

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE GRANGE, NORTHINGTON

By ALISON M DEVESON

ABSTRACT

It is generally said that The Grange originated as a demesne manor of Hyde Abbey in Winchester, but that nothing is known of the manor house before Sir Robert Henley acquired the estate and built a new house in the late-17th century. However, documentary evidence suggests that the medieval Grange estate belonged, not to Hyde, but to Waverley Abbey in Surrey. On the Dissolution the estate passed first to Sir William Fitzwilliam, the Lord Admiral, and then to Sir Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague. Browne sold it to Thomas Cobb, a member of a Hampshire gentry family. Cobb's son Michael built a new house, which his descendants sold to Lord Henry Paulet, brother of the fifth Marquis of Winchester. It was Paulet who sold it to Sir Robert Henley.

It is likely that Sir Robert built his house on a new site rather than extending the Cobbs' house. John Aubrey visited The Grange shortly after its rebuilding and named the architect as William Samwell. His information, though brief, is probably reliable. Aerial photographs show a series of linear features, which could be associated with the gardens of Sir Robert's house. However, a resistivity survey has revealed that the features, possibly terraces, were not originally aligned on this house, and may have been designed for its immediate predecessor. The survey did not produce firm evidence of the earlier houses, and there is still potential for archaeological investigation in the area.

INTRODUCTION

Writers on the architectural history of the house at Northington now known as The Grange have, understandably, relied on the account of the early history given in the 'Northington' section of the *Victoria County History* (VCH iii, 395). VCH drew on the national records available at the time, as well

as on the work of W. L. W. Eyre, who was rector of the combined parishes of Northington and Swarraton in the late-19th century (Eyre 1890). Between them, VCH and Eyre confused a good deal of the evidence for the early history of the estate, and have consequently misled later writers (Geddes 1983, 35; Currie 2003, 5). In particular, VCH asserted that The Grange at Northington originated as a demesne manor of Hyde Abbey, and was 'evidently purchased by Sir Robert Henley before 1665 and added to his estate in Swarraton, which was also known as the Grange' (VCH iii, 395). The first part of this article will contend that The Grange and Swarraton Grange were alternative names for the same house, that it stood in Northington parish and that The Grange was originally the property not of Hyde but of Waverley Abbey in Surrey. Later sections will discuss the documentary and archaeological evidence for the subsequent history of The Grange up to and including its rebuilding in the late-17th century.

NORTHINGTON, SWARRATON AND SWARRATON GRANGE

Northington and Swarraton were separate parishes until the mid-19th century (Fig. 1). The tithe maps of 1842 and 1850 show Northington occupying a much larger area than Swarraton, with respective acreages of 2414 and 895 in the late-19th century (VCH iii, 394; iv, 195). The boundary between them lay along the Candover brook, (HRO 21M65/F7/172/2 and 21M65/F7/228/2). This boundary, which also forms part of the boundary between Micheldever and Bountisburgh hundreds, has been proved to

