

By contrast, work was done in the eighteenth centuries in what was believed to be the authentic style of earlier periods. In the nineteenth, owners with antiquarian tastes tried to improve it further by bringing in a huge amount of antique decorative work which, though mainly genuine, had nothing whatever to do with the original house. Although as a result the house is full of dated ornament, one cannot believe in any of these dates. But though any account of the house is bound to be incomplete, and in some respects may be wrong, Wroxton is the closest country house to Banbury, and the family has often been involved with the town. It is worth an attempt to describe its history.

1 The Building of the House

The house was built on the site of an Augustinian Priory, dissolved in 1536. Following the Dissolution, the terms of its first lease, to William Reynesford, called for the Priory's demolition,¹ but when in the following year the lease was transferred to Thomas Pope, Pope noted the surviving buildings as being

First, the wall of the church on the south side next the cloyster from the foote of the great wyndowes downwards.

It[em]. the south ile joyning to the dorter wyth the little iles north est from that joyning to the same.

It. the dorter, with the rooffe thereof.

It. the four lodgings on both sides of the great buttery.

It. the frater howse on both sides.²

A few other buildings are also recorded, notably a conduit and a guesthouse,³ a tithe barn and a dovecot.⁴ Virtually nothing else is known of the buildings of the Priory. In the early nineteenth century these were thought to lie to the east of the existing house,⁵ but although excavations in 1956 apparently found wall footings and a well, it does not seem to have been established which – if any – of the Priory buildings these may

¹ Oxford, Trinity College archives (hereafter TC), misc. IB/1.32; 172.

² TC, Wroxton & Balscott misc., f.2. Thomas Pope's hand is not easy to read, and the transcript offered here differs both from that in Thomas Warton's *Life of Sir Thomas Pope, 1772*, and in *VCH Oxon IX*.

³ *Ib.*

⁴ TC, misc. IB/1.32.

⁵ John Skelton, *Antiquities of Oxfordshire, 1823*, Bloxham Hundred p.10.