

Riddell, of Roxburghshire, Scotland. Ar. a chev. gu. betw. three ears of rye ppr., slipped vert. Crest, a demi-greyhound ar. Supporters, two greyhounds ar. Motto, "I hope to share."



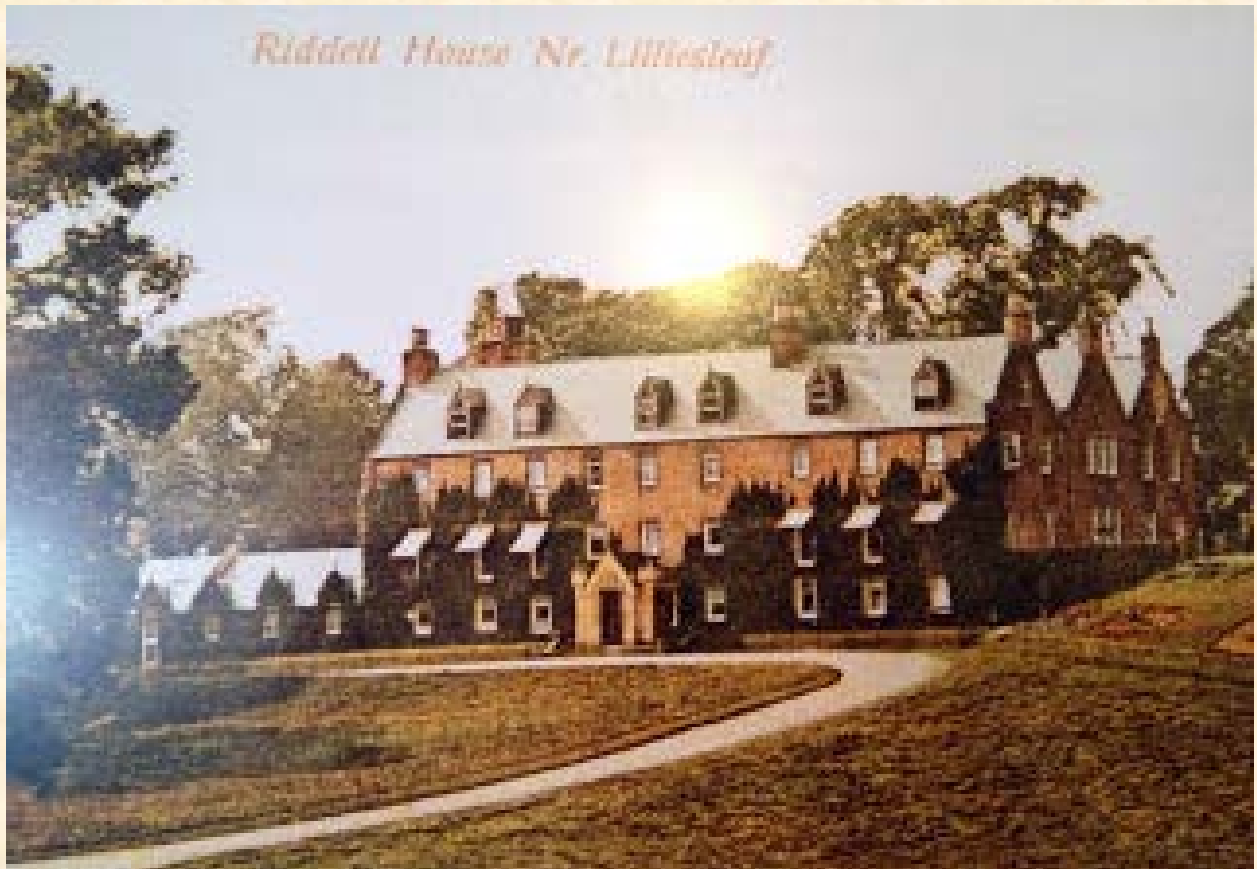
## *Ancient Riddell*

*1176 - 2000*



SPROT (L.O. , 1886). Parted per fesse gules and azure, three salmon haurient in fesse, each with a ring in his mouth or, and in base a boar's head erased of the last. crowned or, holding between the paws a bezant. Motto—Crest—On a wreath of his liveries, a heron proper. Motto (over crest)—"Parce qu'il me plait." Livery—Dark invisible blue, with yellow facings and brass buttons.

# *Ancient Riddell*



## Contents

“Riddell” A poem by W. Nichol .....	4
Some Historical Notes on Riddell House.....	5
The Burning of the Place of Riddale.....	9
Newspaper Reports on the fire which destroyed Riddell House on 19 <sup>th</sup> December 1943 .....	10
Extract From “The Lay of the Last Minstrel” By Sir Walter Scott.....	11
Extract from “Nimrods Northern Tour” 1838 .....	11
Floor Plans of the four stories of Riddell House 1939 .....	12
Riddell from the South Park - 1920.....	16
Riddell House – 1800 .....	17
Three Papal Bulls Relating to Riddell .....	18

## “Riddell” A poem by W. Nichol

O, Riddell! With pleasure I view thee again  
Thy beauties I'll treasure whiles' here I remain,  
So stately thy dwelling, so noble they stand  
O'er looking the valley so lovely and grand.

Proud halls of the noble, what beauties are  
thine!

The oak and the elm, and the evergreen pine,  
Encircled around in their mantles o'green,  
So lovely and fair in their beauty are seen.

