

The present appearance of the house, with old woodwork everywhere, is very largely due to them. They probably preserved most, if not all, of the work done for the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Guilford in the 1740s, although this was enhanced with further decoration where, presumably, it was felt to be insufficiently ancient in feeling. Thus most of the eighteenth century fireplaces in a gothic style were given new chimneypieces constructed from pieces of old woodcarving. To judge by the very small amount left of the work that was done by Roger North for his brother Francis in the 1680s, the Norths must have swept away almost all of what remained.

The extent of the Norths' work can be shown most clearly in the Great Hall, since this is the only room of the house of which there exist illustrations before he began. Here there was less for him to do, since the screen and the gallery at the southern end survived from the original period of building, and the central ceiling pendant, designed by Sanderson Miller in the 1740s, was sufficiently authentic in feeling to be allowed to remain. Already Skelton had described in 1823 how 'the spacious fireplace, and the surrounding objects, bring to the imagination an idea of the noble hospitality which here reigned in former years.'<sup>48</sup> But what existed did not evoke the past powerfully enough for the house's new owners. The chimneypiece was changed, the walls were lined with early-seventeenth century wainscot, and a ribbed plaster ceiling was installed. The ceiling, it has to be said, is not very convincing, and interestingly it closely resembles one installed at much the same time in the dining room at Chastleton. But the success of the work can be judged by the fact that most visitors to the room believe that everything they are looking at is original to the house, even though in fact it is not.

In addition, John North and Lady Susan altered the windows. These had been largely modernised in the seventeenth century, when Roger North had reduced them in size from their original 'bird-cage'-like character and removed stone mullions; he or his successors had introduced sashes and glazing bars. Without detailed evidence for their original appearance, all that could be done was to remodel them in a style that was felt to be correct for the period of building. But the most substantial of the North's work was the completion of the house.

---

<sup>48</sup> Skelton, *op. cit.* as fn. 5.