

ST MARY. The (razed) village to the w had its own church. St Mary, the private chapel of the house, was made collegiate in 1274. The present building was probably begun after that date and was complete by c. 1305. It consisted of an aisleless nave and chancel without structural division. A tower N of the second bay from the E was removed some time after 1793. The chapel is embattled, the tracery of the side windows is evenly of the Y-type, and the windows are shafted inside with a continuous moulding. Only the w and E windows, of five lights, probably later in the C 15. The E window has an embattled transom and cusped arch heads below. Walls heightened and battlements added in the C 15, no doubt when the w and E windows were altered. On the w a simple doorway with a steep single-chamfered arch and two niches with pointed-trefoiled heads l. and r. of the window, whose internal surround is contemporary with the chapel though the tracery is Perp. On the N a doorway similar to the w one. The s doorway was modified to a simple, round-headed opening under the original hoodmould, probably c. 1500. Original s door.

The interior is of noble proportions and almost undecorated. SEDILIA with reeded shafts and uncusped arches with a fillet. Double PISCINA with short shafts, much dogtooth ornament, and cusped arches. Perp roof of low pitch with tie-beams on short arched braces, traceried spandrels, and bosses. Carved figures stand in front of the short wall-posts. – FONT. Octagonal, with two-light blank traceried arches under crocketed gables. – STALLS. Quite exceptionally ornate and to be dated c. 1473–4 (death of William Hesilrige † 1473 who was married to Elizabeth Staunton c. 1458). The ends all have close tracery. On two in addition there is a relief above the tracery, one with the funeral of a woman, the other with a vase and flowers on which perch three cocks, the badge of the Staunton family. Large cocks also on the tops of the arms of the ends, and on the tops of the ends themselves poppyheads. The seats are separated by low arms with angel figures. – PANELLING, E wall. Elizabethan or Jacobean, brought to the church in 1929. – SCREEN. The door of the former screen in two parts now by the w doorway. Perp. – STAINED GLASS. In the E window fragments and some fairly complete figures of Saints that date from before 1306.

MONUMENTS. A large number of incised slabs in the chancel floor, beginning with one of c. 1402. – Sir Thomas Hesilrige † 1629. Alabaster and pink Derbyshire marble. Big standing wall-monument. Tomb-chest with five shields. Angle columns; pilasters between. Two recumbent effigies. Eight boys and six girls kneeling above. – Sir Arthur Hesilrige † 1660 ('in England's peaceable year'). Of white and black marble, slate, and alabaster. Two recumbent effigies, and the second wife, in widow's garb, behind and turned on her side, contemplating her dead husband. She is said to have been added later (VCH). Twelve kneeling children below. Back wall

open semicircular pediment. Attributed by Mrs Esdaile to *William Wright*. – Lady Hesilrige † 1673. Hanging monument in black and white marble. Two white angels in relief, surprisingly Victorian-looking, hold a curtain open. Inscription plate, open pediment, no effigy. – Sir Robert Hesilrige † 1721. Hanging monument. No effigy; fluted pilasters carrying an open scrolly pediment. Two cherubs on this, three cherubs' heads in the 'predella'. – Sir Arthur Hesilrige † 1763. Oval tablet with Rococo swags by *William Cox* of Northampton.

THE HALL was built by Sir Arthur Heslerige (Hazlerigg), seventh baronet († 1763), 'an admirer of the arts who in 1723 passed a considerable time in Italy'. Two rainwater heads are dated 1728. In the late C 19, for the thirteenth baronet, the original eleven-bay brick façade with central pediment was transformed into a dreary cement-rendered one with a heavy balustrade along the parapet and over new, broad, one-storey bay-windows. It still has the earlier angle pilasters shorn of Corinthian capitals and the crowning urns at the ends and flanking the three central bays, the segment-headed windows with small keystones, and the delicately carved pedimented stone doorcase. The entrance was transferred to the w side in 1890–1 and a new w wing built, possibly re-using fabric of the outbuildings that stood here. At the back, the original brickwork and sash-windows.

