



Oakwell Hall – Building Fabric Repair Works

Statement of Significance

BC.HUD.2024.00049.010

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1.0 Introduction

This assessment and statement of significance relate to Oakwell Hall, Nutter Lane, Birstall, Kirklees.

A Statement of Heritage Significance is an objective analysis of significance, describing what is important about the heritage of Oakwell Hall, why and to whom it is important.

The report has been produced for the client to meet the requirements of paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and inform them, their agents and the planning authority of the historical significance of the site. The Statement of Significance is the first part of a Heritage Impact Assessment. This will allow the consideration of any impact of the proposals on the Hall's heritage value and significance.

This statement has been prepared by Richard Storah, Conservation Architect and Chris Mace, Historic Building Consultant of AHR Building Consultancy.

The building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest (List Entry Number: 1134609). The hall is protected as a Grade I Listed Building.

2.0 History and Significance

Oakwell Hall is a fine example of an Elizabethan manor house. It is now furnished as a family home of the 1690s and is a museum owned and run by Kirklees Council.

2.1 Site location

Oakwell Hall, with its own gardens, lies within Oakwell Hall Country Park which consists of 110 acres of old woodland, farmland, and a reclaimed colliery. The Country Park is accredited with Natural England, Country Parks are public green spaces often at the edge of urban areas which provide places to enjoy the outdoors and experience nature in an informal semi-rural park setting. The building complex is situated some 1.1km NNW of Birstall, centred at SE 21746 27114.

The immediate geology of the site is formed by a cap of the Lepton Edge Rock. A sedimentary bedrock formed between 319 and 318 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The surrounding geology is the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation, a mudstone, siltstone, and sandstone of the same period.

2.2 Building description

2.2.1 Setting

As noted above, Oakwell Hall, with its own gardens, lies in Oakwell Hall Country Park (Photo 1). Many visitors arrive by car and approach from the south where the Hall itself is set to the west of a visitor centre formed from the former Oakwell Hall Farm (Photo 2). To the south of the Hall are the remains of a moat (Photo 3). Photo 4 shows a section of the boundary wall to the west of the Hall. From the south-east the Hall is seen across a pond formed from part of the moat (Photo 5). To the rear of the Hall is a walled garden area (Photo 6).

2.2.2 Exterior

The extremely fine hall house, now a museum, was until 1990 a Scheduled Ancient Monument, it is now designated as a Grade I Listed Building, both designations are considered Exceptional: important at national to international levels.

It is considered to date to 1583 and was built for John Batt in local ashlar stone and may incorporate a timber framed house of the mid-15th century, though with considerable 17th century refurbishment. The roof is grey slate with chamfered gable copings. It is of 2 storeys and built to a H-plan with a central hall (Photos 7-10). There is a 2 storey gabled porch to centre right (Photos 11, 13 and 14). There is a gabled wing to left elevation (Photos 19, 20 and 23) identified as a dairy by a window to the rear. On the rear elevation is a stair turret to the left of the west wing (Photos 22 and 24). The windows are double chamfered, and ovolo moulded, mainly with throated hood moulds some of which continue as string courses. There are 5 projecting chimney breasts, with ashlar stacks, to sides and rear, one to the right side being particularly broad. The central hall window is of 30 lights of diamond pattern glazing with king mullion and 2 transoms, and it is thought to be of 17th century date (Photos 11 and 13). The arched entrance to the open porch to the right has a recut inscription I.B. 1583 and a 3-light window to 1st floor (Photos 14 and 20). The wings to the left and right have 12-light mullioned and transomed windows to ground floor and 12 and 10-light similar windows to 1st floor left and right respectively (Photos 10 and 14). The left wing also has inward-looking 12-light window with transom to ground floor and 6-light to 1st floor (Photo 12). Rear fenestration includes 12, 14 and 16-light mullioned and transomed windows (Photos 22-26). The lights to the windows are leaded, many with early glazing.

2.2.3 Interior

Figs 26 and 27 show the arrangement of the layout of the building described in an anti-clockwise direction. The internal arrangement comprises of a through screened passage with open hall to left (Photos 28-30). The oak panelling to the screen has 2 round arched openings with 3 pairs of Tuscan columns, thought to be date to the 17th century (Photo 34).

The Great Hall (Photos 31-34) is galleried on 2 sides with vertically symmetrical turned balusters, and with 17th century plasterwork on the underside (Photos 32 and 35). The gallery is reached by open-well stairs with flat balusters and openwork dog-gates and the fireplace to the right is thought to be 17th century (Photo 33). To the west corner of the hall is access to the Great Parlour and stairs to the upper floor (Photos 35 and 36).

The Great Parlour (Photos 37-40), as with several other rooms has been reinstated to appear as it would in the late-17th century. This involved removing several coats of paint to reveal the scumbling effect of the panelling during restoration work in the 1980s. Returning to the lobby leads to a former Buttery (Photos 41 and 42) now used for exhibits and information boards relating the history of the Hall. This room also has a blocked entrance to a cellar located externally. A doorway leads through to a large room used for storage, considered to be the former Servants 'Hall (Photos 43 and 44). A doorway leads into the former Dairy now used as an office (Photo 45) with a former Pantry beyond (Photo 46).

At present the original staircase (Photos 47 and 48) is not in use and access to the first floor at this end of the Hall is from the lobby to the west of the Great Hall (Photo 49). At the top of the staircase a corridor returns to the right leading to the gallery of the Hall (Photos 50 and 51). To the left is the Great Parlour Chamber (Photos 52-54). To the right off the landing is a room furnished as a Little Parlour Chamber with exposed timber framing (Photos 55 and 56). A doorway leads into a corridor running south-west to north-west (Photo 57). The corridor leads to the Lady's Chamber, a large, airy room with decorated panelling (Photos 58 and 59). Returning on the corridor to the left are ladies '

toilets (Photos 60-62) and gentlemen's 'toilets (Photos 63-65) both formed by internal partitions.