Entrapt I behold thee with pleasure and joy,

Proud halls of the noble, what can thee  
destroy?

Such beauty and splendor, how can they decay?

Time, ruthless invader – time stealeth away.

Within thy proud dwellings how happy I've  
been.

And many's the changes in thee I have seen.

The good and the noble, the gallant and the  
gay,

The hearts that beat merrily have passed away.

Yet still in thy dwelling I'm happy to find

The hearts that are warm – the gallant and the  
kind;

The good and the noble still dwelleth in thee –

Sweet halls of the fairest, the brave and the  
free.

Then joy to thy members, I'll wake the strain,

I'll sing of thy beauties with pleasure again;

Whene'er I behold thee, sweet Riddell, 'twill be

With warmest emotion all centred in thee.

## Some Historical Notes on Riddell House

- 727 AD            The date on an earthen pot contained in one of two coffins dug up at in the old Chapel at Riddell. The pot contained ashes and arms. The other coffin contained bones of a man of gigantic stature.  
Note: - The site of the Chapel is thought to in in the Eastertoun Park just to the east of the General's Tower.
- 1100-1200        The Lands of Riddell were the first ever granted to a Layman by King David I of Scotland. The grant was made to the ancestor of the Riddell of that ilk. They built their first house on the site of the present days General's Tower. It was a wooden Norman Fort. It was fortified with a double fosse and dyke – this is very rare, as normally there is only one. A new tower was built in stone on the same site, and when digging the foundations for the General's Tower, the builders came across the stone top of a dormer window with the Three ears of Rye coat of arms emblazoned on it. This had been lent to the Hawick Museum but in 2008 it was given to Sir John Riddell of Hepple, Northumberland.
- c. 1527            I believe that it was about now that the original stone Tower was destroyed by Hertford at the same time that he sacked the Abbeys, as it is said that there was a Chapel of Rest for the monks beside it. A new Peel Tower was built on a fresh site and is incorporated into the ruins of the present mansion house. It comprises the west half of the front (south) gable.
- 1607              The Burning of the Place of Riddale (Dies Lune). David Turnbull of Tofts, allowed the compound under remission for Resetting, supplying and intercommoning with Robert Turnbull, called Mursile, the King's Rtebel, and at his horn, and specially at the time of the burning at the place of the Laird of Riddale and Stoutrief of twenty four score of sheep, two cows, and a sundry other goods and utensils, from the said Laird of Riddale; the loss sustained in the burning of the said Place, a Hereschip of the foresaid goods and utensils from the Laird of Riddale extending to 200 merks: And also of the slaughter of a black horse at the same time, price 10 pounds pertaining to Robert Scot: Item, for art and part, along with Robert Turnbull and his accomplice, at the time of the Burning of the same place, and Hereschip of the foresaid goods – John Turnbull of Tofts became surety to satisfy the parties.  
Extract from "Criminal Trials" by R. Pictcairn.

- c. 1650            The Riddells exercised “Baronial Rights” in the district, and during this period had his own hanging tree – and used it. He was on ill terms with his neighbors, the Douglas family in Frairshaw, and according to them, coveted their lands. He was charged with turning his sheep into Douglas’ winter wheat in December and keeping them there for a week. The result of this accusation was a fracas at Kirk door on the following Sunday: the Douglas men had greeted him there with remonstrance, whereupon the Laird of Riddell drew sword and, loudly threatening murder, chased the Douglases out over the kirkyard dyke, crying that he had taken one Doulas life already and would have another. Friarshaw did eventually pass into Riddell hands, but only by peaceful purchase.  
About this time some notes tell us that a load of timber was brought up from the Berwick upon Tweed for use on the oldest part of the house for woodwork next to the front staircase. It was said that this wood was taken from the wreck of one of the Spanish armada ships. Doubtless it was utilized in the rebuilding of the house after the fire of 1607.
- 1700 – 1800        North west wing of the house is thought to have been built during this period.
- 1790 - 1818        This is when Sir John Buchanan-Riddell, the 9<sup>th</sup> Baronet, carried out massive improvements to the Estate, which included the planting of fine hardwood woodlands, drainage of the land, and moving the Lilliesleaf-Selkirk public road from the north side of the house to the south side in a two mile detour, in order to provide greater privacy. He built 2 bridges, one for his new driveway through the park, and the other to carry the newly made public road. He then altered the course of the River Ale to flow underneath them.
- 1823                The Barony and Lands of Riddell passed into the hands of the family of Sprot, having been purchased by the Trustees of the late John Sprot for his elder son, Mark, aged 21.
- 1826                The Estate Office/Overseers house was built. After numerous addition culminating in 1924, it became, after the disastrous fire of 1943, the main residence of the Estate.  
  
At this period whisky cost was 8/-s a gallon.
- 1830                The clock tower and archway at the stables were built. It was a wedding gift to Mark from his younger brother, James Sprot of Spott. The clock tower was made by Frodsham and sold in 1989 to Mrs. McCoshof Dalmain, Cumbria.