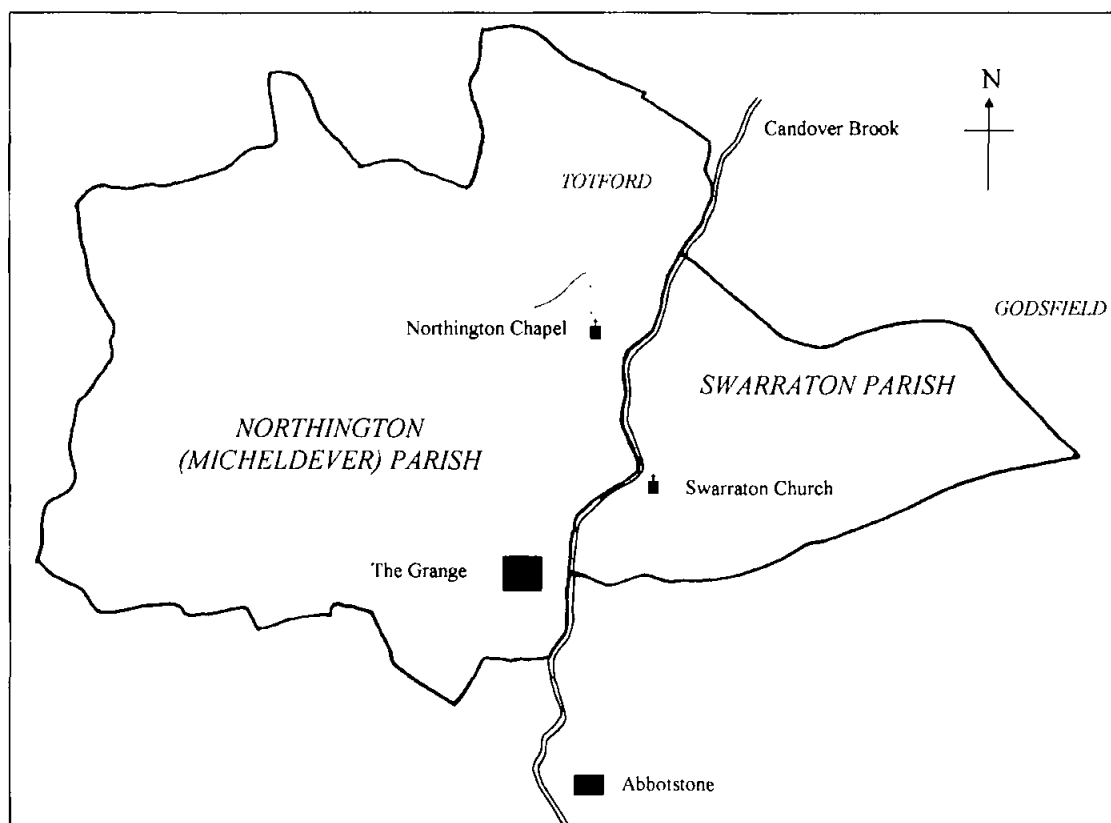


Fig. 1 Places mentioned in the text

be at least as old as the 13th century (Brooks 1982, 199). The medieval hundred of Micheldever was held by the Abbot of Hyde, while Bountisburgh was a royal hundred (*Feudal Aids* ii, 306). Within each of them was a hamlet called Swarraton, that in Micheldever sub-infeudated to the Abbey of Waverley, that in Bountisburgh to the Knights Hospitallers of Godsfield. The implication of this is that the area of Swarraton (as distinct from the parish) was originally larger, and spanned both sides of the brook, occupying some of the land within Northington parish.

Swarraton had its own parish church from at least the 13th century and perhaps earlier (*Registrum Johannis de Pontissara*, i, 14). It stood

inside the present eastern entrance to the Grange park, on the east bank of the Candover brook, and was demolished when the benefices of Northington and Swarraton were united in 1847 (HRO 21M65/F7/228/2; Eyre 1890, 57; Vickers 1993, no 584). Swarraton church was appropriated and its tithes payable to the Knights Hospitallers until their dissolution. By contrast, Northington was never a parish in its own right. The present church, which serves the combined parishes, was opened in 1889. Its immediate predecessor, which was opened in 1830, stood slightly further north, on the site of a chapel which had served Northington in place of a church for many centuries and was annexed to the parish church of Micheldever (Vickers 1993, no 586). Micheldever

church and its chapels were appropriated to Hyde Abbey in 1308 and the abbey received their tithes until the Dissolution, as recorded in *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (Dugdale 1846 ii, 449). When the abbey's property was regranted, Northington chapel was separated from Micheldever church, and at least some of its tithes were granted to a succession of lessees and owners (HRO 11M52/258; PRO C54/1356 and CP25/2/482/17 Chas I Easter).

