

'Suffolk Palace, Hull'

Suffolk Palace was one of a number of terms used to identify a complex of buildings and associated formal gardens which existed in late medieval and early modern times in the northern part of the walled town of Kingston-upon-Hull. It seems likely that most of the buildings had been demolished by the late 17th century although remnants of the gardens survived well into the following century.

Today the approximate perimeter of the site may be walked by the following route. Starting at the North Walls footpath in the Hull College complex, cross William Wilberforce Drive and walk west to the end of Guildhall Road (an alternative would be to walk the north end of Lowgate and along Hanover Square). Having crossed Alfred Gelder Street walk the length of Whitefriargate, west to east. From here continue to Lowgate via the Land of Green Ginger and the Bowl-alley Lane, this part of Lowgate having always been the eastern edge of the land of Suffolk Palace (see Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 View north from the junction of Bishop Lane and Lowgate. The eastern peripheral wall of the Suffolk Palace site would have followed the western side of Lowgate. The tower above the main entrance (see later) would have been visible from here over the wall, the smaller tower over the entrance gate (see later) would have been roughly at the east end of the present Guildhall building.

By the time that Anderson's map of Hull was published in 1818 (see Fig. 2) the site of Suffolk Palace had been completely built over with a series of dense residential streets, a workhouse ('Charity Hall') off the north-east section of 'White Frier Gate' and a grid-plan cluster of streets north of 'Bowlalley' Lane up to the south side of 'Old Dock'.¹ Parliament Street, linking Whitefriargate with the pre-existing Quay Street,

¹ From north to south the cluster of streets were; Hanover Square, Duke Street, Anne Street, Ros Street (?), Duncan's Passage, Manor Street, Pell Mell Court, Cook's Buildings, Leadenhall Square, Manor Alley, Eaton Street and Winter's Alley.

Alfred Gelder Street is a product of late 19th century civic improvement, the Guildhall was completed in 1914 (see Gillett and MacMahon, 1990, 416-419).

had been built in the late 1790s by private subscription.² Clearly, by 1818 the area that had been the house and grounds of Suffolk Palace had become a densely built-up residential area, retaining few clues as to the history of the site except in the names Manor Street and Manor Alley (see Figs. 2 and 3 plus see later).

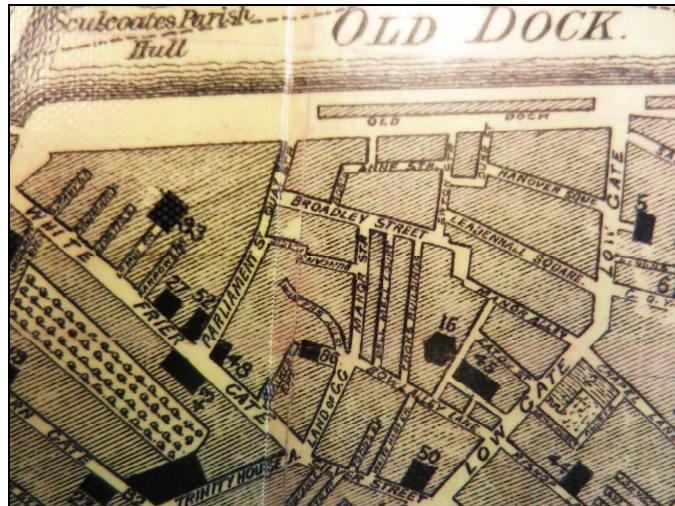


Fig. 2 Extract from Anderson's map of Hull, 1818, courtesy of Hull History Centre and focussing on the area that was from the 14th century to the early 18th century the site of 'Suffolk Palace' and its extensive grounds.



Fig. 3 View north along present day Manor Street. Here and along the central section of Alfred Gelder Street are the most likely public areas to be underlain by physical evidence of the Suffolk Palace complex. However, medieval brick buildings often had shallow foundations so perhaps random artifacts would be a more likely find.

