

# The Bishop's Palace at Nettleham as it may have appeared in the Middle Ages

In the middle of the eleventh century the manor of Nettleham was part of the dower lands of Queen Edith, wife and later widow of King Edward the Confessor, and sister of King Harold who was killed in 1066. It was returned to the crown at her death in 1075.

In 1101 the manor was granted to the Bishop of Lincoln by King Henry I, with permission of his wife Queen Maud, so it was probably part of the Queen's dower lands.

On 25 January 1301, King Edward I of England arrived as Bishop Dalderby's guest and at Nettleham, on 7 February 1301, he proclaimed his son, Edward of Caernarvon, Earl of Chester and gave him all the king's land in Wales.

Although badly damaged during the Lincolnshire Rising of 1536, it was in use for nearly 500 years, until at least 1585.

After being plundered for building materials, confiscated by the king, fired in Cromwell's era and returned to the Church at the Restoration, the manor gradually degenerated, until the only evidence of this once magnificent estate today is a series of grassy mounds in a field to the south of High Street in the village of Nettleham.

**1** Ponds where fish may have been farmed to provide a continuous supply of fresh food

**2** Workers on the estate would have probably lived nearby in very small and simple dwellings crudely constructed from wood, mud and thatch

**3** A range of buildings including the King's Chamber and two adjoining chambers with cellars below would have provided sumptuous private living and sleeping accommodation for visiting royalty, nobility and other dignitaries on the upper floor, with servants' quarters below on the ground floor. This was probably the bishop's private hall

**4** Stabling for horses and storage of harnesses, with an adjacent paddock for grazing. There may also have been a blacksmith's forge somewhere on the site for farriery, together with production and repair of implements, tools and domestic hardware

**5** The Beck would have followed a more meandering course and, because of the greater volume of water flowing at this time, would probably have frequently flooded during the winter months of the year

**6** All Saints Church at this period in time would probably have been a very simple cruciform building constructed from local limestone and with a thatched roof

**7** Possible location of a dwelling owned by the Dean of Lincoln and surrounded by his own agricultural land adjoining the Bishop's Palace estate

**8** The Beck may have formed a large pool which would have been used as a watering place for livestock

**9** In addition to cereal crops, hay would have been harvested and stored in large ricks for winter animal feed. Following this harvest, a second decorative garden would be created on part of this meadow

**10** A range of buildings called the Long Chamber with cellars below. This prestigious property was probably the public hall of the bishops

**11** Inner courtyard providing a sheltered area for various activities

**12** Motive power in medieval times was provided solely by horses and oxen

**13** Different varieties of animal and poultry would have been reared to provide a regular and reliable source of fresh meat

**14** Homestead farm buildings for overwintering animals, milking, sheep shearing, threshing, slaughtering and storage of tools and wagons

**15** Defensive wall and ditch would have offered some security against invaders and predatory animals

**16** Two massive stone buildings on either side of the main entrance were probably barns which provided secure storage for enough food to last through the winter months

**17** A number of different service buildings are recorded as part of this estate, including kitchen, brewhouse and "brewing furnace of lead"

**18** Watermill where grain would have been stone milled to provide flour for baking bread, cakes, pastries and other victuals

**19** The probable location of Queen Edith's manor house. Surface evidence of this earlier Saxon manor house has gone

**20** Productive gardens where a wide variety of seasonal produce would have been grown to provide fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the year