- 1830 - 1842 Piped water was laid on to the house during this period and water closets and bath built. The bath was said to have been a massive affair, made of slate and seldom used...It was situated in the area at the back of the house and access was from outside. Hot water would have had to be carried from the kitchen. A bill from Mr. Sterling, Galashiels, records "Stone for bath at Riddell House "4-2-0, plus 2/5 for cartage".
- The long passage at the back of the house was built in 1842.
- 1845 The north east wing of the house (the two back gables) was built, together with other minor improvements elsewhere. It was probably at this time that the five drawing and three dining room windows were enlarged to their present six foot size in height.
- 1861 The Wellingtonia trees were planted in the South Park.
- 1865 The single floor extension at the west end of the house was built. It contained the Servants' Hall, Larder, Lamp Room, and Coal Cellars.
- 1884 – 1885 Extensive repairs and overhauling of the house was carried out. Hot air and water heating were installed. The east bathroom was made and the west bathroom and lower servants' bathroom were gutted and renewed. WCs were fitted in each bathroom and lavatory. The "arrow-slit" windows at the west end of the dining room were converted into normal sized windows.
- 1886 The tower on the "Castle Knowe" was built during 1885-1886, and was opened in 1887. About 900 yew trees were planted round about it.
- 1888 The cart shed was reconstructed
- 1889 The roofs of the Riding Stables, Pigeon Houses, Clock Tower and Saddle Room were completely renewed.
- A three year trial over the management and cost of keeping pigeons for consumption in the Mansion House was completed. The average cost per stock bird worked out at 2/4 ½ per year.
- 1908 The first Post office telephone was installed in the house.
- 1909 Modern water circulating central heating replaced the old hot air system for a total cost of £116. A new WC for the use of the servants was installed in the room formerly used for the storage of firewood.
- 1955 Mains electricity was being brought to the outlying county areas and extended to Riddell. The chance was taken, and all the houses, cottages, and buildings were wired up and connected to the National Grid.

1963 The County water Supply main was brought to Riddell Clerklands, and all houses, cottages, and buildings were connected to it, including a number of fields where water was in short supply. The old private supply, which came from the Willowbog, and had been operating for nearly 100years, became redundant and was done away with.

1974 The Farm House and Steading of West Riddell were pulled down as they were very old fashioned, unsuitable for modern farming, a long way out, and difficult to get piped water and electricity to. It had been empty for a number of years, and was an uneconomic proposition for improvement.

Notes: - Riddell has always grown good timber. At the end of the nineteenth century oak grown on Riddell was used for the construction of the hull of Captain Scott's Antarctic ship, SS. Discovery. Again, about 1960 a fine oak was felled in order to provide timber for repairs to Lord Nelson's Flagship, H.M.S. Victory. The West Lodge on the north side of the drive, which had been burnt down a few years previously, was rebuilt at a cost of £458.

The Estate Office and Overseer's House was converted into a residence during 1923 and 1924, and called "Riddell Mains".

During the Second World War, Riddell House was requisitioned as a hostel housing members of the Women's Land Army. On 19<sup>th</sup> December 1943 a fire was kindled in the attic in the west gable, and a beam in the roof caught fire. That was at 4 p.m. and was extinguished by the Fire Brigade with only a small hole in the roof. A strong west wind was blowing at 10 p.m. the fire, which cannot have been really put out, flared up again. This time it took a strong hold and the house was gutted. It was aggravated by the heavy stone cope crashing down in the ground floor bringing flaming wood with it. There was not much chance of saving the house or anything in it, as the floors were pine logs slung across with boards nailed on top of them and laths underneath to take the plaster for the ceilings of the rooms below. No flames came out of the building, but the heat inside was so intense that all the plate glass in the windows melted and dripped down. The spaces under the floor boards were stuffed with bog hay for warmth and sound deadening and therefore were like a tinder box.

Riddell Mains now became the main residence on the Estate.

## The Burning of the Place of Riddale

1607

The Burning of the Place of Riddale (Dies Lune). David Turnbull of Tofts, allowed the compound under remission for Resetting, supplying and intercommoning with Robert Turnbull, called Mursile, the King's Rtebel, and at his horn, and specially at the time of the burning at the place of the Laird of Riddale and Stouthrief of twenty four score of sheep, two cows, and a sundry other goods and utensils, from the said Laird of Riddale; the loss sustained in the burning of the said Place, a Hereschip of the foresaid goods and utensils from the Laird of Riddale extending to 200 merks: And also of the slaughter of a black horse at the same time, price 10 pounds pertaining to Robert Scot: Item, for art and part, along with Robert Turnbull and his accomplice, at the time of the Burning of the same place, and Hereschip of the foresaid goods – John Turnbull of Tofts became surety to satisfy the parties.

The above is an extract from "Criminal Trials", Volume 1, Part First, page 34.

Edited by Robert Pitcairn, W.S., 1833.

Hereschip = The act of plunder or harrying

Stouthrief = Theft aggravated by violence

## Newspaper Reports on the fire which destroyed Riddell House on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1943

The "Southern Reporter", Selkirk, 23rd December 1943

Border Fires

Riddell and Harewoodglen

Two stately Border houses have been gutted by fire; Riddell House, Lilliesleaf, home of Major Mark Sprot, DL, which was used as a hostel for the Womens Land Army, and Harewoodglen, Yarrow, home of Miss Lang, whose two brothers died recently. Fire broke out at Riddell House at 10 o'clock on Sunday night. None of the occupants were endangered, all escaping in time, and their possessions were saved. Three units of the National Fire Service from Selkirk, Galashiels and Hawick were quickly on the scene and found the roof and building ablaze. The used water from the nearby burn and Ale and were able to salvage a considerable quantity of furniture, but the loss was very heavy. The firemen remained on duty all night.