Other detailed maps of Hull published in the late 18th century show how rapidly the grounds of the ex-Suffolk Palace were transformed. Jeffery's map of Hull, published in 1767 (see additional figures), shows that much of this top quarter of the still walled

² See Gillett and MacMahon, 1990, 216.

Figs. 5 and 6). By the final decade of the 18th century it would seem that just three remnants of the previous parterres/allotments remained with some new streets and alleyways (most un-named) heralding the detail evidenced in Anderson's map of 1818. The Land of Green Ginger had been extended north and was built-up on either side, while north-west of it Quay Street had been created leading from the Quay and with buildings either side covering much of the area shown by Thew as small rectangular plant beds and by Bower (in 1786) as a star-shaped parterre. Hargrave's map of Hull, also published in 1791 (see additional figures), is not as detailed as Bower's for the Suffolk Palace site but does include more new street names such as Hanover Square, Manor Alley and Broad Street.



Fig. 5 Extract from Bower's map on Hull, 1791, courtesy of Hull History Centre.

Clearly the construction of the Dock (now Queen's Gardens) had much increased the demand for warehousing, company office accommodation and worker's housing in the vicinity and the opportunity to build across previously open land to the south had proven lucrative. So was lost the remarkable survival of extensive formal private grounds within the confines of what had been a walled medieval town.



Fig. 6 View east along Alfred Gelder Street and Whitefriargate from a point near to the site of the Beverley Gate. The wedge of land between these two streets, and including

Alfred Gelder Street itself, comprised the site of the grounds of Suffolk Palace. Maybe a pollen analysis of the soil, under Parliament Street for example, might provide some clues as to the planting regime.

The name Suffolk Palace was in use only after 1385 at which point Michael De la Pole, already Chancellor of England, was elevated to the peerage by Richard II with the title 'Earl of Suffolk'. Technically the status 'palace' was reserved for royal residences, which for brief episodes the house and grounds were as some later members of the De la Pole dynasty fell-out with successive monarchs, were imprisoned and, in such circumstances, their property was sequestered by the monarch. Previous to 1385 the terms 'Manor House' or 'De la Pole mansion' had defined the property.

The term 'Manor House' strongly suggests that the first building complex and grounds dated from the late 1290s when Edward I created the manor of 'Kyngston super Hull', separate then from the manor of Myton. The site of 'Manor House' was in an area which, before the area of the town of Hull was defined by the medieval wall, had been a small estate called Aton Fee which had not been purchased by the abbot of Meaux Abbey, from whom king Edward I purchased Myton berewick in the 1290s. However, around this time Edward I did acquire the land of Aton Fee and it may well have been relatively undeveloped thus enabling the 'Manor House' complex to be so relatively expansive. Immediately south of Aton Fee the expanding settlement of 'Kyngston super Hull' was evolving west of Hull Street (later High Street) and what had originated as the rear access to properties west of Hull Street had developed into the Marketgate (later Lowgate) thoroughfare.⁴ Whitefriargate would then have been the eastern end of the established route-way from Beverley, thus forming a natural boundary to land ownership.

A high status building of the early 14th might be expected to be constructed of 'mud-stud and thatch', that is a timber skeleton set 'in earth' with the local variant of wattle and daub infill and with a thatched roof sitting on a king-post, queen-post or crown-post arrangement of timbers. Brick could be incorporated, often as a plinth to reduce rising damp and to secure the structure, or, in the construction of internal or external chimney-stacks, this to reduce fire risk and to allow some internal room divisions. However, on the lower R. Hull floodplain clay suitable for brick-making was readily available and late-medieval Hull was noted for its predominantly brick-built buildings, John Leland⁵ later describing the 'Pole Manor' (see later) as 'all brick' and 'more like a palace'. There were extensive brick making sites on land in the eastern part of

⁴ For a study of landholding in this period see Clarke, R. 'Hull in the Beginning' (East Yorkshire Historian, Vol. 14, 2013, p. 23-25 plus website).