The corridor leads to the gallery of the Great Hall (Photo 66). To the left is the original stairway lit by a window to a half-landing and a smaller window above (Photo 67). Photo 68 shows a small study formed in the stair turret. The gallery (Photo 69) leads to an exhibition room which retains its painted panelling, the Green Room (Photos 70 and 71). Beyond is a landing area (Photo 72) leading to several rooms. To the right is the Porch Chamber (Photos 73 and 74), an activity room which also has had its ceiling removed to allow interpretation of the building's roof structure (Photo 75). To the front of the building, in the east wing, is a further exhibition room the New Parlour Chamber (Photos 76 and 77). To the rear of which is a small room considered to be a dressing room with exposed timber framing (Photo 78). To the rear of the east wing is the Kitchen Chamber (Photo 79). This room appears to have been unheated and considered to have been for the storage of foodstuffs but also utilised as a chamber. It is not panelled and is open to the roof. Immediately outside are the back stairs (Photos 80 and 81) leading down to a corridor returning towards the through passage via a lobby. To the right is the Kitchen (Photo 82) with a bolection fireplace considered to be a replacement for an earlier large open hearth. To the front of the east wing is the New Parlour now set up as a dining room (Photos 83 and 84). Photo 85 shows the elaborate door leading back to the through passage.

Returning to the west wing an alcove (Photo 86) located in the former Buttery is considered to be an entrance to a cellar like structure under the space to the south west of the building. This was investigated by staff around 2013 and recorded by video. In the former servants 'hall is the entrance to the present cellars (Photos 87-89).

3.0 The Historical Background of Oakwell Hall

3.1 Early development

Oakwell Hall is a manor house, historically it was part of Oakwell, Gomersal and Heckmondwike manors. It was therefore a high-status building. It was usual to let the property, although the tenants themselves may be important in local society, members of the clergy, gentry, or wealthy merchants. The tenants could also let the property themselves.

Oakwell Hall is a typical example of the substantial houses built by the minor gentry in the 16th and 17th centuries in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Henry Batt of Halifax served the Saviles of Thornhill and prospered enough to buy Oakwell in 1565 and add the neighbouring manors. It was once considered that Henry's son John built the present Hall around an earlier timber-framed building, but more recent research suggests that the Hall was built in stone in 1585 and internal walls built using timber-framing techniques developed in the 15th century and earlier. The plan is post-medieval with a through passage and cross wings. Originally the Great Hall would have had a fireplace against the screen passage with a firehood above. It was usual for the service rooms to be separated from the hall by the screen passage. A document of 1611 when the Hall was let by John's son Robert, records the different rooms including a hall chamber. The mention of a New Parlour to the east wing is considered to suggest the north-west 'dairy 'wing could have been added to provide replacement service rooms. Later in the 17th century when Robert's son John took possession the Hall was opened up, the fireplace moved to the

north wall, which may have been rebuilt in stone, and a gallery added. The window to the main elevation would have been added at this time.

Afterwards the family's fortunes declined and following the death of the last John Batt in 1707 the estate was divided amongst his three nieces. In 1747 Benjamin Fearnley acquired two-thirds of the estate.

3.2 Henry Barker

In 1785 the estate was put up for sale consisting of 'several estates late of Benjamin Fearnley, of Birstall in the County of York, Gentleman, deceased, consisting of two undivided third parts of the Manors of Oakwell, Gomersall and Heckmondwike and also consisting of the Capital Mansion house called Oakwell Hall, and likewise of several messuages, tenements, farms, lands, woodlands and grounds, at or near Birstall, Gomersall and Manningham '(London Gazette 8 Nov 1785). The property was bought in 1788 by Henry Barker a London lawyer who leased the Hall back to the Fearnleys. By 1790 the Hall was advertised to let by lease 'together with the garden, orchard, barn, stables, and outbuildings...together with eighty acres of fine arable, meadow and pasture land '(Leeds Intelligencer 14 Dec 1790). In time the Hall was leased back to the Fearnleys. In 1802 Benjamin Fearnley, Junior, was appointed gamekeeper by Henry Barker. Fig. 3 shows the property as surveyed in 1806 from a plan held by Oakwell Hall when it is considered to have been a desirable property for local gentry or a successful clothier, with stables and farm buildings.

Benjamin Fearnley appears to have died by 1810 when an advert was placed stating 'To be sold or let...Oakwell Hall with the garden and orchard well stocked with fruit trees in full bearing, together with several closes of arable, meadow, and pasture land, lying contiguous to the house '(Leeds Intelligencer 4 Jun 1810) Oakwell Hall was taken by Joshua Walker, a wealthy local woolstapler, who resided at Oakwell House. Oakwell Hall itself was tenanted by John Ridgeley a cotton spinner and manufacturer who was in partnership with a Mr Tetley at Burkinshaw Bottoms. The business failed but Ridgeley appears to have continued to reside at the property till around 1820. Sarah Nussey, daughter of Joshua Nussey and Sarah Clapham was resident at the Hall when she married in 1821. In 1822 Baines 'Directory showed the hall itself occupied by Thomas Clapham, a clothier. Clapham's wife Elizabeth died in March 1824 after which it is considered he vacated the property.

3.3 19th century schools

If a building was not being let as a country seat another possible use for a property of this type was as a school. Throughout the 19th century country or gentry houses were considered ideal for boarding schools often run by wives or widows of independent means or unmarried daughters of local clergy or gentry. By 1826 Mrs Wilks 'Establishment for Young Ladies was advertised as reopening after the present vacation, suggesting the school had been open for several years (Leeds Intelligencer, 29 June 1826). Eleanor had a daughter, Charlotte who was born at Oakwell Hall in 1830, the father was William Wilkes, Gentleman. However, by 1835 the Hall was again advertised for let and again in 1838. This time it was offered to let by Joshua Walker of Oakwell House 'with a good garden, and also a few acres of grass land, if required '(Leeds Intelligencer, 28 April 1838). Whilst not conclusive this could indicate that the Hall was no longer being offered as a country estate for the local gentry and the large buildings depicted on the 1806 plan had gone. For much of the remainder of the century Oakwell Hall was occupied as a school. Fig.4 shows Oakwell Hall on the First Series 6"/mile sheet, surveyed in the late

1840s when it appears that the farm has been developed as a separate tenanted property.