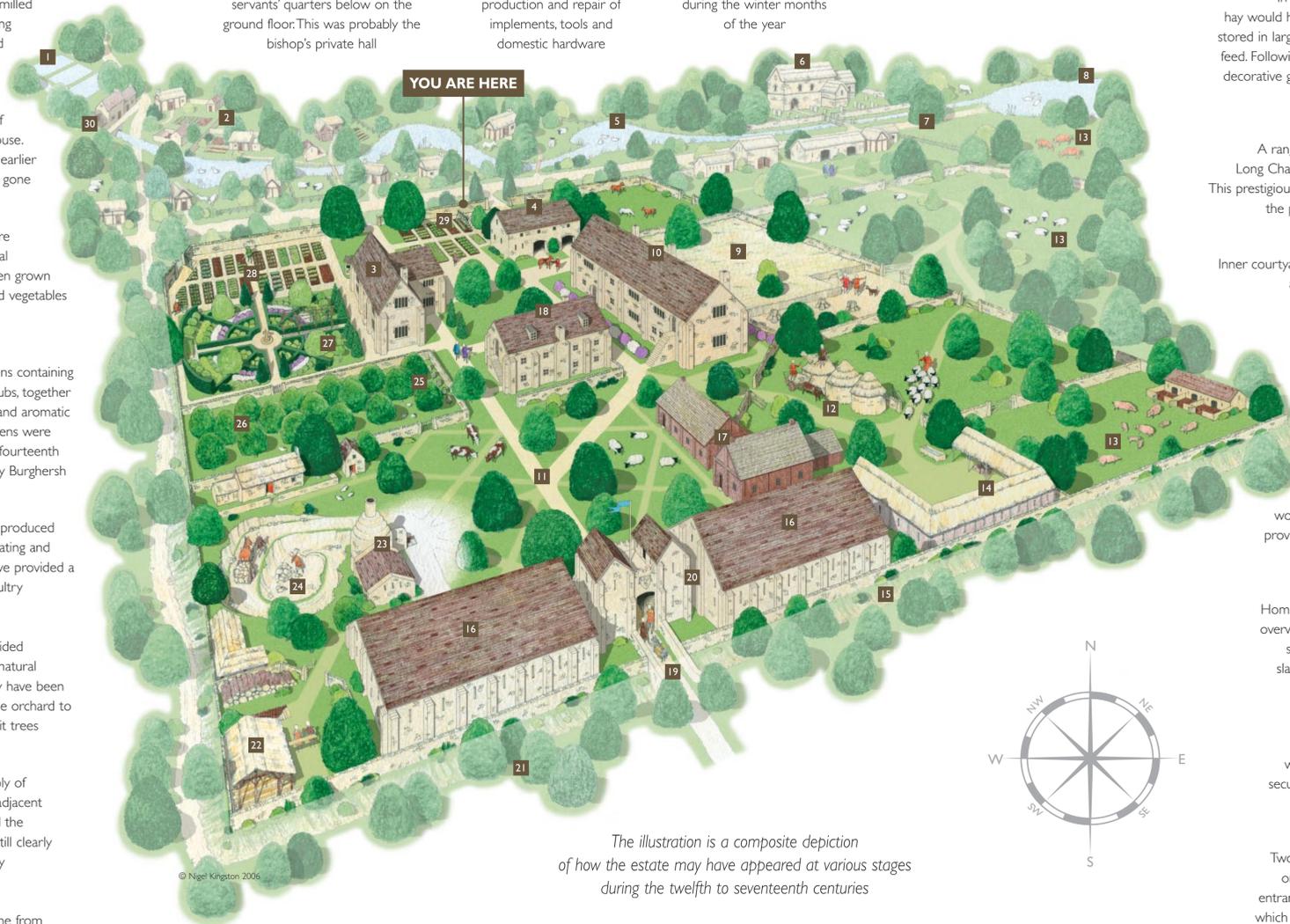
**21** Decorative formal gardens containing flowering plants and shrubs, together with medicinal, culinary and aromatic strewing herbs. The gardens were probably laid out in the fourteenth century by Bishop Henry Burghersh

**22** An orchard would have produced fresh seasonal fruit for eating and storing, and may also have provided a secure enclosure for poultry

**23** Honey would have provided an important source of natural sweetness and bees may have been kept in straw skeps in the orchard to aid pollination of the fruit trees

**24** Quarry providing a supply of small limestone for the adjacent lime kiln. The quarry and the mound for the kiln are still clearly visible to the present day

**25** Lime kiln where limestone from the quarry would have been burnt to create a constituent of mortar for building work and kept in the adjacent damp-proof store. However, these buildings are a post-medieval feature of the site, possibly dating from the time when stone from the site was used for other local buildings in the seventeenth century



The illustration is a composite depiction of how the estate may have appeared at various stages during the twelfth to seventeenth centuries

**26** Timber was an important construction material and would be cut from the surrounding forests, dried, seasoned and stored before cutting to size. It was also an important source of fuel for heating and cooking

**27** The surrounding countryside would have been a mixture of scrubby heathland and forest, providing additional food including deer, rabbits and other game. Recent surveys have indicated that there may have been additional service buildings in this area

**28** The principal properties on the estate would have been constructed from dressed local limestone and roofed with weatherproof materials, probably oak shingles for service buildings and ceramic tiles for the more prestigious dwellings

**29** The main entrance was to the south of the manorial estate and whilst it headed first towards Wragby Road, the old Roman Fosse Way, the exact route to Lincoln cathedral is unknown. It is likely that a fortified gatehouse would have been constructed across the entrance

**30** Officers' Lodgings, comprising four rooms at ground level, with cellars below and two large garrets above, would have provided accommodation for senior administrative staff. It is possible that the ground floor was slightly raised and accessed by external stairs