⁵ John Leland, 1506-1552, became the 'King's Antiquary' to Henry VIII. His *Itinerary*, still in manuscript form when he died, was published in the late 18th century. Leland was often known as 'the father of English topography'.

Myton manor and just outside the town walls. There were further brick-making sites outside Hull's north walls beside a track leading to Charterhouse after the 1350s.⁶

It has often been assumed that the 'Manor House' was built by the brothers William and Richard De la Pole after their being made Lord of the Manor of 'Kyngston super Hull' in the 1330s. However, Horrox records that the De la Pole brothers in 1317 acquired a house in Hull from John Rottenherring for a 'sizeable rent'.⁷ It seems likely therefore that the De la Pole brothers extended a pre-existing property.⁸ By the 1330s William and his brother Richard De la Pole had become joint lords of the manor of Kingston upon Hull and clearly at this time the Manor House was their principal Hull residence. Richard died in 1345 and William in 1366 at which point Katherine, William's widow, took control of the property. By 1385 Katherine's son Michael had been raised to the peerage by Richard II and it seems probable that Michael had the Manor House re-built, or radically changed. Henceforth it was known as 'Suffolk Palace'.⁹

In setting-out to describe the building and its grounds Sheahan, writing after all surface evidence had been obliterated, refers to Tickell for much of the evidence he presents – Allison references both to arrive at his description.

On some points there was general agreement, in particular that the complex of buildings, courtyards and outbuildings was sited towards the eastern end of the 'large triangular plot' but was set back from the Lowgate street frontage. Allison, although conservative in his details on the complex itself, does make a clear distinction between the original build and that following Michael De la Pole's re-building of the 1380s. Allison sites evidence that in 1347 the original Manor house included a hall, chapel and 'garden-house'. He then cites an inventory of 1388 for 'Courthall' (manorial court house) which includes mention of a chapel, a tower, over 20 chambers¹⁰ and a 'somerhalle'.¹¹

Sheahan's description of the building complex is more comprehensive, but possibly with a degree of descriptive licence. Importantly he makes clear that the whole 'large triangular plot' was defined by a peripheral wall (presumably brick). He identifies the

⁶ For further notes on medieval building materials and brick-making locally see Gillett and MacMahon (1989, Ch. 3).

⁷ Horrox, R. *The De la Poles of Hull* (East Yorkshire Local History Soc., 1983, 3).

⁸ For an examination of the lives of the De la Pole brothers and of their connection with J. Rottenherring see Horrox, chapter 1. For a consideration of the connection between the rise of merchants in Hull and the demise of Raverser Odd see Clarke (2013).

⁹ Allison records that once re-built by Michael De la Pole it was known as 'Courthall'. Later still it was known as the 'King's Manor' or 'King's Manor House', see later.

¹⁰ A term usually interpreted as meaning sleeping quarters or just rooms. This suggests a considerable degree of internal room delineation, a progressive idea for the 14th century.

¹¹ Whether the phrases garden-house and 'somerhalle' refer to a building in the grounds detached from the main complex or some sort of conservatory incorporated into the main complex, presumably south-facing, is not clear. Any glass incorporated could only have been in the form of small panes, plate glass being a much later technology, and even so would have been hugely expensive.

main entrance as being on Marketgate (Lowgate) but confusingly then states that this entrance was 'facing towards the Town Walls'.¹² He quotes from the Rev. Tickell when stating that the entrance off Lowgate was a 'lofty and grand gateway over which ... were erected two chambers' and that the 'passage' (drive) from this entrance to the mansion was 30 yards long. A fact confirmed by other evidence (see later) was that the entrance to the mansion itself was at the base of a three-storey tower, this, according to Sheahan, having a lead roof and containing rooms 18 feet square.