The SALOON in the centre of the main front is a wonderful surprise, double-height, its fine decoration Baroque admixed with Rococo motifs, a fashion most common in the 1730s and 40s. Fluted Corinthian pilasters and bolection-moulded panelling below, plain pilasters topped by shells and embellished with flower swags above. At each end two big paintings of a favourite horse in John Wootton's manner. Two marble Rococo chimneypieces also with shells. On the ceiling, a large painting attributed in an inventory of 1797 to *Verrio*, presumably because of the general style (*Verrio* died in 1707). The composition (the Apotheosis of the seventh baronet) is derived from an engraving of one of *Pietro da Cortona's* planetary cycle in the Pitti Palace, Florence. Surrounding it simple panelled plasterwork with armorial cartouches that date it to 1725 or after. Of the nine classical plaster busts mentioned by *Nichols*, two survive outside the house. Behind it the almost equally large staircase hall, the staircase round three sides with three twisted balusters per tread, carved tread-ends, and a ramped handrail. Flanking the saloon, two large rooms both altered in the C 19 when the bays were added. The SE room has oak panelling with fluted Corinthian pilasters, the mouldings and capitals gilded, and a marble fireplace with giant egg and dart;* the SW room an early C 19

cornice above the fluted Doric pilasters and a Neo-Classical chimneypiece. Finest is the former DINING ROOM (now study) to the NE with architectural *capricci* by *Panini* over the heavy mahogany doors (with enriched lugged surrounds) and over the fireplace. Trellis-patterned ceiling with Rococo shells and sprays. On the w side, the entrance hall of 1890–1 and behind it the former LIBRARY with Neo-Classical-revival decoration. Of the formal layout shown in an estate map of 1743, only two small lakes, originally a cruciform pond and a long canal, remain.

STAPLEFORD

ST MARY MAGDALEN. Standing in the grounds of the house in no relation to any remaining village. By *George Richardson* for the fourth Earl of Harborough, 1783; the design was exhibited at the Royal Academy that year. It is outstanding in the Gothic field for its date, and for the complete preservation of its furnishings, of far more than county significance. The Gothic is handled with remarkable restraint and without fancies. w tower with ogee-headed w doorway. Nave and chancel, transepts. Parapets and blank friezes of ogee-headed panels. Large three-light windows with intersected tracery under four-centred heads. Four-light E window and blank four-light transept. To the l. and r. of the window-heads shields and the names of the families they belonged to. The interior is entered by a lobby under the tower with a pretty little plaster vault.

13 The church has a charming ribbed plaster ceiling. It is furnished exactly like a college chapel, except for the w gallery, the family pew of the Earls, which is provided with the comfort of a fireplace. This is of *Coade* stone, and has a relief of the Sacrifice of Isaac. The REREDOS is of divers marbles and Derbyshire Blue John and was made by *Richard Brown* of Derby in 1795. In the middle between entrance and altar a FONT can be fixed to the floor. The woodwork is all simple, with only slight Gothic touches and of very good workmanship. It includes a PULPIT and READING DESK. — RAILS before the altar and to screen the monuments in the transept.

MONUMENTS. Brass, in the floor, to Geoffrey Sherard † 1490. The figures are 3 ft long. There are fourteen small standing figures of children. — First Lord Sherard of Leitrim † 1640. Erected by Lady Abigail, his wife. A sumptuous monument of black and white marble, fully good enough for Westminster Abbey. Free-standing tomb-chest. Two recumbent effigies, the dresses elaborately and sumptuously carved. The tomb-chest has four black columns at the corners carrying the black covering slab. Small figures of children, eight kneeling on the borders of the slab and three recumbent infants. The monument stands in the s transept. Behind and above it a large depressed Gothic arch like that of a fireplace. —

* The smith is not recorded, but the altar rail in the church (in Northants), which was paid for by the family, is by *Nicholas Paris* of Warwick, according to *Edward Saunders*.

Above this an arrangement of four BUSTS. They represent Bennet Sherard, Lord Sherard of Leitrim, † 1699; Philip S., Earl of Harborough, † 1750; Bennet S., Earl of Harborough, † 1770; Robert S., Earl of Harborough, † 1799. The names of the sculptors are unrecorded. — Opposite in the N transept *Rysbrack's* superb monument to the first Earl of Harborough † 1732.* He is represented in a comfortably half-seated, half-reclining pose, and in Roman costume. At his feet Lady Harborough and her infant child, a beautifully carved group. Grey marble obelisk in relief behind. On this a pair of oval portrait medallions. Coat of arms at the top.