Waverley Abbey, founded in 1128, obtained a royal confirmation of its possessions in 1189. These included property called a 'grange' at Swarraton (Dugdale 1846 v, 242; *CPR Edward III* v, 294). 'Grange' is the distinctive term for a Cistercian farm, and Waverley Abbey was a Cistercian house. Its holding in Swarraton was augmented by a grant of land in 1263, and in 1346 its property there amounted to half a knight's fee (Baigent 1883, 174; *Feudal Aids* ii, 306, 329). The abbey surrendered in 1536, and its Swarraton property was called 'the manor of Swarraton' when it was granted, along with the rest of the abbey's lands, to Sir William Fitzwilliam, the Lord Admiral (*LPPD* xi, 88). Fitzwilliam died without a direct heir, and in 1550 the manor descended to Anthony Browne, who was created Viscount Montague in 1554. Neither Fitzwilliam nor Browne had any intention of living at Swarraton, their seat being at Cowdray in Surrey. Swarraton manor was let to tenants, a cause of some litigation in the 1550s and 1560s. The dispute was resolved in favour of the sitting tenant Thomas Cobb, who was confirmed in possession of the manor in 1568, and whose descendants owned it for several generations (PRO C2/Eliz/S16/43/5; Eyre 22). In 1598 it passed from his son Michael to his grandson, another Thomas, who died in 1638. Their inquisitions *post mortem* confirmed that their property was 'The Grange Manor and lordship of Swarraton' (HRO 43M74/PZ3). Thomas's sons Michael and Richard sold it in 1639 to Lord Henry Paulet, brother of the fifth Marquis of Winchester, and he in turn sold it to Robert Henley in 1662 (PRO CP25/2/482 14 Chas I Hilary; HRO 11M52/1-2). The property was then identified by its full title 'The Grange manor and lordship of Swarraton', together with the capital messuage, farm and

demesne called The Grange in the parish of Micheldever.

There were many Cobbs in the area from the 16th to the 18th centuries, and several of them were called Thomas, but the Thomas who inherited in 1598 was additionally surnamed 'of The Grange' to distinguish him from a cousin of the same name (Eyre 1890, 27; HRO 1610A28). His 'Grange' was the 'capital messuage' which was eventually sold to Robert Henley for the enormous sum of £6070. The clerks who drew up Henley's title deeds could not have named the parish wrongly in a legal transaction of such magnitude, particularly when Swarraton would have been the more obvious parish. The location in the parish of Micheldever accords with Speed's county map of 1611 and subsequent county maps, in which The Grange is clearly shown on the west, that is, the Northington, side of the Candover brook (Margary 1976, sheet 4). The will of Thomas Cobb, proved in 1638, also identifies The Grange as 'in the parish of Micheldever'. This Thomas and his father Michael left bequests to the church and poor of Northington, but nothing to Swarraton, and Thomas and his wife were buried in the churchyard of Northington (PRO PROB11/92/74 and 11/178/60; Eyre 1890, Appendix, ix). Swarraton churchyard would have been more convenient, but their house was on the Micheldever side of the parish boundary and Northington chapel was their church.

Eyre must have realised that The Grange and Swarraton Grange were identical, since he discussed the Swarraton evidence under the heading 'Northington'. He did indeed make the connection between the Paulet property and the Henleys' mansion, but did not clarify the full implication of the documents he had consulted (Eyre 1890, 20-6, 29, 45). *VCH* misunderstood him, and perpetuated the myth of two separate Granges.

THE GRANGE: THE EARLIEST HOUSES

Now that Waverley Abbey has been established as the owner of the medieval Grange, we may consider the nature of the houses at the estate

centre. Cistercian granges at a distance from the mother house consisted originally of 'little more than a barn and a modest dwelling to house the relays of *conversi* [lay brothers] who were sent from the abbey to work the estate in collaboration with a hired work-force recruited from the local peasantry' (Lawrence 1989, 179). But in the 13th century, many granges grew in size and complexity, particularly if the abbot visited occasionally and required accommodation (Platt 1969, 42-3). There is no way of telling from documents if this happened at Swarraton, and the only clue to its location is its use as a landmark in a charter dated between 1247 and 1250. The document records a gift of pasture 'below the garden of Swarraton facing south which extends in length up to the grange of Waverley Abbey and in width between the road from Swarraton to Abbotstone on one side and the brook which runs to Abbotstone on the other' (BL Add MS 70511).