It is considered around this time that the novelist Charlotte Bronte became acquainted with Oakwell Hall through her close friend Ellen Nussey who lived in Birstall. In 1849 she based Fieldhead on the Hall in her novel Shirley.

The 1841 Census shows Hannah Cockell and three of her daughters running a school at the property. Hannah Cockell was the widow of Thomas Cockell, a wealthy dyer who died in 1838. As well as three daughters and servants there were 16 girl boarders. The school was still occupying the property in 1851, when there were 13 boarders.

The Misses Upton ran a school at Oakwell Hall from 1852 to 1859. They were daughters of a cotton manufacturer James Upton and were born in Sedbergh. Their father James was living with them by 1857 and when he died in May 1859 the Misses advertised, they were relocating to London. In 1860 Henry Millard moved to the area and married a local girl. By the end of the year, he advertised that he had taken Oakwell Hall and would receive pupils between the ages of six and fourteen (Leeds Intelligencer 8 Dec 1860). Figs 9 and 10 are photographs held at the Hall itself and appear to show schoolboys which would indicate they were taken when Millard was in occupation. Due to problems with his sight, he closed the school several years later.

By 1865 the paper ran the advert 'The Miss Carters, having taken Oakwell Hall, will be glad to receive pupils '(Leeds Intelligencer 2 Sept 1865). The ladies were still running their school on the 1871 Census Returns with eighteen boarders and six staff. Fig. 9 shows the chamber plan of the school as drawn in 1879 with seven bedrooms for boarders. In 1883 the youngest sister, Catherine, left to marry. Her sister Susan continued at the Hall till her death in August 1894. In 1886 Fred Mitchell drew the ground floor which, along with other illustrations was published in the Building News in 1888 (Fig 10). This shows the east wing to be a school room with a dining room to the rear, and an attached fowl house. The west wing had a drawing room with scullery, kitchen, pantry and store room to the rear. Fig. 5 shows the Hall as surveyed in 1892 with changes to the gardens and orchards.

3.4 1897 to 1950

In December 1894, after Miss Carter's death, Oakwell was offered to let. Details included, on the ground floor 'Large entrance hall, dining room, drawing room, breakfast room, 2 kitchens with range and gas cooking oven, good cellarage and on the first floor 9 bedrooms and 2 dressing rooms, together with the usual conveniences '(Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer 1 Dec 1894). To the rear was a large garden with a croquet lawn. The Hall stood empty for several years. It wasn't until May 1897 that it was reported that 'Mr GEH Maggs (of the firm of Scholefield, Taylor and Maggs) is to become the next tenant of Oakwell Hall (Batley Reporter and Guardian 28 May 1897). On 30th July that year the same newspaper noted 'For some time it was unoccupied, and the garden had become a wilderness, when Mr Maggs, the present tenant, fortunately lighted upon it, and with true antiquarian instincts, rescued it from its impending fate of being adapted to cottages, and has restored it to something like its pristine glory. Mr and Mrs Maggs have done all they can to revive its old world appearance'.

The Kirklees Image Archive includes photographs of Oakwell Hall of the period attributed to Lavinia Maggs resident at the house between 1897 and 1913. Fig. 11 is a photograph of the rear of the building showing the croquet lawn. Fig. 6 shows the Hall as surveyed in

1905 with the setting altered considerably with the building of the Heaton Lodge and Wortley Branch Line.

By 1913 Maggs and his wife had relocated to Collingham. The Hall was taken by Philip Kench a retired corn miller. He was still living there in 1926 when concerns were beginning to arise concerning the future of Oakwell Hall. The ownership had passed to descendants of Henry Barker, two sisters who married into the Oliver and Ray families. The Oliver portion of the estate then passed to Captain Fitzroy, who became Speaker of the House of Commons. In the mid-1920s the Ray and Fitzroy estate decided to sell parts of the estate. *To enable the payment of the death duties of a late ward in Chancery, negotiations are being made with a firm of antique dealers for the sale of the internal fittings of Oakwell Hall Birstall* (Yorkshire Evening Post 10 Feb 1926). It was estimated there was some 3,700 feet of fine oak panelling worth £2,000. By April a committee was appointed to ascertain the bedrock price for the purchase and obtain an option to purchase by a public subscription following fears the Hall may be dismantled and shipped to America. The following February Fitzroy and his business partner were prepared 'to sell the hall as it stood, with gardens, paddock, and moat, for £3000, and give a reasonable amount of time for the money to be raised. Later that year Sir Norman Rae and Mr Sharman offered to buy the Hall for the nation and Birstall Urban District Council became trustees or custodians.

By May 1928 it was reported 'The owners have also undertaken, at their own cost, to restore the Hall and its spacious gardens and grounds as nearly as possible to their original state. Defects of age, and structural alterations carried out with the passing years while the Hall has been a private residence, make this no light task...but the task is to be thoroughly carried out under expert advice...The grounds are to be remodelled as an old world garden on the lines of an 16th century floral retreat '(Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer 29 May 1928). In 1927 the scale of the task had been considered and 'A firm of landscape gardeners have been engaged to transform the garden...This is spite of the present resident caretaker having accomplished much '(The Leeds Mercury 23 Nov 1927).

