

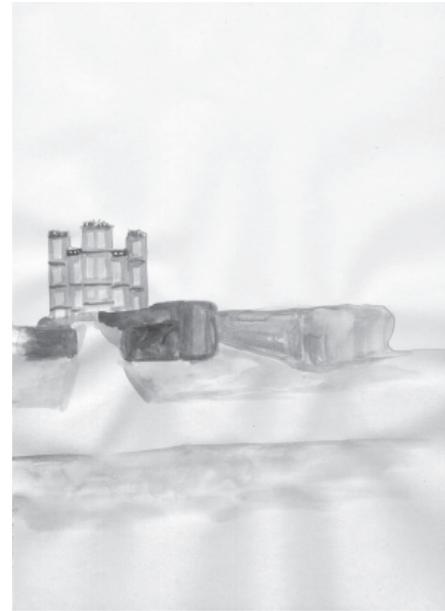
Hardwick Hall, Doe Lea
Robert Smythson for Bess Hardwick, 1597

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Urbanity: Buildings within Buildings

From a distance Hardwick Hall appears as a horizontal cluster of vertical towers, gathered around a squarer, squatter building at the centre. As one moves around the building the towers group and regroup, transforming it from a massive and horizontal collection of vertical towers (ready to address the landscape) into a narrower, taller building that is capable of addressing the informal domestic gardens.

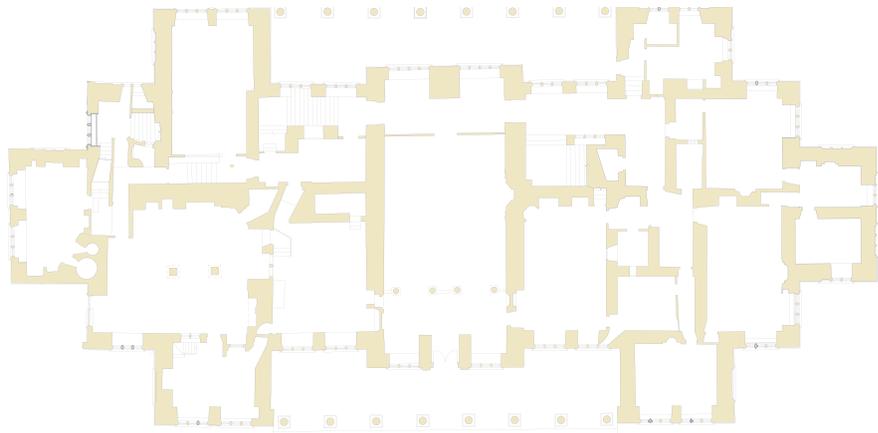
Unlike Smythson's previous buildings there is no complex external variation or articulation between the respective towers, friezes and colonnades at Hardwick. Indeed Hardwick is plane, almost modern or industrial in its simplicity. Yet its simplicity is not uniform. On closer inspection of the front facade, the outer most towers are taller than the remaining four, as if to correct perspectival depreciation. This simultaneously increases the 'horizontal squareness' of the front elevation in the tallness of the short elevation. The top of five of the towers become rooftop follies, accessible only via a staircase within the sixth tower, and along the spine of the roof. Little buildings sat on the roof, for a solitary retreat or a private party, overlooking the vast landscape beyond.



The tall short elevation as seen from the intimate garden rooms



The imposing 'horizontal squareness' of the rear elevation, from the formal gardens

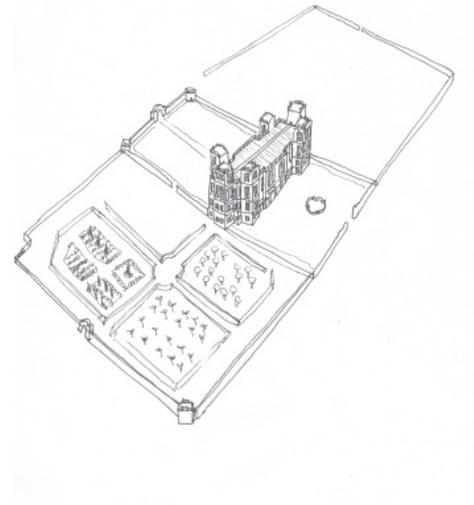


3m



Front elevation illustrating the slightly taller outer towers and emphasising an uncompromising symmetry in contrast to the asymmetrical plan of rooms