The "Southern Reporter", Selkirk, 30th December 1943

Riddell House

Old Associations

The loss through fire of the old mansion house of Riddell constitutes a real tragedy for the Borders. It removes a fine specimen of the plain Scottish country house. There is no record of its age, but its nine foot west wall and other thick walls are proof of its great antiquity. It is built as a stronghold on a rocky eminence overlooking a steep glen – a fact which is disguised to a great extent by the fine old trees with which it is surrounded. Riddell was the home of the Riddell of that ilk from the eleventh century until 1820 when the property passed to the Sprot family, who have resided there ever since. It was referred to by Sir Walter Scott in his "Lay of the Last Minstrel" – "Unchallenged thence passed Deloraine, through ancient Riddell's fair domain", Nimrod, the great sporting Chronicler of early Victorian times, in his "Northern Tour" writes of riding over from Mellerstain to Riddell for a meet of the hounds at that "venerable mansion". For more than a century Riddell has been a popular tryst for foxhunters, and it is said to think that no more will this dignified mansion form the background of those gay scenes.

## Extract From “The Lay of the Last Minstrel” By Sir Walter Scott

"Unchallenged thence passed Deloraine,  
To ancient Riddel's fair domain,  
Where Aill from mountains freed,  
Down from the lakes did raving come;  
Each wave was crested with tawny foam.  
Like the mane of a chestnut steed.  
In vain no torrent deep or broad,  
Might bar the bold moss trooper's road.

At the first plunge the horse sunk low,  
And the water broke o'er the saddle bow;  
Above the foaming tide I ween,  
Scarce half the charger's neck was seen;  
For he was barded from counter to tail,  
And the rider was armed complete in mail,  
Never heavier man and horse  
Stemmed a midnight torrent's force.  
The warrior's very plume I say,  
Was daggled by the dashing spray:  
Yet through good heart and our Lady's grace  
At length he gained the landing place."

## Extract from “Nimrods Northern Tour” 1838

Mr. Callander and myself were on our  
hacks just as the day was dawning, having  
sixteen miles to ride to what I must call a  
nominal breakfast at Mr. Sprot's, of Riddle, for  
Peter had taken care to break our fast with a  
profusion of good things before we started

About ten o'clock we were at our second  
breakfast at this venerable old mansion — one  
of the oldest, I was told, in this part of Scotland,  
and indeed such did its appearance indicate —  
where we found several sportsmen were  
assembled, and in half an hour afterwards the  
hounds arrived, accompanied by their noble  
owner. A horse called Bishop was also brought  
from the kennel for myself, and we immediately  
proceeded to business, accompanied by the  
lady of the house, who rode elegantly and well,  
upon a thoroughly broke horse, but only as an  
amateur, at a distance.

\*Elizabeth Sprot, wife of Mark Sprot of Riddell





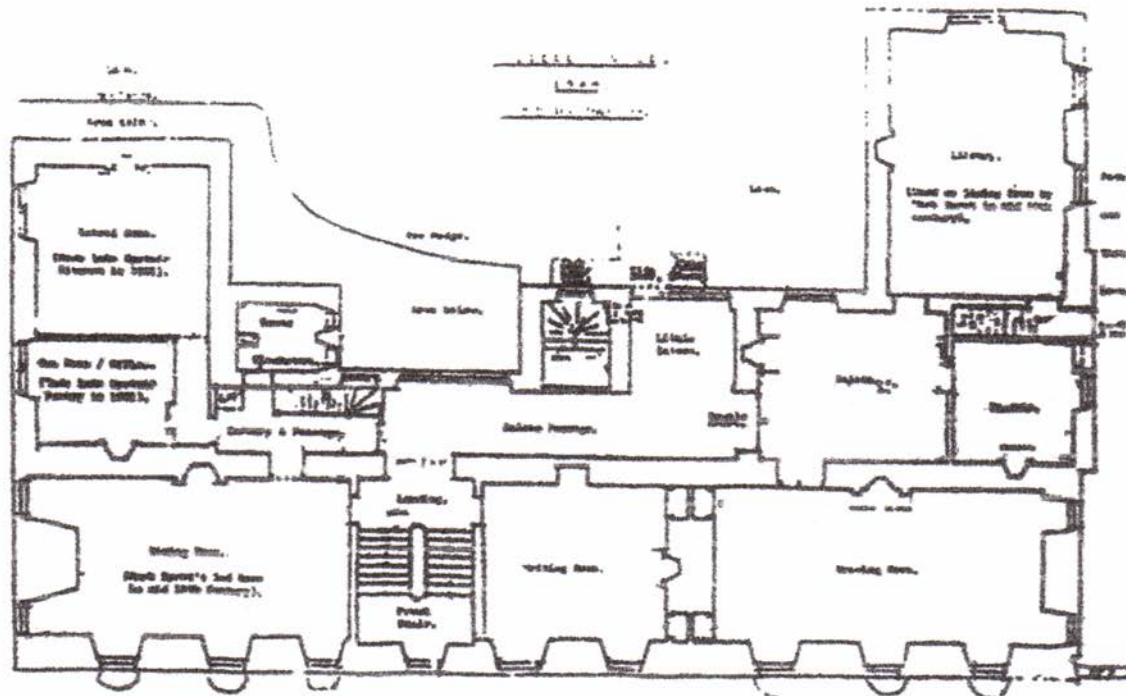
West Front.

