

The Manor Hotel

With a history spanning 900 years, [Weston Manor](#) dates back to the Domesday Book. And one of its owners in the 16th century, Sir Henry Norreys, was an instrumental figure in Hilary Mantel's Booker Prize-winning Novels *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*.

There was a medieval manor-house which was probably of some size, as it was the seat of Oseney Abbey's bailiff for the bailiwick of Weston. Two sides of its 13th-century rectangular moat were existing, and a third side could be traced, before they were largely filled in in 1908. The present house, however, was probably mainly built in the mid-16th century by Lord Williams of Thame or his widow. The main survival of the earlier building is the great hall (19x42 ft.), very probably the court room of the manor. Its walls date from the early 16th century. An entry into the hall from the corridor between the great hall and the buttery and kitchen quarters is called the Monk's Hole or Hall, but as it now stands it appears to be of a later period and probably dates from about 1851, when the Hon. the Revd. F. A. Bertie was rebuilding and making extensive alterations to the house.

On the outside of the south wall is a staircase turret, bearing the arms of the Bertie family, and leading up to a minstrels' gallery, perhaps adapted from the solar of the older hall. Inside, the hall has oak linen-fold panelling and above a carved frieze of foliage and mermaids, and a head probably representing that of St. John the Baptist on a charger. A legend 'Time Deum et recede a malo. Principium sapiencie timor est Dei' runs around the frieze, with the name of Richard Rydge, the last Abbot of Notley (Bucks.), between the two sentences. Peregrine Bertie (1741–90) moved this panelling from Notley in about 1780 and put it up in the hall at Weston; the open timber roof now in the hall also came from Notley, but was first used to roof a barn in Chesterton and was not placed in the hall of Weston Manor until between 1840 and 1850. The plaster corbel angels supporting the roof were probably a part of F. A. Bertie's restoration.

The main block of the 16th-century house is rectangular: with its two small projections at the back it encloses a courtyard (45 X 30 ft.). The stables and outbuildings lie to the right of the house across a paved stable yard, through which may once have been the main approach. The size of the house before the 19th-century alterations may be gauged from its 20 hearths returned for the hearth tax of 1665. It was among the county's larger mansions, although not in the same class as Lord Anglesey's house with its 30 hearths at nearby Bletchington. An etching of about 1823 shows it as it was before its original 16th-century frontage was replaced by a Gothic-revival façade in the 1820's. The front of the main building has a gable at either end, and the central porch is flanked by bay windows, extending the whole height of the building, which was of two stories with attics. An unpretentious low wall or paling separates the house from an open field, and farm outhouses lie on both sides.

The principal other points of interest in the present building are the William and Mary panelling in the drawing-room; the bow window of this room, which extends to the top of the first floor; the Tudor fireplace in the entrance hall; and the adornments of the central courtyard. This last has a central well

surrounded by a low wall bearing the arms of the Bertie family, and against its west wall two doors from the Jacobean chapel of Exeter College. They bear the arms of George Hakewill, a Fellow and Rector of the college, at whose cost the chapel had been built; and were probably acquired by the Berties when Exeter chapel was rebuilt in 1856.

The gardens have an avenue of deciduous trees, called the Monks' Walk, but undoubtedly planted by the Berties. The last of the elm trees, planted in 1672 and 1682 and noted in the parish register by Edward Norreys himself, was struck by lightning in 1952 and removed. The house has been used as an hotel since 1949.

The parish has played a small part in national affairs. In the Civil War royalist troops were quartered in the village in 1643 and 1644 and parliamentary troops under Colonel Fleetwood were stationed there before the siege of Oxford in 1646. The manor-house was the home for over two centuries of the Bertie family. John Warde, 'the father of foxhunting', established kennels at Weston in 1778.

At the time of the Conquest WESTON was one of the possessions of the Saxon lord Wigged of Wallingford. On Wigod's death shortly afterwards many of his lands including Weston passed to Robert d'Oilly, the first Norman castellan of Oxford, who is said to have married Wigod's daughter. Robert held Weston rated at 10 hides in 1086 and on his death in 1094 it passed to his brother and successor Nigel. Nigel lived until about 1115 and was succeeded by his son Robert (II) d'Oilly, who married Edith, daughter of Forne, to whom he gave Weston as part of her dower. It is likely that Robert's gift about 1130 to his new foundation of Oseney Abbey of the church of Weston was accompanied or followed by a grant of lands in the manor; Henry (II) d'Oilly confirmed to the abbey 6 virgates which were the gift of his grandmother Edith and his father Henry (I). In 1137 Edith, with Robert's consent, gave 35 acres of land in Weston to the new foundation of Otley Abbey in Oddington, later removed to Thame. Robert died in 1142 and was succeeded by his son Henry (I), who confirmed his mother's gift to Thame and confirmed or augmented her gift to Oseney. Edith presumably held Weston until her death between 1151 and 1154. Her son Henry (I) died in 1163 and was succeeded by his son Henry (II), a minor who came of age about 1175. In 1213 Henry granted Weston in marriage with his daughter Maud to Maurice de Gaunt, who undertook to discharge a debt of 1,200 marks owed by Henry to the king. Maud had died without issue by 1220 when Henry sought to recover the manor from Maurice. The king's court eventually decided that, since Maurice had been given twelve years in which to pay Henry's debt by annual instalments, he should hold Weston until 1225, when Henry should recover possession. Oseney Abbey had meanwhile increased its estate in Weston by a number of small gifts from tenants of the manor. In 1227 Henry d'Oilly sold to Oseney the whole manor with the exception of the manor-house, the mill, and certain demesne lands for 300 marks, which the abbey paid to a creditor of Henry, David the Jew of Oxford. Soon afterwards, probably in 1228, Henry gave the remainder of the manor to Oseney Abbey.

