

THOUGHTS ON 'HADDON HALL' FROM OUR NEW LIST OF ENGLISH HISTORY TITLES JULY 2026

Rayner's Haddon Hall was never a title I immediately took to. It was, after all, a magnificent illustrated work from the last year of William IV's reign, a groundbreaking topographical study and an invaluable architectural record. But was it English history...and what, indeed, is English history?

In the end I had no hesitation in adding it, with some pride, to my first history list. It was a copy that had been hanging around the book-trade unloved for some while, neither price nor uniqueness much appreciated. Such is 'the trade.' Yet here, in Rayner's work is a place where topography, architecture and history tread on each other's feet in such a way as to produce something new; a visual and textual vision of mediaeval England in its most highly romanticised form, both depicting and describing legends in stone, accuracy never an issue....except that comparison of Rayner's work with modern-day photography had revealed more than a nod towards scientific accuracy on Rayner's part.

I have never been to Haddon Hall. Perhaps if I sell my book I shall be able to do so. But unquestionably, for me, armchair traveller of the twenty-first century, this glowingly colourful nineteenth century vision of mediaeval life in England works as well and as true as any modern one. For Rayner too, it was unreal, it was romantic, it was enticing...which is exactly how it is today. Different ticket seller on the door.

HADDON HALL. RAYNER, SAMUEL. [coloured copy].

The History and Antiquities of Haddon Hall : illustrated by thirty-two highly finished drawings ; with an account of the hall in its present state by S. Rayner. bound with: Supplementary Number to Rayner's Haddon Hall.

Published by Derby, Mosely; London, Weale, 1836-37.

2 parts in 1 volume, folio, [actually very large 4to], pp [4], [4], 53, [1, list of plates, [2, subscribers]; [4], with frontispiece portrait of William Hage, 34 lithographed plates of interior and exterior view of the hall ALL HAND-COLOURED PROOF Impressions ON INDIA PAPER, with a further 8 tinted lithograph plates in the supplement [including one plan and 7 plates of architectural details], bound in original textured red cloth, titled in gilt to upper board, sometime neatly rebacked in red cloth preserving original cream

endpapers and original black leather label, all edges gilt, a little rubbed and bumped at edges of binding, Internal with edge foxing to supplementary plates at the end, else clean and bright throughout,

FIRST EDITION, LARGE PAPER COPY, WITH THE SUPPLEMENT, a possibly unique copy with the plates in unrecorded hand-coloured state. In August 2025 Haddon Hall hosted an exhibition of the lithographic views contained in this work put along side the same views in contemporary photography, thus demonstrating the accuracy of Rayner's draughtsmanship and the extent of the post 1920 restorations to the building both inside and out. ' To quote 'Derbyshire Life' ' Samuel Rayner's Haddon Hall Revisited presents the work of Samuel Rayner, artist and author, who in the early part of the 19th century studied intricately the architectural details of Haddon Hall, near Bakewell, creating over thirty sketches of the property in its then state.' Rayner's work dated from the last year of William IV's life in 1836 and his patron's were both The Duke of Rutland and the Queen. He included in his published work a fairly brief text of 58 pages which included much anecdotal material supplied by the hall's then keeper and guide William Hage, depicted in the frontispiece to the volume in an interior setting. The resulting book could be seen as a masterpiece of mediaeval English architectural delineation, its accuracy demonstrated by the recent exhibition's modern photographic studies meticulously prepared by a group of professionals. The present large paper copy, which unfortunately bears no marks of provenance, would appear to be the only one known with the plates hand-coloured as such, each being a proof impression on india paper mounted on thick card paper. The coloured plates number 35 in total, plus 8 tinted lithographs in the supplement.

£ 900