

North recounts elsewhere how he spent his time at Wroxton in measuring the house, designing improvements, and discussing these with his brother and his friends. This seems to have led to a good deal of rather heavy-handed badinage, described in a rather fuller version of Roger North's *Life* of Francis North than the published text and which survives in manuscript.<sup>28</sup> (Another of the North brothers, Dudley, shared Roger's passion for architecture. 'He drew, and I drew, and much altercation we had,' Roger North recalled.<sup>29</sup>)

A more powerful argument for rebuilding a house was an economic one – one could continue to live in the house while the work was going on:

Many must have some habitation, which an old house will afford even while it is altering, the family removing before the workmen, and at length fixing in their destined apartments. And so the master is ever at hand to conduct and order what is fitt, which will be daily and hourly needfull. And he may proceed, or stop, and whenever he leaves [i.e. stops work], the house is bettered so much, or he may move slow, and work out of the growing profits of his estate, and not sink his capital.<sup>30</sup>

It is clear that both of these considerations weighed powerfully with Francis North. In addition, besides having an innate aversion to unnecessary display, he was concerned that by improving the house and thus its value, his descendants would be liable in due course to a larger entry fine – the recurrent charge for renewing the lease from Trinity College. Consequently, despite the urgings of his brother Roger, Francis North did little more than the minimum that was needed to bring the principal rooms up to date and fit for an occupant of his standing, and to improve the accommodation for his family and household.

In general terms, what Francis North undertook can be learnt from Roger North's summary description of the work and from the surviving plan in his hand. This – which is clearly a plan for proposals, rather than of the work actually carried out – does not show precisely what was done, but apart from the unexecuted south wing (on the right hand side, on the plan) it is reasonably accurate save in some details. The best

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<sup>28</sup> London, British Library. The passages relating to Wroxton (though omitting those referring to schemes for the garden, which were not carried out) are reprinted at Appendix I, below.

<sup>29</sup> London, British Library Add. MS 32513 ff.153v-154r. See also Richard Grassby, *The English Gentleman in Trade: The Life and Works of Sir Dudley North, 1641-1691*, 1994.

<sup>30</sup> *Of Building*, 27.