The road indicated in the charter is probably the track which followed the eastern bank of the Candover brook and entered Abbotstone Down on the southern edge of the Grange park (Margary 1976, sheet 15). Wherever the 'garden of Swarraton' was, it is clear that the grange lay towards the southern end of Swarraton parish. The description might be thought to imply that the farm complex was on the Swarraton, eastern side of the brook but aerial photographs in the Hampshire Archaeology and Historic Buildings Record and the National Monuments Record show no sign of settlement in that area. A taxation document of 1340-1 records, in the entry for Swarraton, that Waverley Abbey was liable for payment on land in the parish of Micheldever, which implies that the grange was already on the western side (Vanderzee 1807, 111). Speed's map of 1611 shows the house clearly west of the brook and approximately in the area of later development, but the scale of the map is not large enough to determine the exact position. The land on that side is flatter than on the east, and afforded a more spacious site than the original grange may have occupied.

There is a long gap in the published records for Swarraton grange, from the mid-14th to the mid-16th centuries, and there do not seem to be

any unpublished sources. Scanty documentation may be a feature of the Cistercian system (Hare 1985, 93). In the case of Benedictine properties, much of this period would have seen the transition from demesne farming to leasing. As a consequence of this, many farmhouses were either rebuilt or refashioned for gentry owners by the time that the monasteries were dissolved. Cistercian farms were also leased, particularly in the 14th century (Burton 1994, 256-7) but if Swarraton was upgraded and leased before the dissolution of Waverley Abbey, there are no recorded tenants.

Sir William Fitzwilliam and Viscount Montague, the first post-dissolution owners, are unlikely to have invested in the house on their own account. The Cobbs, however, and particularly the second Thomas, had a certain amount of social status to keep up. He styled himself 'esquire', was a captain of the muster in 1625 and of sufficient wealth to provide four sets of armour and two muskets for his men (HRO 44M69/G5/26/2). However, there is a strong indication that the house which he inherited in 1598 from his father Michael was still relatively new. The will of John Cobb, who died in 1594, contained a reminder that Michael Cobb, who had inherited The Grange around 1584, owed him 'for all the glasse of the new house' (HRO 1595B07/1-2). In an age when houses were used as symbols for the display of wealth and status, both Michael and Thomas Cobb required more than an upgraded farmhouse.

Lord Henry Paulet also required a grand house, and he would have been acquainted with the Candover valley before The Grange became available. He was the brother of the fifth Marquis of Winchester, whose ancestors had owned the adjoining estate and house at Abbotstone for several centuries. However, Lord Henry bought The Grange on the eve of the Civil War, in which his brother was actively involved on the Royalist side and is principally known for his defence of his main residence at Basing. If Lord Henry Paulet played any part in the war, it was not prominent enough to merit a reference in the standard work on the subject (Godwin 1973). He must have been resident at The Grange for a time, since his son Francis was baptised in Northington

chapel in 1640 (Eyre 1890, Appendix, iii). Lord Henry sold The Grange to Robert Henley in 1662, almost immediately after the restoration of Charles II. Even if he had not been actively engaged in the war, it seems unlikely that he would have had much opportunity for alteration at The Grange.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The present Grange, with its Greek-revival columns and terrace obscuring the late-17th-century basement and walls, is so prominent that little consideration has hitherto been given to the possible situation of earlier houses. The original ground levels on the north and west side of the house were destroyed during the many 19th-century additions and alterations. However, aerial photographs taken in 1967 and 1971 show a series of garden-like features immediately east of and possibly extending under the house platform (NMR aerial photograph SU5636/3; HCC aerial photograph 160693). The former also shows rectangular parchmarks south of the house, beyond the terraced gardens which still partially survive. There are several descriptions of the gardens in the 19th century. On the east side of the house the Candover brook had already been dammed to form a lake, as part of a typical 18th-century landscape remodelling, with extensive lawns and clumps of trees (Duthy 1839, plate facing 148; Crook 1970, 220). Pleasure grounds and flower and kitchen gardens lay at a distance to the south-east (Prosser 1833). There have since been other modifications but the features visible on the aerial photographs are not associated with any documented garden layout. In January 2004 a resistivity survey was conducted with the object of clarifying the relationship between these apparent features and the standing building, and also of discovering any evidence of previous houses (Johnson and Strutt, 2004).

