveyors in 1568, the principal gatehouse, the towers of which would need to be 'haulf

¹⁹ Falvey, 'The More: Archbishop George Neville's palace', pp. 293-97; *The Victoria History of the Counties of England, Hertfordshire*, ed W. Page, 4 vols, London 1902-14, vol. 2, pp. 375-76.

²⁰ Biddle, Barfield and Millard, 'Excavation of the More', pp. 154-56 (Neville); pp. 156-58 (Wolsey). For documentary evidence of Wolsey's works at the More, see Thurley, 'Domestic building works', pp. 91-93; Simon Thurley, 'English Royal Palaces, 1450-1550', unpublished PhD thesis, University of London 1989, pp. 208-14. I am grateful to Dr Thurley for providing me with copies of the relevant pages of his thesis.

²¹ Biddle, Barfield and Millard, 'Excavation of the More', pp. 156-58; Thurley, 'Domestic building works', pp. 91-93.

²² Colvin, *King's Works*, pp. 164-69; Thurley, 'English Royal Palaces', pp. 208-14. The original documents on which these descriptions of the works are based include Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson MSS D. 776-781 and Nottingham University Library MS Ne O2.

²³ During this period much work was also carried out within the park, including the construction of wooden lodges, to cater for hunting parties.

²⁴ British Library (hereafter BL) Harleian MS 1419B, ff. 31-45, '[the contents of] The Guarderobe at the Manour of the More, In the Countie of Hertford in the chardge of Richarde Hubbes'. Hurried use was made of the house, for example, during the summer of 1542, when the Privy Council met there several times because there were outbreaks of sweating sickness in London, *Letters and Papers*, vol. 17, items 401, 404, 408, 410. Pieces of furniture in the house in 1547 included three chairs 'havinge the late Cardynalles Armes embroderde uppon the backe' and three more with 'Quene Annes Cipher embrawderde on their bakesides', BL Harleian MS 1419B, ff. 39v, 40r. ('Quene Anne' refers to Anne of Cleves rather than Anne Boleyn.)

²⁵ The National Archives (hereafter TNA) PRO/E315/391, f. 8v.

²⁶ TNA PRO/SP12/4/57, 23 June 1559, Marquess of Winchester to Mr Secretary.

²⁷ For a map showing the distribution of royal houses in the south east of England in 1547, see Simon Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England: Architecture and Court Life, 1460-1547*, London 1993, p. 69, figure 92.

²⁸ BL Lansdowne MS 13, ff. 103-106.

²⁹ BL Lansdowne MS 13, f. 103v.

³⁰ Indeed, the derivation of the name 'More' was 'mor', Old English for marshy ground, *Oxford English Dictionary*.

pulled downe', would cost at least £500 to repair, the lodgings and towers on the east and west sides a further £300, and the long gallery £190. In all, necessary repairs to walls, floors, windows and doors, the entry bridge over the moat, the stabling and water conduit would cost an estimated £1806 13s 4d.³¹ However, the fact that the duchy of Lancaster chose not to spend such a sum on these repairs does not explain satisfactorily why, during his travels through Hertfordshire the late 1590s, John Norden recorded seeing 'the *auuncient ruynes* of Morhouse'.³² As a professional surveyor and cartographer, Norden was not given to florid exaggeration.³³

In 1568, in addition to estimating the cost of repairs necessary to render the More habitable, the duchy's surveyors had valued the fabric of the property as it then stood. This valuation included lead worth £650, glass worth £66 13s 4d and stone, brick and tiles worth £300. In all they suggested that the component materials of the house were worth £1386 13s 4d.³⁴ In effect, this was the scrap value of the house. The surveyors were, therefore, showing the duchy's officers that three courses of action were open to them regarding this now redundant house: firstly, spending over £1800 to make it habitable; secondly, selling the materials with a view to raising nearly £1400; and thirdly, taking no action and thus leaving the house to decay further. Until recently, historians of the More had assumed that it was this third option that had been taken, with the result that by the 1590s the house had fallen into ruin. Close reading of the 1568 surveyors' report, however, shows that at that time although the house was in need of extensive repair, the main body of the building was still standing. How then could it have become 'auuncient ruynes' within thirty years? The archaeologists' report explains the ruination of the house thus: firstly, that in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the house had been inhabited by squatters, who had removed most of the stone and lead; and secondly, that the house had been deliberately demolished between 1655 and 1661.³⁵ Although this scenario, particularly the second part, does not explain adequately Norden's observation, it does take into account the excavators' findings both on the ground and in the various documents that they had consulted. Until fairly recently this interpretation was the only one that fitted the available evidence but now additional evidence has come to light. This new evidence suggests that it was the second option, rather than the third, that had been selected by the duchy, not least because royal coffers were always in need of replenishment.