In October 1929 James Sanderson, the caretaker, also a landscape gardener, married Adelaide Bates at St Peter's in Birstall and they moved into Oakwell Hall in 1930 where they raised three daughters. Their quarters consisted of the buttery, pantry and dairy on the ground floor and the three rooms above. The rest of the Hall was open to visits from the public and Mrs Sanderson later recalled many visitors, not only local and English tourists, but also the French, Americans and Japanese. The family resided at the Hall till 1951. Figures 12 and 13 show the Hall at the time with a family bathroom inserted at the rear.

3.5 Later developments

Oakwell Hall holds an archive collection of its own material which includes photographic evidence of renovation works from the 1960s and the 1980s. It is considered that the Hall was unoccupied during the 1950s although it was utilised for certain events and exhibitions. During the 1960s a major renovation was undertaken to the Great Hall, the future Little Parlour Chamber and works to bedrooms at the rear of the property, including the insertion of public toilets in a bedroom area and the family bathroom. Figs. 14 to 20 are a representation of the work carried out in the mid-late 20th century. Figs 21 and 22 show the Hall as drawn in 1974. In December 1986 it was announced the Hall would be closed for important structural repairs to be carried out. The opportunity was taken to undertake the delicate work of removing paint from the panelling in the Great Parlour

Chamber and Lady's Chamber to expose the fine trompe l'oeil decoration (Figs 23 and 24). It is considered that timber guttering and modern rainwater goods may have been added at this time or subsequently. Detail from Fig. 11 shown in Fig. 25 may illustrate an earlier more decorative guttering.

By May 1988 the Friends of Oakwell Hall Country Park, the setting of the Hall had been greatly improved following the closure of the railway and a nearby colliery, were invited to view the 'extensively refurbished Hall'. This was following what was described as 'an extensive programme of structural repairs and refurbishment... to give the house a more "lived in" feel and, as far as possible, make sure all the rooms reflect the period of 1690, when Oakwell was occupied by the Batt family (Batley News 26 May 1988).

3.0 Legislation and planning policies

3.1 Legislation and guidance

As noted above any proposed works would affect a designated heritage asset, therefore, works which affect the character or the setting of a designated heritage asset should be assessed against the relevant legislation and policies contained in the NPPF and in the local plan.

The legislative framework for the preservation and enhancement of listed buildings and conservation areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Legislation, Sections 16, 66 (1) and 72 of the above Act, and national policy set a strong presumption in favour of protecting, conserving and where possible enhancing the significance of heritage assets. The weight to be attached to that presumption, when assessed against meeting other needs, will be dependent on

- The significance of the heritage asset, whether it is designated or non-designated and its grade.
- The contribution of that part of the asset to be affected by the proposed development to the significance of the asset, including its setting.
- The scale of any harm or loss that will be caused to significance; and
- The degree of public benefit that will result from the development.

The relevant section of the National Policy Planning Framework is 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment. In particular paragraph 207 which in part states *'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting'. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'.*

3.2 Local planning policies

As well as national planning policies relating to the historic environment, the Local Planning Authority (LPA), in this instance Kirklees Council, also have relevant policies in their Local Plan.

Kirklees Local Plan: 'Strategy and Policies '(Part 1) was adopted 27 February 2019 and contains the spatial strategy and development management policies.

Kirklees Local Plan: 'Allocations and Designations' (Part 2) which sets out the allocations and designations included in the Local Plan.

Part 1 of the Local Plan contains guidance on the historic environment in 14 in particular

Policy LP35 - Historic environment

1. Development proposals affecting a designated heritage asset (or an archaeological site of national importance) should preserve or enhance the significance of the asset. In cases likely to result in substantial harm or loss, development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposals would bring substantial public benefits that clearly outweigh the harm, or all of the following are met:

- a. the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site.
- b. no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation.
- c. conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d. the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

2. Proposals which would remove, harm or undermine the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, or its contribution to the character of a place will be permitted only where benefits of the development outweigh the harm having regard to the scale of the harm and the significance of the heritage asset. In the case of developments affecting archaeological sites of less than national importance where development affecting such sites is acceptable in principle, mitigation of damage will be ensured through preservation of the remains in situ as a preferred solution. When in situ preservation is not justified, the developer will be required to make adequate provision for excavation and recording before or during development.

3. Proposals should retain those elements of the historic environment which contribute to the distinct identity of the Kirklees area and ensure they are appropriately conserved, to the extent warranted by their significance, also having regard to the wider benefits of development. Consideration should be given to the need to:

- a. ensure that proposals maintain and reinforce local distinctiveness and conserve the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets
- b. ensure that proposals within Conservation Areas conserve those elements which contribute to their significance.
- c. secure a sustainable future for heritage assets at risk and those associated with the local textile industry, historic farm buildings, places of worship and civic and institutional buildings constructed on the back of the wealth created by the textile industry as expressions of local civic pride and identity.
- d. identify opportunities, including use of new technologies, to mitigate, and adapt to, the effects of climate change in ways that do not harm the significance of heritage assets and, where conflict is unavoidable, to balance the public benefit of climate change mitigation measures with the harm caused to the heritage assets' significance.
- e. accommodate innovative design where this does not prejudice the significance of heritage assets.
- f. preserve the setting of Castle Hill where appropriate and proposals which detrimentally impact on the setting of Castle Hill will not be permitted.

4.0 Significance

A Statement of Heritage Significance is an objective analysis of significance, an opportunity to describe what is important about the heritage, why and to whom it is important.

Conservation Principles (2008) published by English Heritage provides a comprehensive framework for the sustainable management of the historic environment. The document established Significance as a concept for measuring the cultural value of a place, using judgement to assess the place and its different aspects in a hierarchy.

This is now widely accepted with the following established levels of significance:

- Exceptional: important at national to international levels, reflected in statutory designations, such as Grade I listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- High: important at regional or sometimes a higher level, e.g. Grade II listed buildings
- Medium: important at a local level, and possibly at a regional level for example, for group value
- Low: of no more than local value
- Negative or intrusive features: features which in their present form detract from the value of the site.