114/117, Littleleaf, Dorsetshire.

Scale 1/4" = 1'



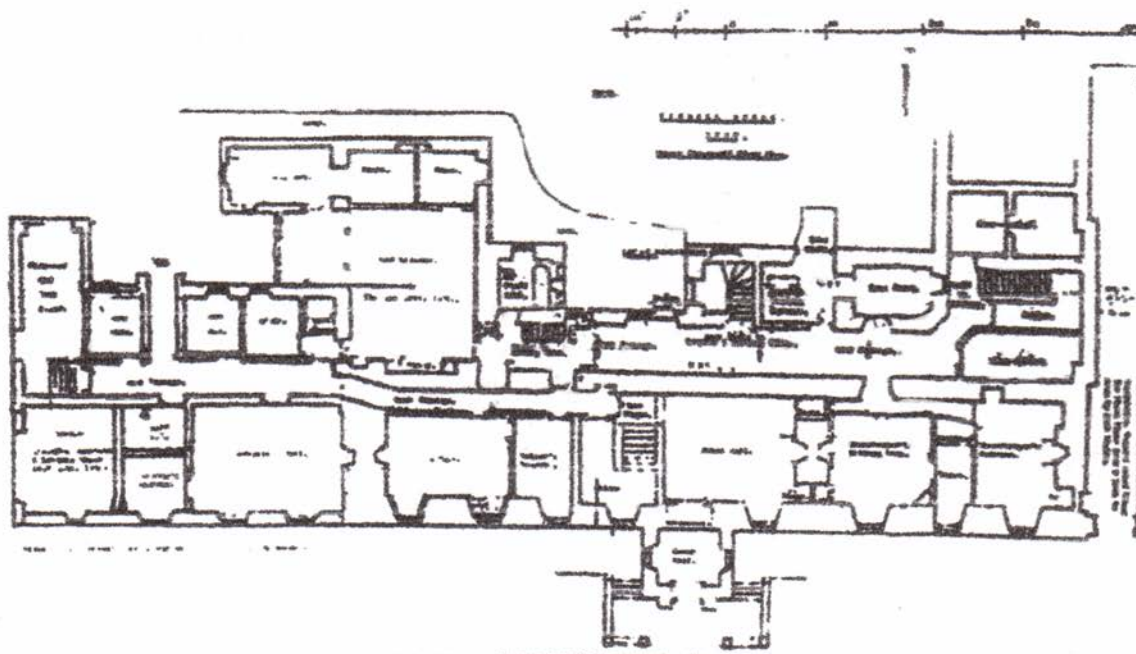
North Front.



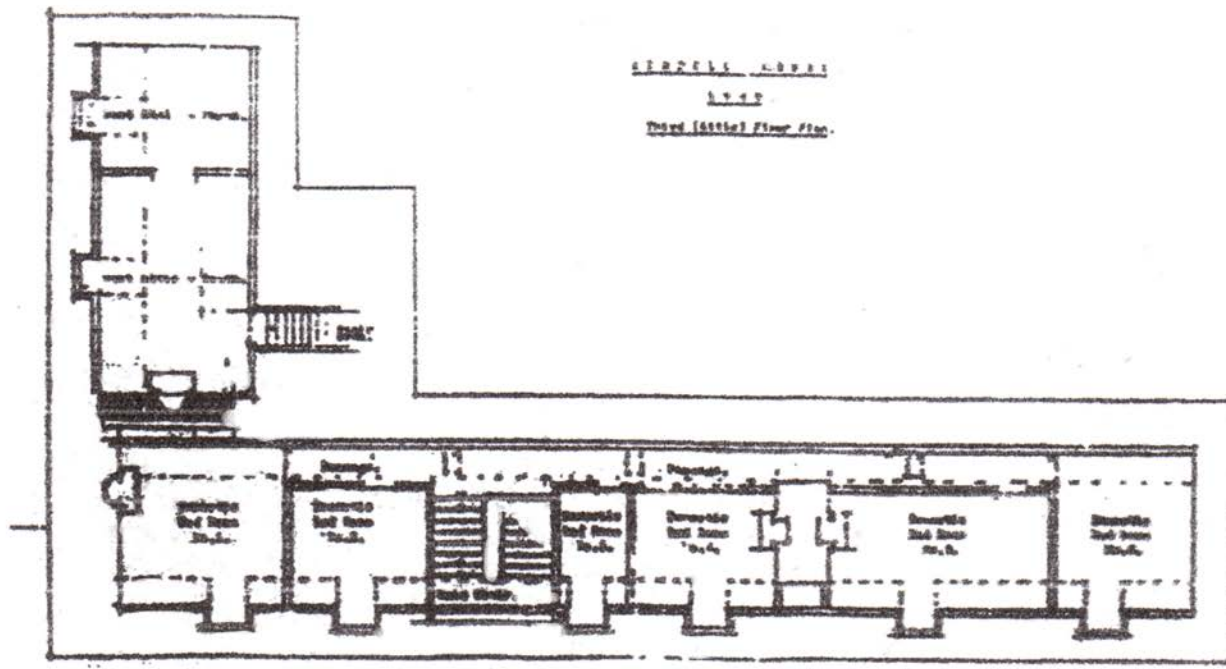
WHEELER, Architect, Melbourne, 1st Nov 1939.