STAPLEFORD PARK. Acquired from the Earl of Lancaster in 1402 by Robert Sherard. About 1500 his grandson, Thomas, built the wing in 1633 'repayed' by his own grandson, created Baron Leitrim by Charles I. His work, or rather that of his wife Lady Abigail Sherard, is of considerable historical interest in its surprisingly early respect for genuine Gothic features and its creation of an ensemble probably appearing more Gothic than what already existed. Their motive, in common with many of the newly ennobled of the c 16 and early c 17, was, both here and in the windows of the church, not so much an appreciation of architecture as a demonstration of the family's antiquity, 'the fine pedigree of the Sherards and their matches'.

To the old building the second Baron, Bennet Sherard, added c. 1670–80 a house typical of that date. His son was created Earl of Harborough in 1719. The fourth Earl, who rebuilt the church, also remodelled the house with larger sashes and with some Neo-Classical decoration inside.† The s façade was Jacobeanized for the brewer John Gretton in 1894–8 by *Micklethwaite*, who added a large block between the projecting wings and rearranged much of the interior. Exactly how much of the late c 17 interior decoration is genuine or *in situ* is not clear.

The house is approached through a service range (largely of 1898 by *Micklethwaite*) which incorporates a GATEWAY of c. 1630 with slender Doric columns, a three-centred arch with classical mouldings, and a frieze of shields. This suggests a courtyard on the N side of the house with the earliest part, LADY ABIGAIL'S RANGE, on its w side providing lodgings (three rooms on each floor) of the usual medieval kind. The range is dated 1500 with the initials of Thomas Sherard, but the inscription in large letters on the E front refers to the repairing in 1633 by Lord Sherard. The whole composition is eminently picturesque and reminiscent of Flemish town halls and quite unimaginable in its Tudor state. Yet what was done in 1633 cannot be accurately assessed.

The main two storeys of the E and N sides are basically of

* Not 1722.

† Nichols says the house was rebuilt in 1776: either he means 1676 or is referring to the remodelling. Could *George Richardson* have worked on the house

c. 1500: the plinth and upper string course with shields and emblems look quite trustworthy. Some of the windows too could be contemporary (they have straight heads and cusped heads to the lights, some arched, some four-centred, and one has proper tracery), but were they originally disposed in this way? The upper storey with shaped and pedimented gables to the dormers and N gable-end is of 1633, as is the back (except for a doorway of 1500) with straight gabled dormers and normal mullioned-and-transomed windows. It is possible that none of the Gothic features were on the building originally, though most are undoubtedly old. Some, especially the religious relief panels,* may have come from churches, even from the S aisle of Stapleford church, which Lady Abigail rebuilt. Between the windows on the first floor twelve Perp canopied niches (*in situ*?) containing statues. The r. six statues and corbels are original, the l. six were added by Lady Abigail and purport to be Sherard ancestors (including William the Conqueror and Gilbert de Clare) named on banners beneath. She also added the shields below the lower string course, no doubt grafted on the three pretty triangles of small-scale tracery with the Tudor rose and Aragon pomegranate over the central window, and put old figures in the dormers. The bay linking the later house, although with the same windows etc. as the rest of the old wing, looks later (see the plinth, etc.).

Externally the LATE C 17 HOUSE is very restrained after the splash of 1633. Two storeys and a wide entablature with a pulvinated frieze between them. Quoins. Hipped roof with big modillion cornice and groups of square chimneys. Most of the hipped dormers removed and the cross-casement windows (see one on the N front) replaced by bigger sashes in the C 18. N front of seven bays, the eaves slightly raised over the middle window. The nine-by-one-bay E front projects slightly N. The doorways on both these fronts have broken segmental pediments on consoles. The seven-bay W front is the same without a doorway. It and the E front projected S to form two one-bay wings. Illustrations show that it had one-storey C 18 additions attached to the inner faces before Micklethwaite filled the space between the wings with a much too grand and regular piece of display. Ground-floor windows with two transoms, first-floor windows with three. Top balustrade. Projecting centre bay with a curved gable.