Those principles are embedded in the latest guidance relating to the planning system, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Significance is one of the guiding principles running through the historic environment section of the NPPF. The NPPF defines significance as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest’. Such interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic’ and it may derive ‘not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting’ (Historic England 2019, 2).

The values that can be attached to places are:

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
- Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

The development of proposals for change to heritage assets, and the consideration of subsequent applications based on the resultant proposals, benefits from a structured approach to the assembly and analysis of relevant information (Historic England 2019, 3).

A staged approach would usually embrace the following stages, informed by the scope of the proposal:

- Understand the form, materials and history of the affected heritage asset(s), and/or the nature and extent of archaeological deposits
- Understand the significance of the asset(s)

4.1 Heritage Interests of Oakwell Hall

4.1.1 Historical and Architectural Interest

During the 16th century the introduction of woollen production into the West Riding of Yorkshire led to increased prosperity. Clothiers produced kersies, often on their hillside farmsteads, which were soon being exported on a considerable scale. By the 16th century a new social class of yeomen used the wealth they accumulated from farming and textiles

to build houses that reflected their position at the top of local society. Other opportunities could be afforded by association with established gentry family estates such as the Saviles who Henry Batt served.

Oakwell Hall is a typical example of the substantial houses built by the minor gentry in the 16th and 17th centuries in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Built by John Batt in 1585 it was constructed to a post-medieval plan of a high status cross wing separated from a service wing by a storied hall. Access was by a through passage between the hall and service wing. As the family prospered the hall was opened and a high status window inserted in the main elevation. A New Parlour was formed in the east wing and further service rooms added to the north-west. Elaborate decoration reflecting the Batts' new status was added in the form of plasterwork and trompe l'oeil panelling to the major rooms.

Declining fortunes around 1700 meant little major reconstruction was carried out. The Hall was subsequently let to local families after been sold. By the early-mid 19th century the Hall was utilised as a series of boarding schools with only probable internal alterations and sub division. At the end of the 19th century the Maggs carried some renovation but by the mid-1920s fears over the future of the Hall grew. Two successful local textile magnates stepped in, and the Hall passed to the local authority and its future was secured. After some deliberation the late 20th century saw Oakwell Hall renovated to an end of the 17th century look and become a successful museum set in a fine country park, accredited with Natural England.

4.2 Assigning Heritage Values

Oakwell Hall is a designated heritage asset listed at Grade I under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest (List Entry Number: 1134609). The building, therefore, has exceptional significance.

The building also has evidential, historic, aesthetic, and communal value.

4.2.1 Evidential value

Oakwell Hall holds evidence as a typical example of the substantial houses built by the minor gentry in the 16th and 17th centuries in the West Riding of Yorkshire. At a time when earlier timber-framed buildings were being replaced by stone structures or clad in stone, it is considered that Oakwell Hall is an example of a building substantially built in stone but with use of timber-framing techniques internally and perhaps to the rear elevation. Additions in the early-mid 17th century reflected new fashions in design and decoration. Declining fortunes of the original family meant little major alterations were carried out. The building retains its original materials and form reflecting their intended use. The building holds **exceptional** evidential value.

4.2.2 Historic value

Oakwell Hall was constructed and developed as high-status residence for a member of the minor gentry aspiring to advancement. It therefore reflects the society of around 1600 in the West Riding of Yorkshire. This was an important time with the emergence of the Yeoman-Clothier class who would drive the economic and social progress of the region. The later tenancy of the Hall by a series of prosperous clothiers strengthens those links. When the textile industry changed in the early decades of the 19th century Oakwell Hall was readily adaptable as a boarding school providing educational opportunities for young ladies. This development in part led to the association of a major 19th century novelist, Charlotte Bronte, with the property. It is, therefore, considered it has **exceptional** historical value.

4.2.3 Communal value

Oakwell Hall is a designated historic building experienced by locals and tourists as a successful museum in an accredited country park. It is visited by schools and local and regional interest groups providing strong links with the economic and social history of the region. More recently Oakwell Hall has been used as a wedding venue adding another layer to its use by the community. The building is considered to hold **exceptional** communal value.

4.2.4 Aesthetic value

As noted above, visitors experience the high status vernacular building, built in local sandstone, in a well-designed and accredited semi-rural setting, Oakwell Country Park. It is experienced by them, with all its historical connections, in this setting. It therefore holds **exceptional** aesthetic value.

The assigned values relate to the historic and architectural interest of Oakwell Hall. These are maintained in the exhibition rooms, including service rooms in the Kitchen and Kitchen Parlour. However, parts of the former service range to the north-west, built in a plainer, more utilitarian fashion, are not considered part of the visitor experience and are considered staff areas including the former servants 'hall, the dairy and the pantry/store room areas. These provide functional uses in office areas, etc. Whilst still part of the historic building at present they may be considered to have High/Medium significance. Areas of the upper floor were occupied by the caretaker and his family in the mid-20th century and were modified again in the 1960s with restoration work including the insertion of public toilets. This area is considered to have **Low significance** at present.

5.0 Conclusion

A Statement of Heritage Significance is an objective analysis of significance, an opportunity to describe what is important about the heritage of an asset, why and to whom it is important. This document has considered the significance of Oakwell Hall and its setting in accordance with Paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Guidance.

Oakwell Hall is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest (List Entry Number: 1134609) at Grade I, and therefore is of Exceptional significance, important at national to international levels. It lies within the Oakwell Hall Country a multiple Green Flag award winning Country Park accredited with Natural England.

Oakwell Hall has survived as a high status minor gentry house of around 1600 with major remodelling only occurring in the early-mid 17th century. It has important ties to the local and regional economic and social history, strengthened by its use as a boarding school. Oakwell Hall also has links to Charlotte Bronte and therefore with groups and individual with literary interests. At an early date the building passed into local authority custodianship. Since restoration work in the 1960s Oakwell Hall has gradually evolved into a successful museum and visitor attraction held in high regard and valued by a wide-cross section of society.