Sheahan also describes at least two courtyards around which were buildings forming parts of the complex. A 'central courtyard' was 'two roods in area'.¹³ This courtyard was surrounded by 'beautiful and elegant buildings' one of which was a great hall measuring 60 by 40 feet. There was, Sheahan writes, a further small courtyard south of the great hall around which were 'out offices' such as the kitchen which was 20 feet square.¹⁴ On the 'north side' of this second courtyard was a private chapel dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel, this measured 28 feet by 15 feet, was built of brick and stone and covered in lead (roofed by sheet lead fixed to roof timbers which formed a ridged roof).

In describing the grounds Sheahan writes of an acre of land to the north(?) of the house comprising a 'quadrangle' with fish ponds and a dovecote. To the west of this were two acres of pasture enclosed by a brick wall (presumably the peripheral wall), while outside the windows of the great hall was about an acre(?) of flower garden, adjoined by a kitchen garden. Sheahan here is describing a formal garden with many different features (maybe including a summer-house) and with pastureland beyond. Perhaps horses or a few sheep grazed here (see Fig. 6).¹⁵

Further evidence as to the built complex and grounds of Suffolk Palace comes from pictorial evidence, but as always the reliability of the evidence has to be questioned.

Allison reproduces an oft referenced plan of the medieval town of Hull and gives it the caption 'The Medieval Town, an undated view, perhaps a 16th century copy of an older drawing'. This aerial view cross-references well with other evidence in many respects e.g. the town walls, the 'old harbour', a basic grid-plan of streets and Drypool village and church. However, although the 'triangular plot' includes a tower the rest of the area is covered with little buildings so cannot be accurate (see before). Allison's second illustration is entitled 'The Pole Manor-house – an undated view showing proposed improvements, perhaps drawn in 1541'. If so then this aerial view shows what Henry VIII wanted it to be like following his two visits to Hull during

¹² To be so the entrance would have needed to have been on the north side of the triangular plot.

¹³ A rood is defined as 40 square poles, this converting to 200 sq. yards. A courtyard of 400 sq. yards (or one tenth of an acre) seems improbable and does not conform with pictorial evidence (see later).

¹⁴ Sometimes written descriptions from the past can be difficult to reconstruct until the reader realises that the author got their directions wrong, this may be the case here.

¹⁵ The estuarine clays on which the medieval town stood provided fertile grazing land all along the north Humber lowlands – see Clarke (2016 plus website).

his 'Northern Progress' of that year. However, it does show two courtyards, one smaller than the other, and a central tower along the east range with an entrance at its base. Between this and the Lowgate peripheral wall is shown a large forecourt. Interestingly it shows many chimneys puffing smoke, this showing that there were many room sub-divisions internally and is almost certain evidence that the main building material was brick, this to reduce the fire risk. An adjoining building to the smaller courtyard with a pyramidal roof and beside the forecourt may have been the chapel, but it is to the east of the courtyard, not north as stated by Sheahan. All the buildings of the complex are shown as being of two-storeys, with windows (not necessarily glazed) to both floors, further evidence of complex internal room sub-divisions. The pyramidal roofed building appears to have a mullioned window with two round-headed lights.

Later illustrative views of Hull also provide relevant evidence, in particular two 17th century plans. Speed's map of the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire, published in 1610, included an inset plan of Hull in the bottom left corner, this topped by a shield of three crowns.¹⁶ Although Speed's map shows that part of the grounds of Suffolk Palace had been built-on in the area of what was later called the Land of Green Ginger the map clearly shows Suffolk Palace much intact and incorporating a lofty tower plus a detached tower to the north. The 'Palace' is surrounded by much open land and much of the perimeter wall seems to survive. On the other side of Lowgate stands St. Mary's church with a pyramidal cap on its west tower.¹⁷

Hollar's plan of Hull, published 1640, also shows the Suffolk Palace site in some detail. Although no clear arrangement of courtyards is visible the main tower and the entrance tower are shown clearly, the latter at a bend in the perimeter wall and thereby facing north (thus confirming Sheahan's direction, see before). Most of the grounds north of Whitefriargate had been built on by 1640 but a large proportion of the grounds otherwise remained open but, seemingly, divided into rectangular fields. St. Mary's church is shown as having no west tower.

