

Beyond the question of how closely the existing manuscript follows Sir John's original notes, the record of Elizabeth's wedding raises questions about the exact status of these particular Neviles, how lavish their festivities might have been, how closely Sir John might have followed the fashion of the royal court and the greatest households in the country, and the form and appearance of the entertainments mentioned, the play and 'maske'.⁴

The family's status is not hard to discover. Sir John Nevile's branch of the Neville family was a rather junior one from Liversedge in Lincolnshire, and he himself was his father's third son; in that he did not inherit his father's property, he may well have considered himself a self-made man, which would help to explain the emphasis in the Memoranda Book on how much he spent on his house and hospitality. Born before 1488 (according to his biography in *The History of Parliament*), he raised his status early in the sixteenth century by marrying Elizabeth, the heiress of the West Riding Bosville family who brought him the property of Chevet near Wakefield.⁵ He initiated a twenty-year programme of building there, which suggests radical modernisation if not, indeed, complete rebuilding; luckily, a set of accounts for this building survives, as well as the notes in the Memoranda Book, which together give us a good idea of the extensiveness and layout of the house.⁶ The survival of the building records is especially fortunate, because the house itself has not survived: having passed by marriage from the Neviles to the Pilkington family in the eighteenth century, it remained in the Pilkingtons' possession until it was sold to Wakefield Council in 1954, briefly opened to the public, and then demolished, evidently because of mining subsidence, in the 1960s. Photographs of the house in its final years indicate much alteration since Sir John Nevile's time, although one staircase, said to be from the early sixteenth century building, had been retained.⁷

4. I adopt the manuscript spelling *maske* throughout this article, rather than the later *masque*, which may suggest a slightly different kind of entertainment.
5. For Sir John Nevile's biography, see reference to *The History of Parliament Online* at note 2 above.
6. For manuscript see Leeds University Brotherton Library, Bradfer-Lawrence Collection MD335/3/2. See also Wm.E. Preston 'A Sixteenth-Century Account Roll of the building of a house at Chevet' *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 35 (1936) 326–30.
7. A brief account of the Chevet site, now part of Newmillerdam Country Park, can be seen at <<http://www.pennineheritage.org.uk/exhibits/show/historic-homes-of-yorkshire/chevet-park>> [accessed 3 August 2017]. It includes photographs of the house taken in the early twentieth century.

William E. Preston's article in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* includes a useful transcript of the building accounts, which give a very good idea of the extent of the house and outbuildings.⁸ The accounts are headed 'Thys be the chargeus of the beyldyng of my howse at Chevet sens the viij yere of our souveraine lord Kyng Henry the viijth [April 1517–April 1518] as doye apere by the (Indenre of accountnts).' Joseph Hunter, in *South Yorkshire* (quoted by Preston) mentions a beam incorporated into the structure of the house with the inscription 'Thys hows was mad by John Nevyll knyght and Dame Elizabeth hys wyf in the yere of our God MCCCCXXIX', which suggests a period of continuous rebuilding, additions and improvements covering twenty-two years – a thorough and presumably expensive project designed to ensure that the house would befit the status of an MP and courtier such as Sir John became. The rooms mentioned in the accounts include the hall, the 'old greet chambur', the (new?) 'grett chambur in the neythur end of the hall', the gilt chamber, the great and little galleries, the chapel, the gate house and various outbuildings including brew house, stables, granary and ox house.

The accounts also detail numerous windows and chimneys, and it is in a list of new windows that we find the intriguing mention of 'the qwens chambur' and 'the kyngs grett chambur'. Preston suggests that either there had already been royal visitors or the Neviles were preparing for the possibility. There appears to be no surviving evidence for a royal visit to Chevet either in the Bosviles' time or in Sir John Nevile's, but the impression given by the Memoranda Book is that Sir John would certainly have welcomed a visit from King Henry VIII: he was evidently proud both of his royal connections and of his own ability to spend freely on appropriate occasions. More interestingly, a note calendared in the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, Volume 16 (1540–41)* of several actual or projected 'gests' made or planned by the king includes the itinerary of 'The King's summer gests from Windsor to York': the planned Yorkshire leg is from Sheffield to 'Burton Abbey, Mr Nevill's, and Wakefield, hassellwoode, and York'.⁹ It is known that Henry VIII visited Yorkshire only once, during the admonitory Northern Progress of June–October 1541, when quite a different route was followed, so these 'summer gests' including a stay at Chevet evidently never took place. However, on this evidence it seems not to

8. For details see note 6.

9. Calendared in *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, Volume 16 (1540–41)* 323 #677: viii. Accessed online at <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol16/pp315-331>> on 16 August 2017.