Some areas of the building were built in a plainer, more utilitarian fashion to form services to former occupants of the Hall and now provide functional uses in office areas, etc. for the present occupants. These may be considered to have High/Medium significance.

Areas of the upper floor used for family occupation in the mid-20th century were modified

again in the 1960s with restoration work including the insertion of public toilets for visitors. This specific area is considered to have Low significance at present, but with potential for enhancement.

Oakwell hall is of Exceptional Heritage significance with Evidential, Historic and Aesthetic value in its fabric and setting as a heritage asset. It also has significant Communal value being visited by schools, park visitors, wedding parties and local and regional interest groups providing strong links with the economic and social history of the region.

Report prepared by

Richard Storah

BA(Hons) Dip. Arch. MA (Cons). RIBA. AABC. SCA. IHBC

Sources

Historic England (2019) Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets, Historic England Advice Note 12

Kirklees Council (2019) Kirklees Local Plan: Strategy and Policies

Kirklees Council (2019) Kirklees Local Plan: Allocations and Designations

RCHME (1986) Supplementary Series: 8, Rural Houses of West Yorkshire 1400-1830

APPENDIX: Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: I
List Entry Number: 1134609
Date first listed: 29-Mar-1963
List Entry Name: OAKWELL HALL INCLUDING BOUNDARY WALL
Statutory Address: OAKWELL HALL INCLUDING BOUNDARY WALL,
NUTTER LANE
District: Kirklees (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: SE 21746 27114

Details

SE 2711 2174 BATLEY MB NUTTER LANE BIRSTALL 2/40 29.3.63 Oakwell Hall including boundary wall
I

Extremely fine hall house, now museum. Probably 1583, built for John Batt, incorporating timber framed house of the mid C.15, with considerable C.17 refurbishment. Ashlar. Stone slate roof with chamfered gable copings. 2 storeys. An H-plan with central hall with 2 storey gabled porch to centre right, and gabled wing to left elevation. Windows are double chamfered, and ovolo moulded, mainly with throated hood moulds some of which continue as string courses. 5 projecting chimney breasts, with ashlar stacks, to sides and rear, one to the right side being particularly broad. The central hall window is of 30 lights with king mullion and 2 transoms, and it is thought to be of C.17 date. Arched entrance to open porch to right with recut inscription I.B. 1583. 3-light window to 1st floor. The wings to left and right have 12-light mullioned and transomed windows to ground floor and 12 and 10-light similar windows to 1st floor left and right respectively. The left wing also has inward-looking 12-light window with transom to ground floor and 6-light to 1st floor. Rear fenestration includes 12, 14 and 16-light mullioned and transomed windows. Lights are leaded, many with early glazing. Hall window has diamond pattern glazing. The internal arrangement comprises through screened passage with open hall to left, beyond which is the great parlour or drawing room to front, and buttery, pantry, dairy and servants' hall to rear. To right is a smaller parlour or dining room, with kitchen to rear. At 1st floor level the principal bedroom is above the great parlour. The great hall is galleried on 2 sides with vertically symmetrical turned balusters, and with C.17 plasterwork on underside. Oak panelling to screen with 2 round arched openings with 3 pairs of Tuscan columns, thought to be C.17. Gallery is reached by open-well stairs with flat balusters and openwork dog-gates. The fireplace is thought to be C.17. The window jambs in the great parlour have plaster grotesques, possibly early C.17, in the form of lions' heads, caryatids and female figures the latter representing the Celtic goddess of fecundity. The arched fireplace in this room may be original. The passage ceiling has C.17 plasterwork in patterns of 3, 5, 6 and 8 sided figures. Plasterwork to the porch ceiling thought to be C.16. The stone boundary wall has roll-top coping and large ball finials to opening in front of entrance and returns to building to right. The building was 'Fieldhead' in Charlotte Bronte's "Shirley". Geoffrey Woledge, Oakwell Hall, 1978. N. Pevsner, The Buildings of England, 1979.

West Yorkshire Historic Environment Record
Finding Number WYHER/8771

Office record is held at: Historical Environment Record, West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service

Title Oakwell Hall

Description Oakwell Hall is an extremely fine hall house, now turned museum. It was originally built for John Batt and dates to c.1583 but is thought to incorporate a timber framed house of mid-15th century. A dendrochronology report carried out by Nottingham University in 1990 also found re used timbers with a tentative date of c.1199 incorporated into the building. It is of two storey height throughout and is arranged on a hall and cross wings plan. Most of the windows are double chamfered and ovolo moulded, except for the central hall window which is of 30 lights, with king mullions and 2 transoms, and is thought to be of a 17th century date. The hall also has 5 projecting chimney breasts, with ashlar stacks, to the sides and rear of the building.

The internal arrangement comprises of a through screened passage with open hall to the left, beyond which is the great parlour or drawing room. The buttery, pantry, dairy, kitchen and servants 'hall are all to the rear. At first floor level the principal bedroom is situated above the great parlour. The arched fireplace and stone boundary wall may be original and the plasterwork in the porch probably 16th century. However, the majority of the decorative woodwork and plasterwork conforms to a mid-17th century date and the structural evidence has confirmed that the hall underwent many alterations in the 17th century.

The hall is believed to have been the model for 'Fieldhead 'in Charlotte Bronte's 'Shirley'. (Text edited from English Heritage LBO description)

The site has had a degree of archaeological investigation, which has revealed possible remains of Medieval settlement here. Geophysical surveys and excavations of Oakwell Hall's grounds were undertaken by staff and students of the University of Bradford in May 1977, as well as another set of excavations by J.A. Gilks on behalf of Kirklees Libraries and Museum Service in late 1978 (see PRN 97 for further details). Further to this an archaeological assessment of the 'Painted Panelling of the Dairy Chamber 'was undertaken by West Yorkshire County Archaeological Unit in October 1985.