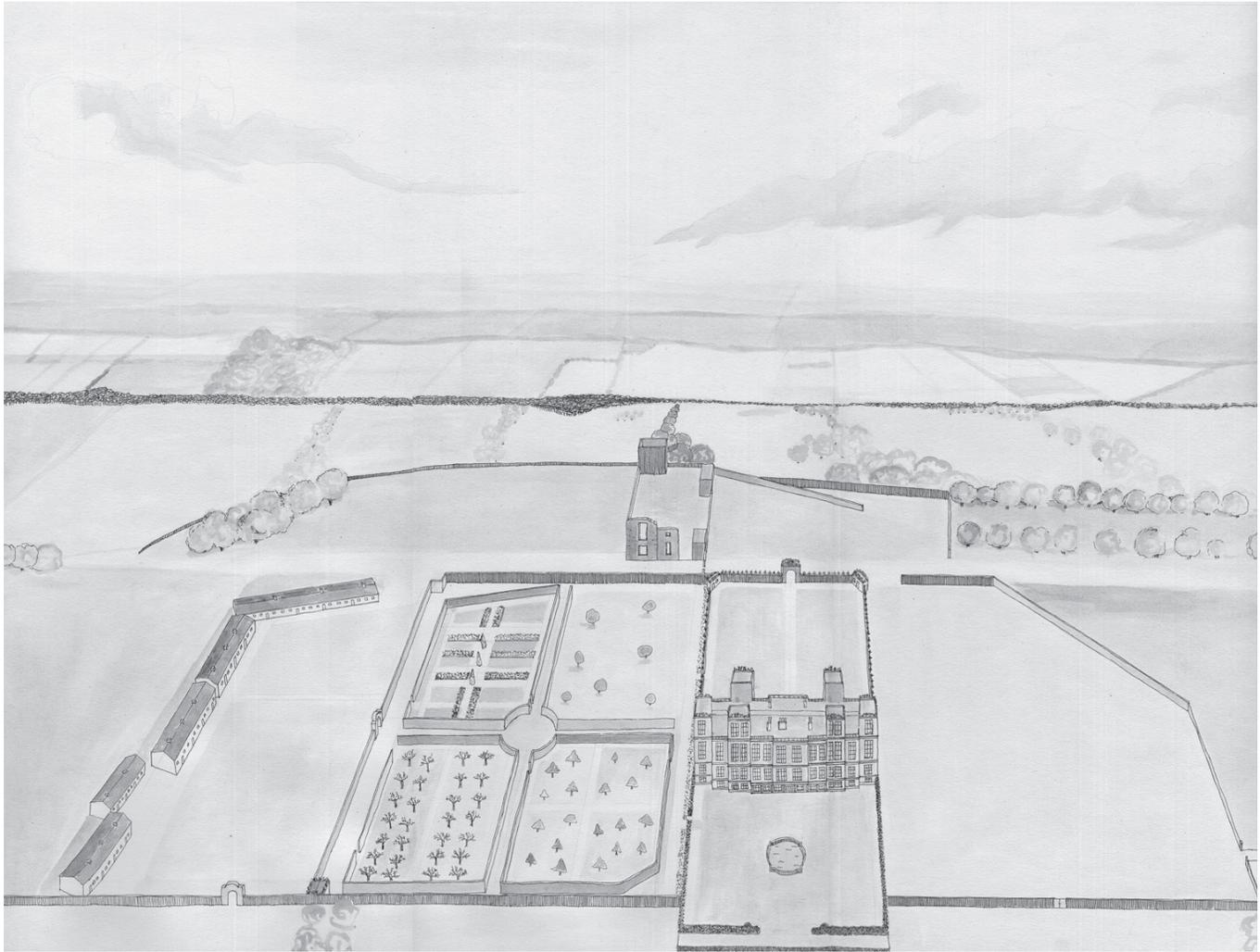
Plan of Rooms: houserooms, gardenrooms and landrooms of the Derbyshire countryside

Concepts of Scale:

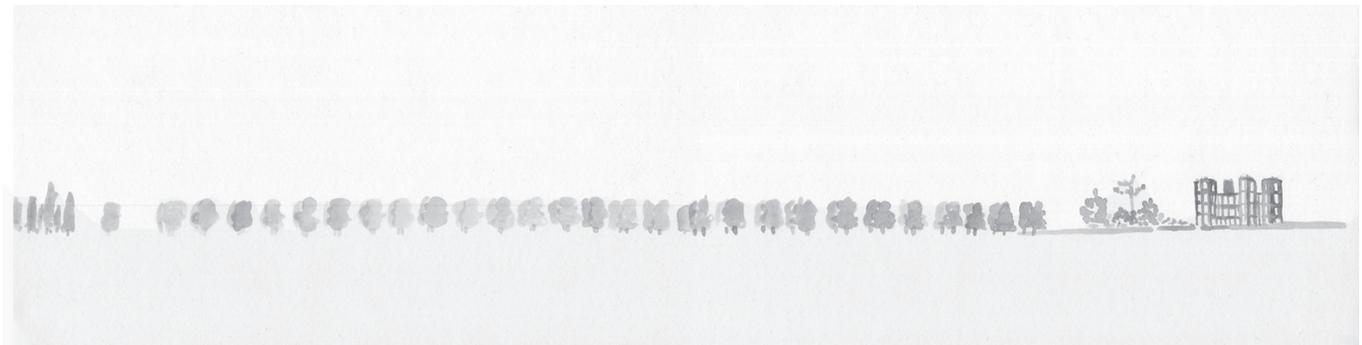
House-rooms to Garden-rooms to Land-rooms.

There are few corridors at Hardwick Hall, and so entering the screened antechamber that is followed by the formal and centralised great hall, one is directed into a warren of informal functional spaces at ground floor level. This surprising variety of formal and informal rooms is continued both throughout and outside the house. To the east and west of the building deep hedgerows surround a series of informal garden rooms, each with its own character: an ancient and sinewy orchard room, a scattered oak trees room, an empty room and a room of tiny paths and flowers. To the north and south of the building lie more formal garden rooms, and a thick sandstone wall surrounds them all. Old Hardwick remains a walled ruin at the south entrance and beyond this are the Hardwick parklands, divided loosely into fields by clusters of trees. Further still are the working fields of Derbyshire and to the south, the foothills to the Pennines in the distance: all this falls under Hardwick's bold command.





Hardwick new and old, surrounded by a sandstone wall, and overlooking the rural landscape (view looking west)



Grounds to the rear of Hardwick, a bottle neck of trees (view looking east)

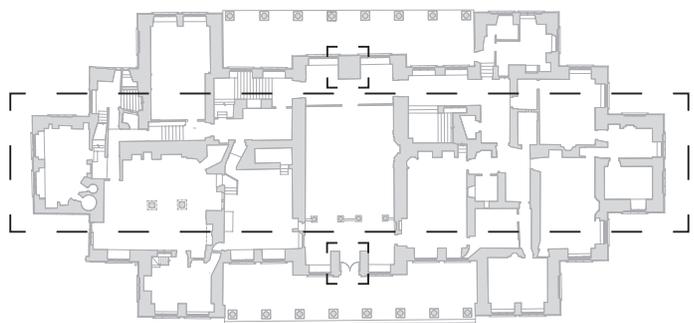




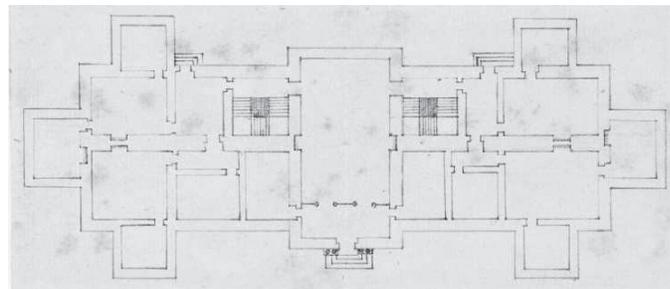
Large window openings at top of the house with view to the gardens

Technology and Proportion

The windows of the *piano nobile* are 6 meters tall. The slender stone mullions are made from Hardwick Sandstone from a local quarry owned by Bess, who also owned a glass factory, enabling such vast expanses of glazing. The panes of glass are approximately 600mm wide and vary between 800mm and 1400mm tall. To increase their sense of scale, the taller panes within each window frame are located each time at the bottom, and are followed by increasingly smaller panes further up the frame. Structural stability is achieved via an asymmetric spine wall and two massive columns which run down the centre of the plan taking transfer loads from the floors above. These columns are visible only from the inside of the house, and are used as alcove-room dividers.



Ground floor plan with long spine wall and two structural columns (one of which divides into 2 over entrance at ground floor level.)



Original plan by Smythson, before Bess's instruction for a less symmetrical organisation



Mullion detail: 150mm thick containing panes of between 800mm and 1400mm tall





The spine wall (right of picture) running continuously down the length of the long gallery on the *piano nobile* (3rd) floor. To the left of the picture is the large column just seen partitioning a smaller alcove room

References

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