The survey revealed a number of geophysical anomalies which provide compelling evidence for a layout of formal gardens on the south and east of the standing building. Linear high-resistance

anomalies form regular patterns, which suggest the presence of extensive and substantial terraces, probably contemporary with each other (Fig. 2). As expected from the aerial photographs, they are truncated by the later house platform. It was not possible to extend the survey eastwards towards the lake because of the scrub along its banks, but the terraces evidently continued for some distance in this direction. A low-resistance anomaly in the south-east of the area surveyed seems likely to have been a water feature, possibly an ornamental pond with a central fountain; this large feature is also truncated by scrub. The most significant result from the survey was the orientation of the terraces. From the aerial photographs they seem to be aligned with the standing building, but when the survey was plotted on to the Ordnance Survey grid, this is clearly not the case. The lines of the terraces, if extended, would meet the house at a distinct angle. The garden layout therefore appears to have been designed for an earlier house, and to have been adapted for its late-17th-century replacement. Michael Cobb's new Grange, built and glazed not long before 1594, would certainly have been surrounded by gardens, probably more formal than those he had inherited with his father's house. Terraces would have been necessary for a geometrical layout because of the sloping nature of the site. Although the survey did not reveal the exact location of Michael Cobb's house, the concentration of the linear features suggests that it was close to the present Grange.

THE GRANGE IN THE LATE-17TH CENTURY

The house included in Robert Henley's 1662 purchase was substantial. He was assessed on 13 hearths for tax in 1664 and 1665 (PRO E179/375/32; Hughes and White 1991, 231). In 1673 and 1674 he was assessed on 30 hearths (PRO E179/176/569 and E179/247/30) and it is a reasonable assumption that the increase resulted from a major rebuilding. Robert Henley was knighted in 1663 (Eyre 1890, 29) and having completed the purchase of the estate the year before, was in a position to consider a new



Fig. 2 Linear features underlie the foreground of this view of The Grange

house. William Samwell is generally named as the architect on the basis of references in the manuscripts of John Aubrey, although the attribution is not as unequivocal as some have suggested. The principal reference occurs in Clark's edition of *Brief Lives*, in the biography of James Harrington, among whose friends Aubrey listed 'his [Harrington's] son, Mr. Samuel, an excellent architect, that has built severall delicate howses (Sir Robert Henley's, Sir Thomas Grosvenor's in Cheshire)' (Clark 1898, i, 293). The Cheshire house was Eaton Hall, of which several illustrations survive (Laurie 1984, 43–5). Elsewhere Aubrey clarified the Samwell and Harrington family relationship, from which it is clear that 'Mr. Samuel' was William Samwell

(Clark 1898, i, 288). A later editor of *Brief Lives* omitted the biography of Harrington because he considered that its many gaps displayed 'nothing more than Aubrey's ignorance of a date or a place' (Dick 1972, 3).