On 8 February 1574 an indenture that appears to have decided the fate of the More was drawn up between Queen Elizabeth and Charles Morrison esquire of Cassiobury in Watford (Herts) and William Hawtrey esquire of Chequers (Bucks).³⁶ At that time the house and the buildings belonging to it were 'much Decaied and Like in shorte time utterlie to growe to Ruyne'. The queen had, therefore, been advised by the duchy council that the house was 'More fyte to be defaced and taken downe and converted to the moste profit of the Quenes Ma[ies]tie then to be repaired and reedifyed againe'.³⁷ Consequently, the contents and fabric of the house and outbuildings, as distinct from the legal entity of the manor, were being sold to Morrison and Hawtrey.³⁸ In return for the sum of £1460, they were to take possession of 'all man[er] of tymber Iron Leade glasse stone syling waynescot Dores Heng[es] Lock[es] brick Tables

³¹ BL Lansdowne MS 13, f. 104v.

³² John Norden, *A Description of Hertfordshire*, London 1598, facsimile edition, Ware 1903, p. 8.

³³ For biographies of Norden, see Frank Kitchen, 'John Norden (c.1547–1625), estate surveyor, topographer, county mapmaker and devotional writer', *Imago Mundi*, vol. 49 (1997), pp. 43–61; Frank Kitchen, 'Norden, John (c.1547–1625)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford 2004. Previously I had not considered Norden's comment in the light of his professionalism but having carried out extensive research into the work of early seventeenth-century surveyors I now appreciate that they practised a science and made careful, measured observations in their writings. In addition to Norden's own work, *The Surveyors Dialogue*, London 1607 (and later editions), see also Andrew McRae, *God Speed the Plough: The Representation of Agrarian England, 1500–1660*, Cambridge 1996, Chapter 6: "'To know one's own": the discourse of the estate surveyor'; Bernhard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland*, Basingstoke 2001, Chapter 2: 'Land measuring: an upstart art'; Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*, Chicago and London 1992, Chapter 3: 'The land speaks'.

³⁴ BL Lansdowne MS 13, f. 105r.

³⁵ Biddle, Barfield and Millard, 'Excavation of the More', pp. 159–60.

³⁶ Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies 8754, indenture dated 8 February 16 Elizabeth (1574). Charles Morrison was one of the Justices of the Peace for Hertfordshire and a very influential local figure. His home at Cassiobury was less than three miles from the More. During the second half of the sixteenth century there were two men, a father and his adult son, who were both named William Hawtrey of Chequers. It is unclear which of the two partnered Morrison in this venture.

³⁷ The quotations are from the indenture.

³⁸ In 1576 Francis Russell, second earl of Bedford, was granted the *manor* of the More for an annual rent of £120. Biddle, Barfield and Millard, 'Excavation of the More', p. 141. Morrison's mother, Bridget, had married Russell as her third husband.

Cubbords slate tile and other thing[es] what soev[er]' within the property.³⁹ Payment was to be made in three annual instalments and the purchasers were given twelve years in which to remove the materials. Of course, the fact that the indenture was granted does not necessarily mean that Morrison and Hawtrey actually dismantled the house – consider the licence granted to Flete and the pardon granted to Butler – but given that the house was in ruins some twenty years later, it seems highly likely that they did.⁴⁰

During the second half of the sixteenth century Charles Morrison financed and oversaw the completion of a new mansion at Cassiobury that had been commenced by his father, Richard. All of Morrison's house, apart from the west wing, was rebuilt in the late seventeenth century and the whole of this house was pulled down *circa* 1800, consequently no physical evidence remains that could be inspected for materials recycled from the More.⁴¹ Nevertheless, it is arguable that Norden saw only 'auncient ruynes' because the house had been dismantled legitimately rather than because it had been left to crumble or had been robbed by squatters – although documentary evidence to the contrary might still be awaiting discovery.

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³⁹ The fact that tables are listed here indicates that they were fixed rather than moveable assets and explains why chairs but not tables were listed in the inventory of 1547, which referred only to moveable goods.

⁴⁰ I have not searched the voluminous archive of the duchy of Lancaster at TNA for the receipts for the payments due from Morrison and Hawtrey. They *may* be held in PRO/DL28 (duchy of Lancaster, various accounts).

⁴¹ VCH, *Hertfordshire*, vol. 2, p. 454.