Henry d'Oilly died in 1232, and the overlordship of Weston passed to his nephew Thomas de Newburgh, Earl of Warwick, and followed the same descent as the overlordship of Bucknell. In practice the overlordship soon

lapsed, and the Abbot of Oseney virtually held the manor in chief. About 1260, however, the manor was claimed against the abbot by Roger Damory of Bucknell. At the time of the Domesday survey Robert (I) d'Oilly's tenant at Weston had been Gilbert, probably the ancestor of the Damory family, who also held of Robert at Bucknell, Bletchingdon, and Fulwell. Gilbert's descendants may have held lands at Weston as tenants under the D'Oillys, but although Robert Damory (d. 1236) witnessed grants of land in the manor about 1220, it does not appear that either he or his son Roger held lands there themselves: they were certainly not among the numerous tenants of the manor who granted their lands to Oseney between 1230 and 1270. Roger nevertheless brought his suit, but in 1260 at Beckley, before Richard of Cornwall, he agreed to quitclaim the manor to the abbot for 300 marks. From 1260 until the Dissolution Oseney Abbey remained in undisputed possession of the whole manor with the exception of the 35 acres given to Thame in 1137 and quitclaimed to that abbey by Roger Damory in 1257.

As a reward for his services to Henry VIII, notably as surveyor of monastic lands in Oxfordshire, Sir John Williams of Thame obtained Weston manor in 1540, and in 1546 he purchased certain lands and rents reserved in his original grant. Sir John, later Lord Williams of Thame, died in 1559 leaving Weston to his second wife Margery Wentworth. Margery married secondly Sir William Drury (d. 1579) and thirdly James Croft. On her death in about 1588 Weston passed by the terms of Lord Williams's will to Henry, Lord Norreys, husband of Margery, Lord Williams's younger daughter by his first wife. Lord Norreys, however, allowed James Croft to retain Weston as his tenant. Sir William Norreys, Lord Norreys's eldest son, had died in 1579, and in 1586 his widow Elizabeth married Henry Clinton, Earl of Lincoln. The earl claimed Weston manor as part of his wife's jointure, turned Croft out of the manor-house by force and occupied it himself. Lord Norreys brought an armed band from Rycote to his tenant's help, and after some fighting with the earl's servants Croft was reinstated. The earl, however, continued his fight in the Star Chamber court from 1590 to 1597. Judgement was finally given in Lord Norreys's favour.

On the latter's death in 1601 Weston passed to his grandson Francis Norreys, later created Earl of Berkshire. Francis married Bridget, daughter of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, by whom he had a daughter Elizabeth, who inherited most of his lands on his death in 1624. Weston, however, by virtue of a settlement made in 1619 passed to Francis's illegitimate son Francis Rose, who assumed the name of Norreys after his father's death. Sir Francis, as he became in 1633, was Sheriff of Oxfordshire in 1635 and later M.P. for the county under the Commonwealth. He married Hester, daughter of Sir John Rouse, and was succeeded by his eldest son Sir Edward Norreys on his death in 1669. Sir Edward, many times M.P. for either the county or city of Oxford, died in 1713, when Weston was inherited by his eldest daughter Philadelphia and her husband Captain Henry Bertie, a younger son of James, Earl of Abingdon. In 1734 Captain Bertie was succeeded by his grandson Norreys Bertie, who died unmarried in 1766 and who bequeathed Weston to his great nephew Peregrine Bertie. Peregrine also left no children, and on his death in 1790 Weston passed to his elder brother Willoughby, Earl of Abingdon, who entailed the manor so that it should only be held by his successors in the earldom if there were no younger brother to hold it.

Willoughby was succeeded as Earl of Abingdon in 1799 by his third and eldest surviving son Montague, but Weston under the entail was inherited by his fourth son, the Hon. the Revd. Frederick Arthur Bertie, when the latter came of age. He married Georgina, daughter of Admiral Lord Mark Ker, and was succeeded in 1868 by his son Captain Frederick Arthur Bertie. Captain Bertie's widow, Rose Emily Bertie, sold the manor by auction in 1918 after the death of her only son in action in Palestine in the previous year. The estate has been split up and manorial rights have lapsed.