However, it is certain that Aubrey knew at least two members of the Henley family. In a list of his works, dated 1692, he noted on the *Idea of Education of Young Gentlemen* that 'The correct copie is with Anthony Henley Esq. at the Grange in Hantshire' (Powell 1948, 271). Anthony Henley was the son of Sir Robert Henley by his first wife, and had inherited The Grange in 1692 on the death of his father. The following year Aubrey sent Anthony a copy of the *Idea* with a covering letter which contains a



Fig. 3 West front, attributed to William Samwell

margined note 'This idea had its conception at ye Grange A.D.1669 being then in love with your early *bona indoles* [good nature] and ever since the designe has runne in my minde' (Bodleian MSS Aubrey 10, fo 2). Anthony Henley was only three years old in 1669, and so the host on that occasion must have been Sir Robert Henley. A letter from Aubrey to Anthony Wood in 1682 refers to a visit made eleven years previously. The relevant passage reads 'I'll shew you a trifle of mine writt in 1671 in my solitude at Sir R. Henley's in Hants and among the beeches ... I had not seen it these eleven years till my box was sent to me' (Bodleian MSS Wood F39, fo 369). Even if

Aubrey's memory for dates was faulty, a letter from Sir Robert Henley to Aubrey about a possible visit in 1679 makes it clear that they were on very good terms at this period (Bodleian MSS Aubrey 12, fos 160-1). Sir Robert's invitation contained details about times and fares of coaches to Basingstoke, an offer to take Aubrey back to London in his own coach and the assurance of a hearty welcome in Hampshire. The Grange was not explicitly named in the letters of 1679 and 1682, but this Sir Robert Henley did not own any other houses in the county. Aubrey's biographer Anthony Powell made several misleading references to Anthony Henley's house as 'The

Grange at Bramshill' (Powell 1948, 135, 194, 282) but the branch of the family to which Anthony belonged did not own Bramshill, which in any case has never been called 'The Grange'. Powell's confusion perhaps arose because Anthony Henley's grandfather had once owned Bramshill, and it had passed for a time to another Sir Robert Henley, a nephew of Sir Robert of The Grange (*VCH* iv, 36).

Horace Walpole famously attributed The Grange to Inigo Jones and declared it to be 'by far one of the best proofs of his taste' (Wornum 1862, ii, 414). *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, in which this assertion occurs, was based on the notebooks of George Vertue, which Walpole bought from Vertue's widow and published, with additions of his own, over a period of ten years from 1762. However, the reference does not occur in the original notebooks as published by the Walpole Society, and is evidently one of Walpole's additions. It appears from his correspondence that he visited The Grange at least once, in 1758, and knew the Sir Robert Henley of the day (Walpole 1937–83, ix, 222). Presumably, therefore, his attribution to Jones was based on both family tradition and architectural judgment, although Jones's reputation may well have coloured these.

The attribution was discredited by an article in 1788, on the undeniable ground that Inigo Jones was dead by the time that the first Sir Robert Henley acquired The Grange (*Gentleman's Magazine* 1788, 871–2). Nevertheless, the possibility that Henley obtained plans by Jones through Jones's relative and pupil John Webb should not be immediately discounted. The writer of the article, who also appears to have seen the house, admitted that 'if it was not built by Jones himself, it must have been from his designs by Webb, for it is perfectly characteristic of his style'. There was also a possible connection by marriage, albeit a generation later than John Webb, between the Henley and Webb families (Suckling 1908, 142–4). On balance, however, Aubrey's attribution to William Samwell should probably be given more weight than the architectural judgment and personal knowledge of Horace Walpole, since Aubrey's scattered clues amount to an acquaintance with

The Grange and its owner around the time of its rebuilding (Fig. 3).

Apart from the literary references, there is the architectural evidence of a plan in the Ashmolean Museum (Mercer 1970, 48). The plan is unsigned, undated and untitled, but is endorsed in pencil, in an early-18th-century hand, 'Mr. Henley's house in Hamshire'. The paper and watermark also appear to be early-18th century, and the hand of the drawing is not that of Samwell. It seems to be a survey plan, and corresponds well with the elements of the 17th-century Grange which survive beneath all the subsequent alterations, although some of the levels shown are improbable. There are relatively few authentic plans by Samwell, and even fewer surviving buildings, from which his style can be deduced (Colvin 1995, 841–2). If The Grange was his work, it came as a slight surprise to an architectural historian, who wrote that the elevations 'were clearly more original and elaborate than one could guess from his work at Felbrigg or Eaton Hall; while the interior was unexpectedly majestic' (Geddes 1983, 41). Evidently the attribution to Samwell on stylistic grounds is not beyond question, although the Ashmolean plan would now be considered untypical of Jones's work also.