Riddell.  
1939.

1st Floor.  
(Living Rooms)



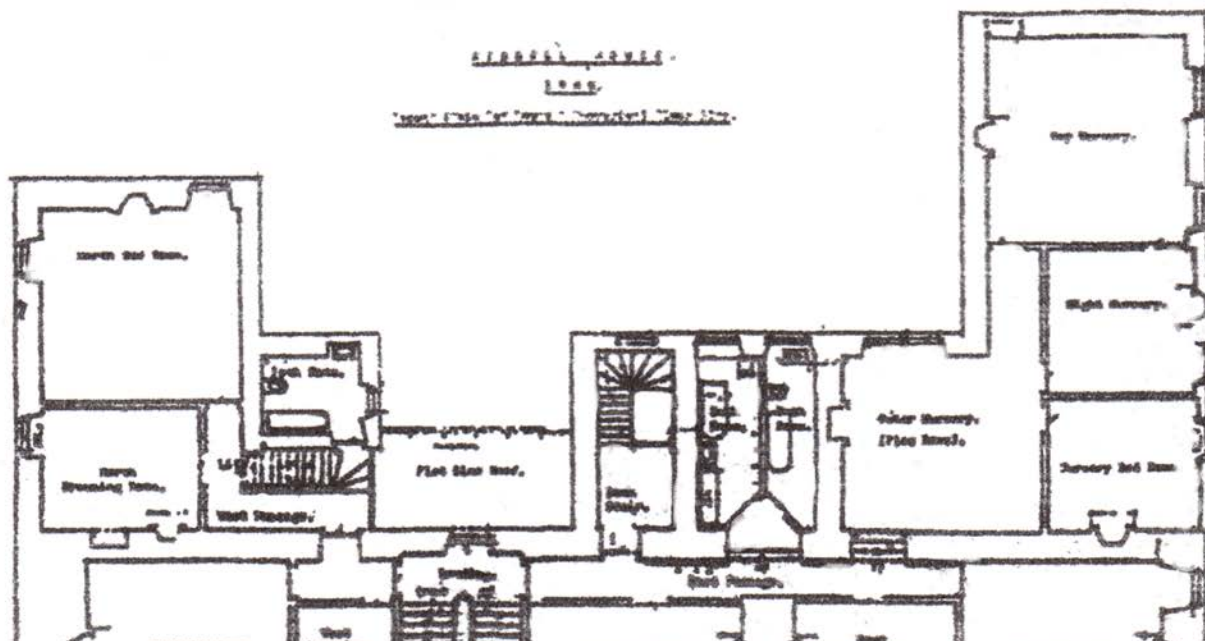
Ground Floor.  
(Basement).



GENERAL HOUSE  
 1747  
Third (Attic) Floor Plan.

3rd Floor.  
 (Attics).

Michl, 1811/10/1; 1810/10/1. 1st. 1810/10/1.



GENERAL HOUSE  
 1747  
Second Floor Plan (Bedrooms).

2nd Floor.  
 (Bedrooms).

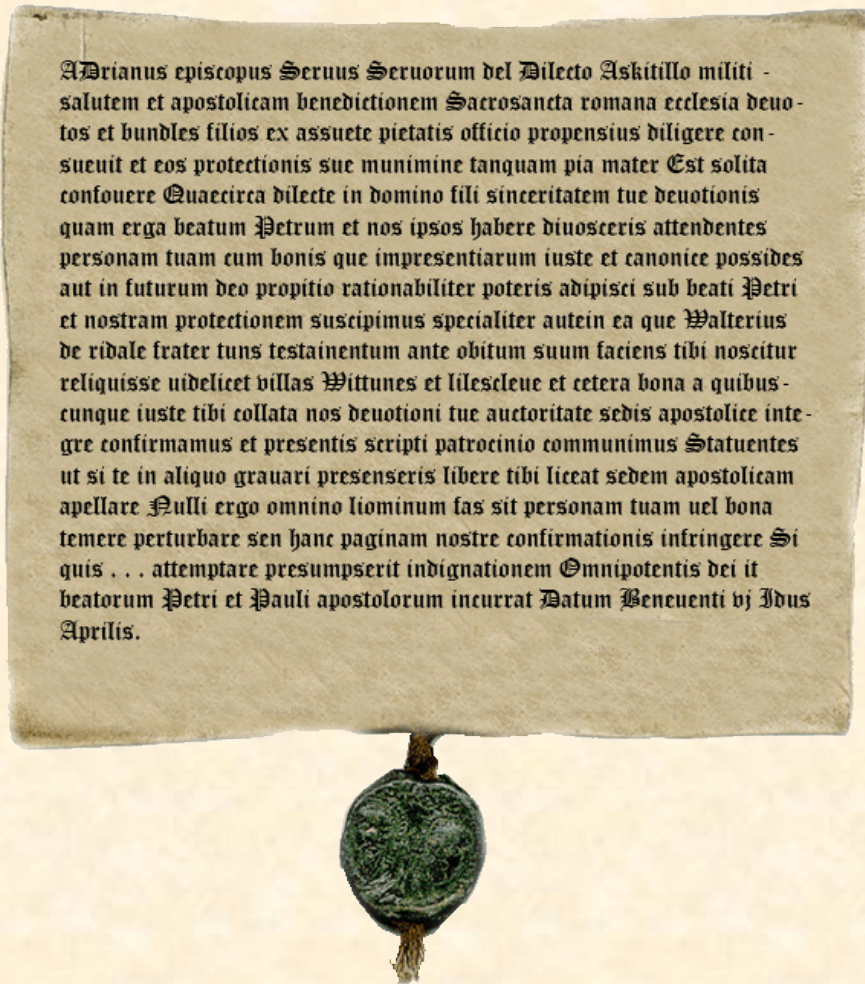
Riddell from the South Park - 1920



Riddell House – 1800



## Three Papal Bulls Relating to Riddell



Three Papal Bull relating to Riddell are the property of Sir John Buchanan Riddell BT and are held in various museums throughout the country.