250 years after Michael De la Pole's re-building of Suffolk Palace in the late 14th century Hollar's plan shows that some parts of the building complex and grounds remained. Plans of Hull of the second half of the 18th century show that these had mostly gone (see above). So what had happened to the status and usage of this palatial property between 1385 and 1767 (publication of Jeffery's map)? Two points are clear; firstly that the usage of this property changed over time, and indeed for most of the 300+ years it was not a private/family home. Secondly, that the property played a significant role in two episodes of national importance and involving two monarchs.

¹⁶ This is one of many maps published by John Speed in his *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* (1611-1612), later reprinted.

¹⁷ This west tower presents a problem as the church's late 15th century tower collapsed in the 1510s and the present tower was not built until 1697 (see Neave, 2005, 511). Perhaps then a third tower had been built between 1514 and 1697, or maybe, the tower shown was illustrative licence.

It seems very likely that Suffolk Palace remained in the ownership of the De la Pole family and living accommodation for family or tenants throughout the 15th century.¹⁸ Presumably it remained the 'manor house' and would have been open-house on the occasions when the manorial court was held. Although by the 1380s and beyond Michael and his descendents had their principal 'seat' at Wingfield in Suffolk the De la Pole family retained their land in Hull and kept in active contact with events in Hull.¹⁹ At the time of Henry VIII's two visits to Hull in 1541 it seems that Suffolk Palace retained its grandeur and comforts as Henry stayed there and at about this time John Leland described the 'Pole Manor' as 'all brick' and 'more like a palace'.²⁰ However, in ordering that a proper fresh water supply be created to the manor house Henry seems to have referred to Suffolk Palace as a 'citadel', although, given the extensive nature of the complex's buildings, this need not have detracted too much from the living accommodation. In 1541 king Henry was in fact owner of Suffolk Palace as the last direct descendent of the De la Pole family tree had died in 1539 while imprisoned in the Tower of London and, in such circumstances, the monarch automatically acquired the late family's property. Later in the 16th century when Michael Stanhope was made lieutenant in charge of the upgrading of Hull's defences ordered by Henry VIII he chose not to live in the King's Manor as 'the rooms were so large that he could not furnish even one of them'.²¹

At some point in the 16th century the current Tudor monarch sold-off the King's Manor and ownership passed through a number of families including the Hildyards of Winestead.²² Doubtless the property was still very prestigious although increasingly difficult to maintain.

In 1639 king Charles I took-out a lease on the King's Manor and converted it to a magazine. This quite possibly was focussed on the central tower of the eastern range of buildings, as was the case of church towers, these structures were considered more secure than ground-floor buildings. However, Sheahan records such a large quantity of arms as being stored that much of the King's Manor complex must have been required.²³ In April 1639 Charles I visited Hull to inspect the magazine and was well received by the members of the Corporation, but when he returned three years later the national situation had deteriorated and the Beverley gates were locked to prevent him entering the town.

¹⁸ Even when unoccupied such an extensive property would still have required a 'skeleton staff'.

¹⁹ In particular they retained close contact with the Carthusian monastery, Charterhouse, which owed its original endowment to the family. For a more detailed consideration of this point see Horrox (1983, 39-42).

²⁰ John Leland, see footnote 5.

²¹ Sheahan (1866, 105).

²² However, the name 'King's Manor' seems to have endured.

²³ Sheahan lists the following stock; '50 pieces of large ordnance, 200,000 muskets carbines, pistols and swords, 14,000 spades, wheelbarrows, shovels, powder, shot and match'. A further '1,200 muskets, 300 pikes, six brass canon, seven petards, 400 cannon balls, 30 barrels of powder and 24 barrels of musket shot' were purchased in Holland and shipped across the North Sea.