**1066** William the Conqueror defeats King Harold at the battle of Hastings and England is subject to Norman rule

**1075** Queen Edith dies and the manor of Nettleham is returned to the crown

**1101** The church of Nettleham is given to the Abbey of Ebrulfi (Evroult) in Normandy by William the Conqueror

**1101** The manor of Nettleham is granted to the Bishop of Lincoln by King Henry I

**1219** Bishop Hugh of Wells negotiates for the return of the church of Nettleham to the Bishopric of Lincoln

**1301** King Edward I proclaims his eldest son Edward of Caernarvon as the first Prince of Wales at Nettleham

**1336** Edward III grants Bishop Burghersh the right to crenellate the manor house, and the gardens probably laid out at this time

**1536** The Bishop's Palace comes under attack and is considerably damaged by rebels during the Lincolnshire Rising

**1547** The first married bishop of Lincoln Henry Rands (or Holbeach) lives at Nettleham with his wife, son and daughter

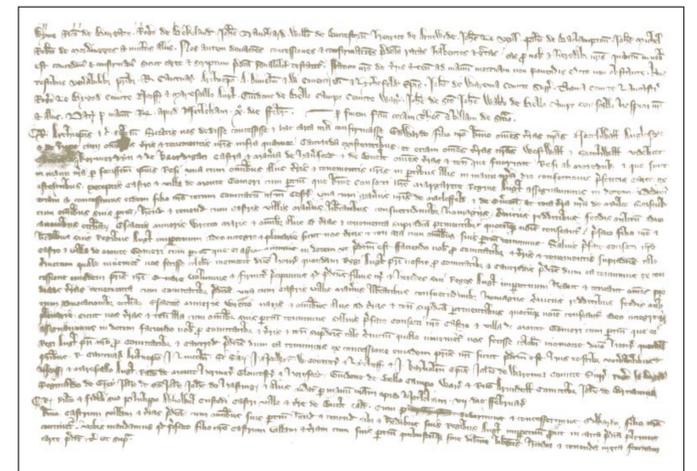
**1585** Suzanne Wickham, daughter of Bishop William Wickham, dies and is buried in the village on 4 May

**1648** During the Commonwealth Nettleham manor is sold for £2,029 15s 1/2d by order of Parliament

**1660** At the Restoration of Charles II a bill of Parliament restores the manor to the Church of England

**1837** In a major ecclesiastical reorganisation the diocese of Lincoln is greatly reduced

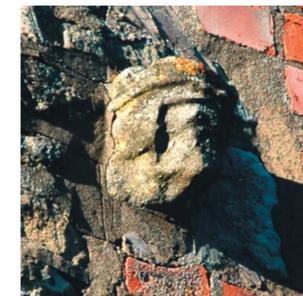
**2012** The lease of the Bishop's Palace site is acquired by Nettleham Parish Council and development commences



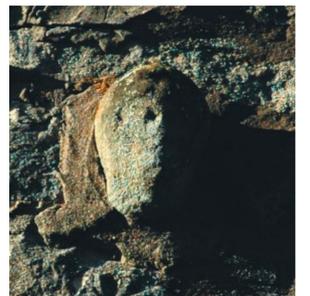
The Nettleham Charter giving to Edward I's son, Edward of Caernarvon, all the king's land in Wales and proclaiming him Earl of Chester, dated 7 February 1301 and declared to be by our (the king's) hand at Nettleham

## Reminders of a glorious past

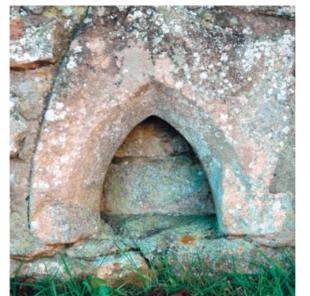
Three carved stone heads, believed to have come from the original Bishop's Palace, were incorporated into residential properties and are clearly visible to the present day



Two of these carved stone heads, now considerably weather eroded over the years, are located on the end gable of the stone cottage at 30 High Street and can be seen by walking a few metres down Watermill Lane and looking up to your left



The third carved stone head is located high on the end gable of the cottage at 62 High Street



A small carved stone in the boundary wall near the Bishops Gate entrance is also believed to have come from the original buildings

Other pieces of carved stonework, including a section of stone window tracery, have been unearthed in the village and these will most probably also have originated at the Bishop's Palace. It is thought that most of the dressed stone from the Bishop's Palace in Nettleham, a valuable building material, was eventually taken and reused over the years in the restoration of the Bishop's Palace in Lincoln and the construction of smaller properties in the village.