1st. Papal Bull - A charter by David I. To Walter Ryedale, Sheriff of Roxburgh, confirming all the estates of Liliesclive, &c., of which his father Gervasius de Ryedale died possessed.

- Translation: " Adrian the Bishop, the Servant of the Servants of God, to the beloved Knight Askitill, greeting and Apostolic benediction. The Holy Roman Church has been wont the more readily to favour her devout and humble sons out of regard to their continual pious services, and like a pious mother, is accustomed to cherish them with the safeguard of her protection. Wherefore, beloved son in the Lord, perceiving the sincerity of the devotion to the blessed Peter and ourselves by which thou art distinguished, we' take thy person with the property which thou dost now justly and canonically hold, or mayest hereafter by the favour of God, regularly acquire, under the protection of the blessed Peter and ourselves ; but in especial that which Walter de Ridale thy brother, in making his will before death, is known to have left thee, namely the vills of Wittunes and Lilescleve. And all other property that any have justly conferred upon thee, we, by the authority of the Apostolic See, confirm entirely to thy devout use, and secure it by the protection of this present writing, decreeing that if thou shouldst feel thyself oppressed in any thing, it shall be freely permitted thee to appeal to the Apostolic See. Let it not therefore be lawful for f.ny man at all to rashly trouble thy person or property, or to lessen the force of our confirmation on this page. But if anyone presume to assail it, let him incur the anger of Almighty God and of the blessed Peter and Paul the Apostles.

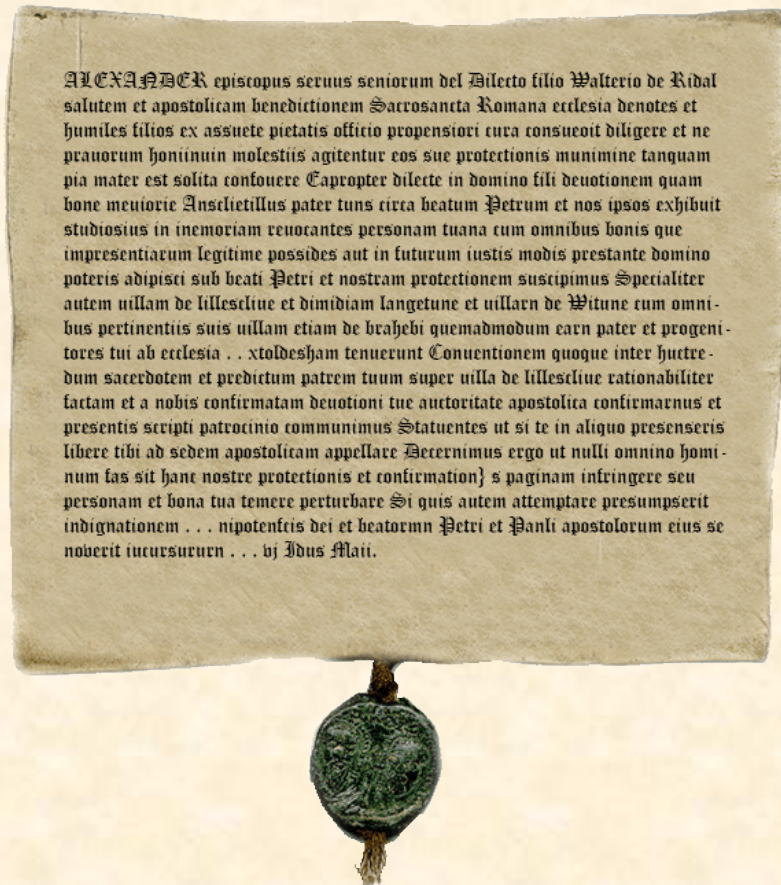
Given at Benevento, the 6th of the Ides of April." 13

ALEXANDRE episcopus seruus seruorum dei Dilecto filio Anskitillo de ridale militi salutem et apostolicam benedictionem Iustis petentium desiderijs dignum est nos facilem prebere consensum et uota que arationis tramite non discordant effectu sunt prosequente complenda Capropter dilecte in domino fili tuis iustis postulationibus grato concurrentes assensu ea que Walterius de ridale frater tuus testamentum in obitu suo faciens tibi noscitur reliquisse uidelicet uillas Witunes lillescleue et Brahebi et cetera bona a quibuscunque iuste tibi collata Conuentionem quoque inter te et Huctredum sacerdotem super uilla de lillescliue mediante Karissimo in Christo filio nostro A illustri Scottorum rege de utriusque partis assensu rationabiliter factam et autentico scripto eiusdem regis firmatam quern admodum in eodem scripto contineri diuoscitur tibi et heredibus tuis auctoritate apostolice sedis integre confirmamus et presentis scripti patrocinio communimus Statuentes ut nulli omnino hominum liceat hanc paginam nostre confirmationis infringere uel ei aliquatenus contraire Si quis autem hoc attemptare presumpserit indignationem omnipotentis dei et beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum. eius se nouerit incursum Datum Siluiniaci xv. Kal. Junii.