Sheahan records that the King's Manor House was 'pulled-down' in the 1660s but later states that the 'Suffolk Palace' gateway remained until 1771.²⁴ Allison records that in 1664 the Hildyard family held a fair on the 'ground' called 'The Manor' and that Hull's Baptist congregation met in the tower of the former Pole manor house in Manor Alley.²⁵ These references are hard to reconcile as Sheahan's 'gateway' was presumably the one that had been topped by the smaller of the two towers (see above), however, the tower of the Pole Manor House seems to be referring to the larger tower. As the site was gradually built over in the late 18th century (see above) Manor Alley developed close to the site of the built complex, but not on it?

Quite possibly then Suffolk Palace suffered long-term neglect in second half of the 17th century and gradual demolition, rather than it being a single event. As might be expected, the tower(s) were probably the last part of the building complex to go.

Finally, a brief and roughly contemporary comparison. Leconfield Castle was a moated 'seat' of the Percy family of which the leading figures were the Earls of Northumberland. It was visited by Henry VIII and Queen Catherine Howard during the Northern Progress of 1541 and visited and described by John Leland in 1540. The Percys were an ancient baronial dynasty whereas the De la Poles were 'nouveaux riche', this apart Leland's description of Leconfield Castle suggests that the De la Poles sought to build in similar style, if not grander. Leconfield had, for example, just one 'spatius courte' (courtyard) and only the 'meane gate' (small, or poor quality, gatehouse) and one range of buildings was built of 'sum brike'. The remainder of the buildings around the courtyard at Leconfield were 'al of tymbre'.²⁶ According to Leland Leconfield Castle had a park (deer-park) 'fair and large' with a 'tour (tower) of brike for a logge (hunting lodge) yn the park'.²⁷

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²⁴ Sheahan (1866, 408).

²⁵ Allison (1969, 312 and 412).

²⁶ This term almost certainly meaning timber framed with some variety of wattle-and-daub infill.

²⁷ See Neave, S. *Medieval Parks of East Yorkshire* (1991) and Neave, D. And Waterson, E. *Lost Houses of East Yorkshire* (1988). The site of Leconfield Castle may still be visited by public footpaths from the village, the moat remains intact.

The 14th century De la Poles could only have had a hunting park on the land of their Myton Manor beyond the town walls, however, they chose a more commercial option and grazed flocks of sheep (see Clarke, R. (2016).

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Additional figures:



Fig. 7 An alley-way between Bowl-Alley Lane (foreground) and Alfred Gelder Street (distance) cutting across the site of 'Suffolk Palace' itself.



Fig. 8 Jeffery's map, 1767 (relevant extract).

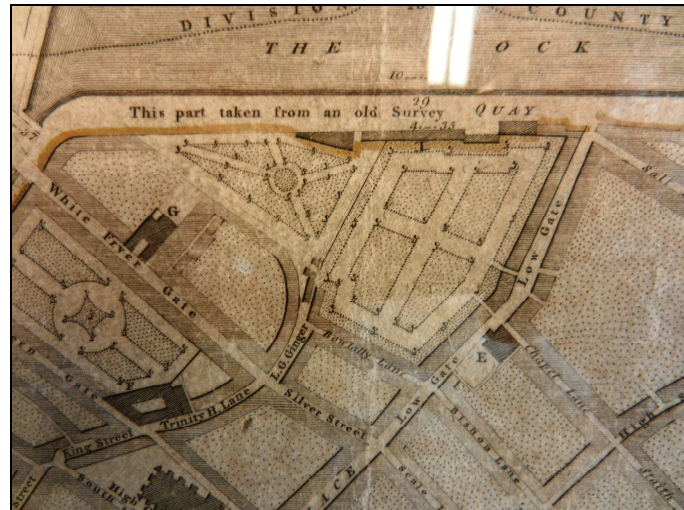


Fig. 9 Bower's plan, 1786 (relevant section).



Fig. 10 Hargrave's map, 1791 (relevant section).

Figures 8,9 and 10 courtesy of Hull History Centre.