INTERIOR. In the NW corner of the range of c. 1500, forming part of the passage to the old stables, a doorway with a pointed arch and foliage and heads in the spandrels. The door on the E front leads into the ENTRANCE HALL, the original passage linked by a later (?) screen of Corinthian columns to a room with a late C 17 pedimented doorcase and a Neo-Classical chimneypiece and ceiling. In the centre of the ceiling a medallion with a scene in high relief. To the N the STAIRCASE HALL, C 19 in C 17 style; to the S the ANTEROOM

* They illustrate the Creation, the Life of the Virgin, the Legend of St George, and St Michael weighing souls.

with rich decoration, late C 17 except for the Neo-Classical chimneypiece. Panelling with shaped panels, delicate rinceau ornament, an acanthus frieze, an overmantel with more crudely carved festoons of fruit, and a big broken-pedimented door surround. At the SE corner in the SITTING ROOM plain bolelection panelling and a deep moulded cornice.

W of the entrance hall in the N range the DINING ROOM made out of several smaller rooms after 1894. The doorcases and enriched panelling were brought from the first-floor saloon. Round the overmantel and big pedimented doorcase, prodigious naturalistic carving of much finer quality than the anteroom festoons, thick, deeply cut garlands of leaves and flowers. Beamed plaster ceiling of after 1924. Neo-Classical chimneypiece. On the W front the OLD KITCHEN with an C 18 Gothick vault on a central pillar. In Micklethwaite's S suite a bookroom in late C 17 style and a French-style drawing room. On the first floor, the GALLERY, intended to be a copy of Sudbury (Derbyshire) but left unfinished and roughly plastered in 1899. Rich C 18 chimneypiece with caryatids.

The village of Stapleford disappeared as the result of enclosures c. 1500. Of the medieval church, only the CHURCHYARD CROSS remains, some distance NE of the range of 1633. Base with shields in pointed quatrefoils. Shaft with emblems in quatrefoils etc. of different shapes. In the NW corner of the park, of the time of the church or somewhat later, the rows of COTTAGES. The BEDEHOUSES of 1732-3 (brick with Gibbs surrounds) were enlarged and thatched in 1820 to make them picturesque: derelict in 1983. Also of 1820, the Gothick VENISON HOUSE. The park is characteristic of *Brown's* style: his foreman *William Ireland* was here in 1775, so some work was presumably done then. The distant STABLES of 1899 by *Peter Dollar* are probably the finest in this hunting county. Stone, Jacobean style, with their interior fittings intact and of the best, but with not a horse in sight, alas.

NORMANTON

ST MATTHEW stands stripped of its dignity, up to its knees in concrete and rubble, on an artificial spit jutting out into Rutland Water (q.v.). Mainly for didactic, historical reasons the tower especially was saved, but how absurd and disproportionate it looks now without its complete base of portico and nave. The W end was added in place of a medieval tower which was attached to a plain nave and chancel of 1764 by *Cockerell* in 1826-9. The architect of the W end was *Thomas Cundy*, probably the younger, as the elder died in 1825. *Cockerell's* work was replaced in 1911 to a design of 1905 by *J. B. Gridley* of London. Rescue scheme by *Laurence Bond*, 1975.

The tower is not high. Its Baroque design is a close adaptation of St John's Smith Square, an unexpected source of inspiration in the early C 19: but the Cundys were successively surveyors of the Grosvenor Estate, Westminster. The vestibule echoes the tower but in a conventional, and somewhat conflicting, Neo-Classical mode. Semicircular portico and Ionic columns *in antis* applied to the sides. The nave and apse are in a conforming half-classical, half-Baroque taste. Inside, a screen of Doric columns replaced a W gallery and stairs. The Heathcote monuments have been moved to Edith Weston, including Sir Gilbert Heathcote's, and to Edenham (Lincs.).

Sir Gilbert Heathcote's great HOUSE was pulled down in 1925.* It was designed by *Henry Joynes*, former Clerk of Works at Blenheim, c. 1735-40, and altered and enlarged by *Kenton Couse* in 1763-7. At that time the village was swept away for the park and the villagers rehoused at Empingham. Some traces can still be seen. The STABLES and FARM BUILDINGS

* Ionic columns from the drawing room were incorporated in the White House

which survive 200 yds to the NE are in a sound and pleasant Neo-Classical style. Probably earlier, according to a sketch of c. 1795 in *Cundy Senior's* sketchbook.