The hall was de scheduled in October 1990 but is still protected by its grade I listed status.

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Figure 1: Location Plan

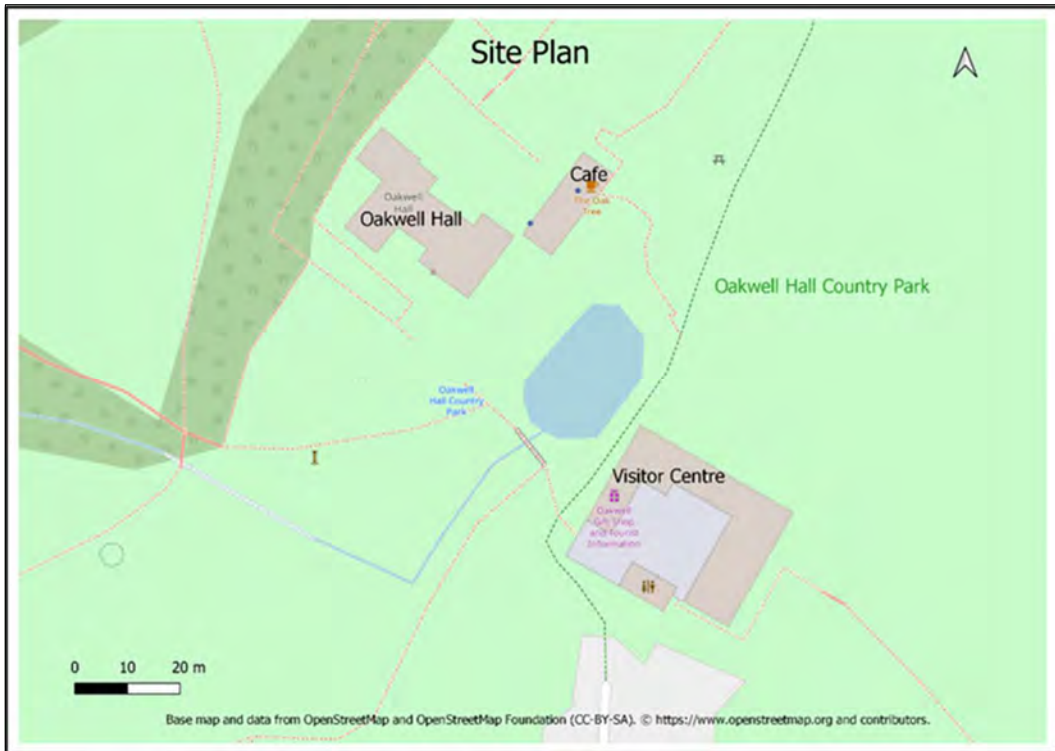


Figure 2: Site Plan



Figure 3: Plan Of 1806 (Oakwell Hall Archives)



Figure 4: Yorkshire Sheet 232 Surveyed: 1847 to 1851, Published: 1854



Figure 5: Yorkshire CCXXXII.2 Surveyed: 1892, Published: 1893

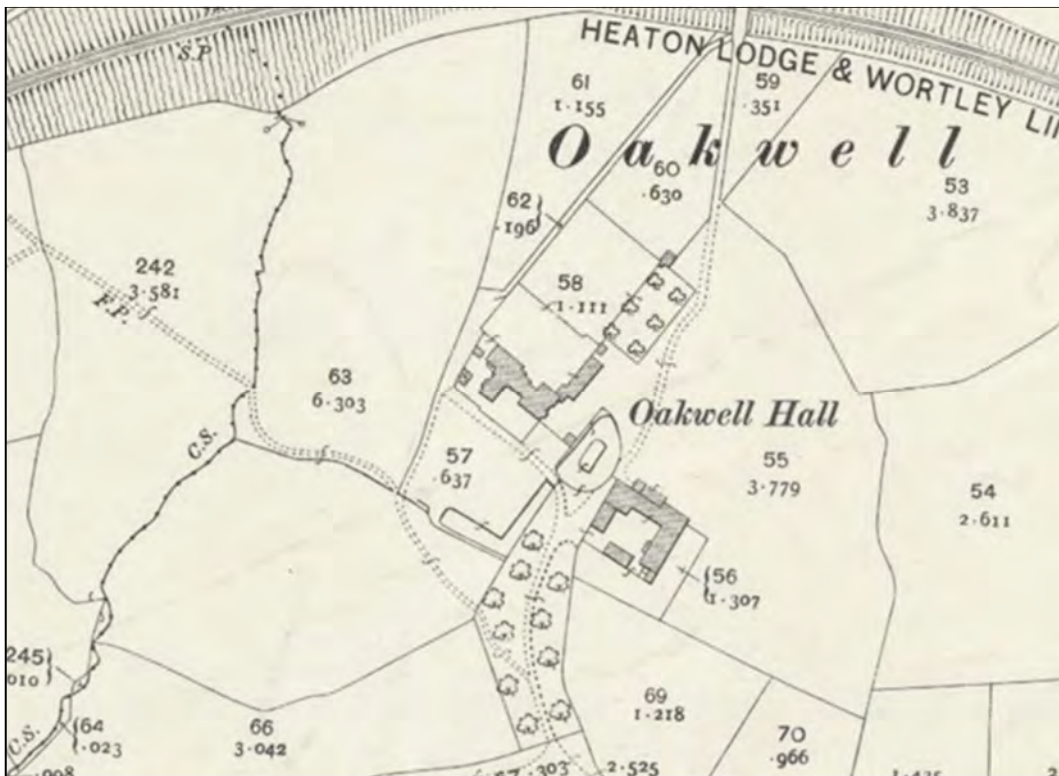


Figure 6: Yorkshire CCXXXII.2 Revised: 1905, Published: 1908



Figure 7: Yorkshire CCXXXII.2 Revised: 1915, Published: 1922



Figure 8: Yorkshire CCXXXII.2 Revised: 1938, Published: 1947



Figure 9: A possible 1860s view of the Hall from the south



Figure 10: The Hall viewed from north, possibly in the 1860s



Figure 11: The rear of the Hall around 1900 (k002339)