Whoever the architect was, it is clear that The Grange was completely rebuilt. The plan of the standing building is consistent with a new design on a fresh site, and not with the extension of an existing house. There are no notes in the 1664–5 hearth tax returns to show that Sir Robert's 13-hearth house was not habitable at the time. We may therefore assume that the returns related to the old house rather than the new, which could scarcely have been taxed and occupied in a half-built state. Sir Robert and his family could have continued to use the old house while the new one was under construction. Aubrey did not say which Grange he visited in 1669 and 1671, and there is an indication that the new house was still being improved in the early-1670s. At this period the hearth tax was administered more systematically than in the preceding decade, and assessments were made regularly from 1671 to 1674 (Schurer and Arkell 1992, 43). A marginal note in Sir Robert Henley's entry for 1673 reads

'increased vj [hearths]'. The Hampshire assessment for 1672 does not survive, but the note signifies that the increase from 24 to 30 hearths had taken place in the preceding 12 months. Given the efficiency of the receivers, it is more likely that the heating had been improved than that the house had previously been underassessed.

When comparing Grosvenor's and Henley's new houses, we should also consider their settings. The new Eaton Hall was sited north of its medieval predecessor, which was retained as a home farm (Laurie 1984, 41–6). There is, as yet, no sign that the earlier house was retained at The Grange. The results of the resistivity survey suggest that it stood close to the later house but on a slightly different orientation, and it would probably have been too close to have been accommodated comfortably as a home farm or outbuildings (Johnson and Strutt 2004, 9). At Eaton Hall, a park and new gardens were laid out around the new house; at The Grange, existing gardens were retained and adapted. In both places, terraced gardens descended towards a river. Those nearest the house at Eaton Hall contained geometric parterres, as probably also did those at The Grange, although without excavation this would be difficult to prove. There is nothing distinctively 'Samwell' about either landscape, since terraces and parterres were typical of 17th-century garden design and would have suggested themselves to any owner or designer of a house set on a slope. The present study can therefore adduce nothing but documentary evidence for Samwell's association with The Grange. However, the resistivity survey has provided glimpses of its formal gardens, which, though scarcely indicated on the Ashmolean plan, would have been an integral part of the design.

CONCLUSION

There are still unanswered questions about the location and appearance of earlier Granges, those of Waverley Abbey and the first Thomas Cobb. There are no written descriptions, and no wills with inventories which might have helped. There

is no obvious sign, on the aerial photographs, of the double enclosure which was typical of a Cistercian grange (Platt 1969, 72). The continued occupation and development of the site may account for this. In any case, a grange such as Swarraton, at a considerable distance from its mother house, may have been little different from any other farm. However, while the area immediately to the north and west of the present house is not accessible to survey, this study has demonstrated that there is still potential for archaeological investigation in the vicinity of The Grange.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BL:	British Library
HCC:	Hampshire County Council
HRO:	Hampshire Record Office
NMR:	National Monuments Record
PRO:	Public Record Office (now The National Archives)
CPR:	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
LPFD:	<i>Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII</i>
VCH:	<i>Victoria County History of Hampshire</i>

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MSS Aubrey.

MSS Wood.

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Aerial photograph SU 5636/3.

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11M52: Ashburton papers.

21 M65/F7/172/2: Northington tithe map.

21M65/F7/228/2: Swarraton tithe map.

44M69/G5/26/2: view of the hundred of Micheldever, 1625.

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Author: Dr Alison M Deveson, 8 Lynch Hill Park, Whitchurch, Hants, RG28 7NF

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