2nd. Papal Bull - A bull of Pope Adrian IV. Confirming the will of Walter Ridale, Knight, in favor of his brother Anschitil de Ridale, dated 8th April, 1155.

-Translation: " Alexander the Bishop, the Servant of the Servants of God to his beloved son the Knight Anskitill de Eidale greeting and Apostolic benediction. It is right for us to lend a ready assent to the just wishes of petitioners, and promises that interfere not with the course of the ploughing should be carried into speedy fulfilment. For these reasons, beloved son in the Lord, being pleased to accede to thy just requests, we, by the authority of the Apostolic See, confirm entirely and secure by the protection of this present writing to thee and thy heirs those things that Walter de Bidale thy brother, in making his will at his death, is known to have left thee, namely, the vills of Whitton, Lillesclive, and ' Uraliebi,' and all other property that any have justly conferred on thee ; likewise also the agreement between thee and Huctred the Priest as to the vill of Lillesclive reasonably concluded with the assent of either party, through the mediation of our most dear son in Christ, Malcolm, the illustrious king of the Scots, and confirmed by the authentic writing of the same king, in the same manner as is known to be contained in that writing ; decreeing that to no one at all shall it be permitted to lessen the force of our confirmation on this page, nor in any wise to oppose it. Should however anyone venture to assail it, let him know that he will incur the anger of Almighty God and of the blessed Peter and Paul His Apostles.

Given at Sauvigny, the 15th of the Kalends of June." 25



ALEXANDER episcopus seruus seruorum dei dilecto filio Walterio de Ridale salutem et apostolicam benedictionem Sacrosancta Romana ecclesia deuotes et humiles filios ex assuete pietatis officio propensiori cura consueoit diligere et ne prauorum hominum molestiis agitentur eos sue protectionis munimine tanquam pia mater est solita conuolare Capropter dilecte in domino fili deuotionem quam bone memoriæ Anschietillus pater tuus circa beatum Petrum et nos ipsos exhibuit studiosius in inemoriā reuocantes personam tuā cum omnibus bonis que impresentiarum legitime possides aut in futurum iustis modis prestante domino poteris adipisci sub beati Petri et nostram protectionem suscipimus Specialiter autem uillam de lillesclive et dimidiam langetune et uillam de Witune cum omnibus pertinentiis suis uillam etiam de brahebi quemadmodum eam pater et progenitores tui ab ecclesia . . . xtoldesham tenuerunt Conuentionem quoque inter huetredum sacerdotem et predictum patrem tuum super uilla de lillesclive rationabiliter factam et a nobis confirmatam deuotioni tue auctoritate apostolica confirmamus et presentis scripti patrocinio communimus Statuentes ut si te in aliquo presenseris libere tibi ad sedem apostolicam appellare Decernimus ergo ut nulli omnino hominum fas sit hanc nostre protectionis et confirmationis paginam infringere seu personam et bona tua temere perturbare Si quis autem attemptare presumpserit indignationem . . . nipotentis dei et beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum eius se noverit incursurum . . . vj Idus Maii.

3rd. Papal Bull - A bull of Pope Alexander III., confirming the said will of Walter de Ridale, bequeathing to this brother Anschittil, the lands of Liliesclive, Whettunes, &c., and ratifying the bargain betwixt Anschittil and Huetredus, concerning the church of Liliesclive in consequence of the mediation of Malcolm II., and confirmed by a charter from the monarch; this bull is dated 17th June, 1160. 4th

-Translation: "Alexander the Bishop, the Servant of the Servants of God, to his beloved son Walter de Ridale, greeting and Apostolic benediction. The Holy Roman Church has been wont to favour her devout and humble sons with more ready care out of regard to their continual pious services, and lest they should be troubled by the molestations of wicked men, is, like a pious mother, accustomed to cherish them with the safeguard of her protection. On these accounts, beloved son in the Lord, recalling the more carefully to remembrance the devotion that thy father Anschietill, of blessed memory, showed to the blessed Peter and ourselves, we take thy person with all the property that thou dost at present lawfully hold, or which hereafter thou shalt be able, by the Lord's assistance, to acquire by just means, under the protection of the blessed Peter and ourselves; but in especial the vill of Lillesclive and the half of Langetun, and the vill of Witun, with all that pertaineth to it, likewise the vill of Brahebi, in the same manner as thy father and thy ancestors held it from the church of [Hejxtoldesham. We further, by Apostolic authority, confirm to thy devout use the agreement as to the vill of Lillesclive, which was reasonably concluded between thy father aforesaid and Huetred the priest, and confirmed by us, and we strengthen it with the protection of the present writing; appointing that if thou shouldst feel thyself in aught [aggrieved], it shall be freely permitted thee to appeal to the Apostolic See. Therefore we decree that it shall not be lawful for any one at all to lessen the force of the protection we have granted and confirmed on this page. But should anyone dare to assail [it] let him know that he will incur the anger of Almighty God and of the blessed Peter and Paul, His Apostles.

Given at .... the 6th of the Ides of May." 26