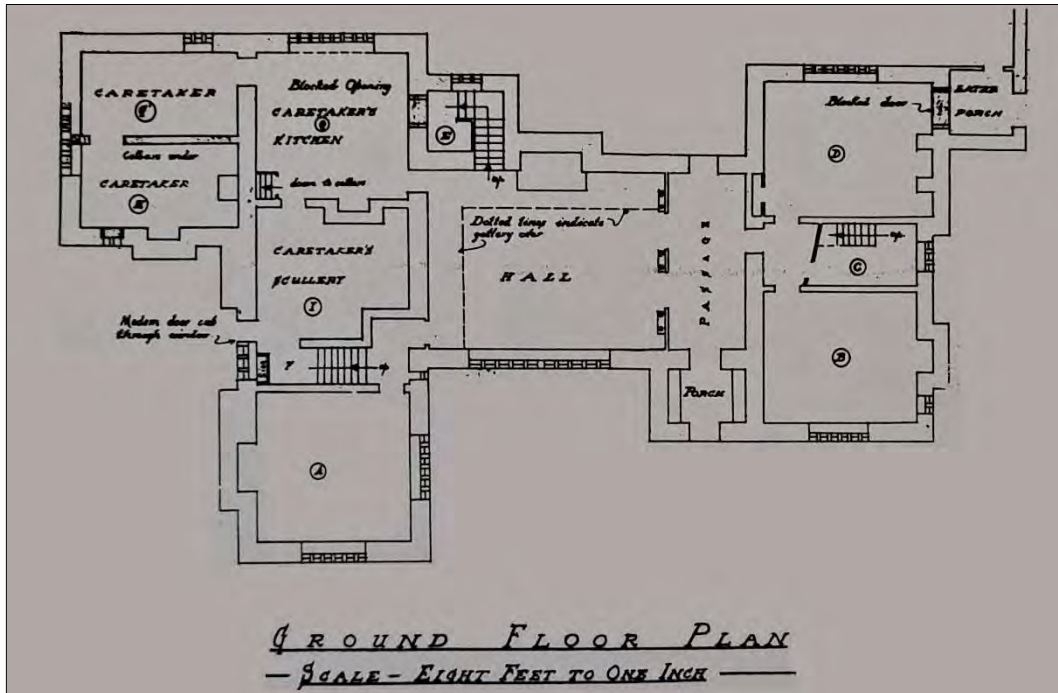


Figure 12: Ground Floor plan mid -20th century

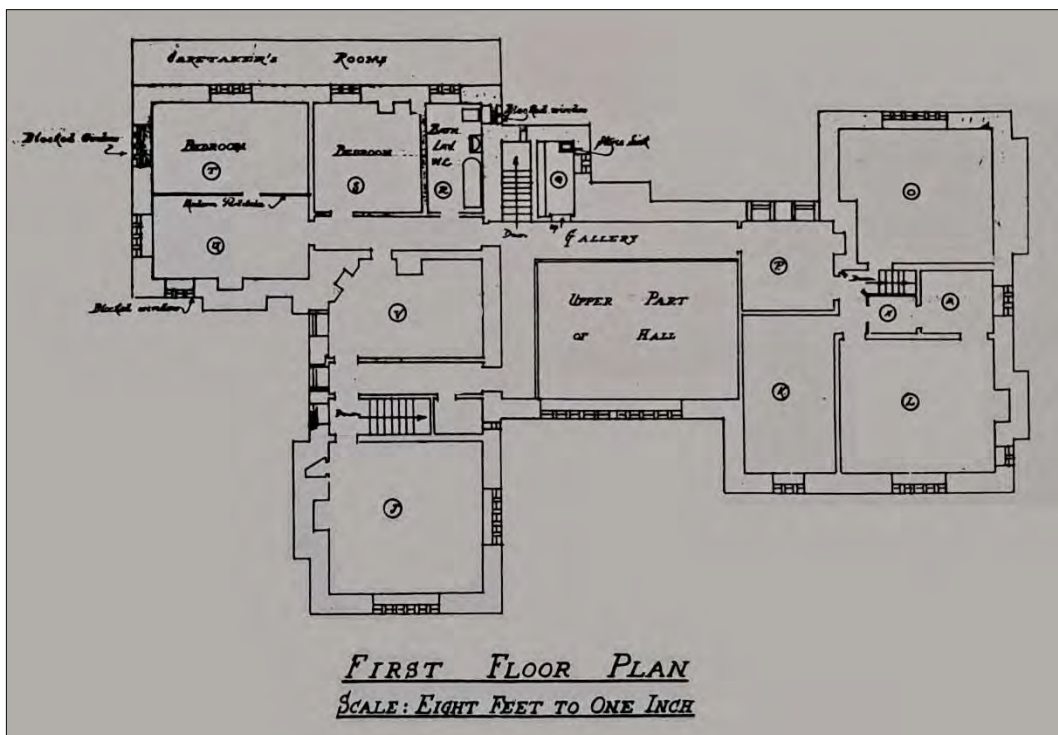


Figure 13: First Floor plan mid -20th century



Figure 14: Photograph of Great Hall attributed to Lavinia Maggs



Figure 15: The fireplace in the Great Hall after removal of 19th century additions



Figure 16: Renovation work to the Great Hall



Figure 17: Fireplace removed from Little Parlour Chamber



Figure 18: Fireplace in room now used for toilets



Figure 19: Restoration work in the Kitchen Chamber



Figure 20: Exposed roof structure in the Kitchen Chamber

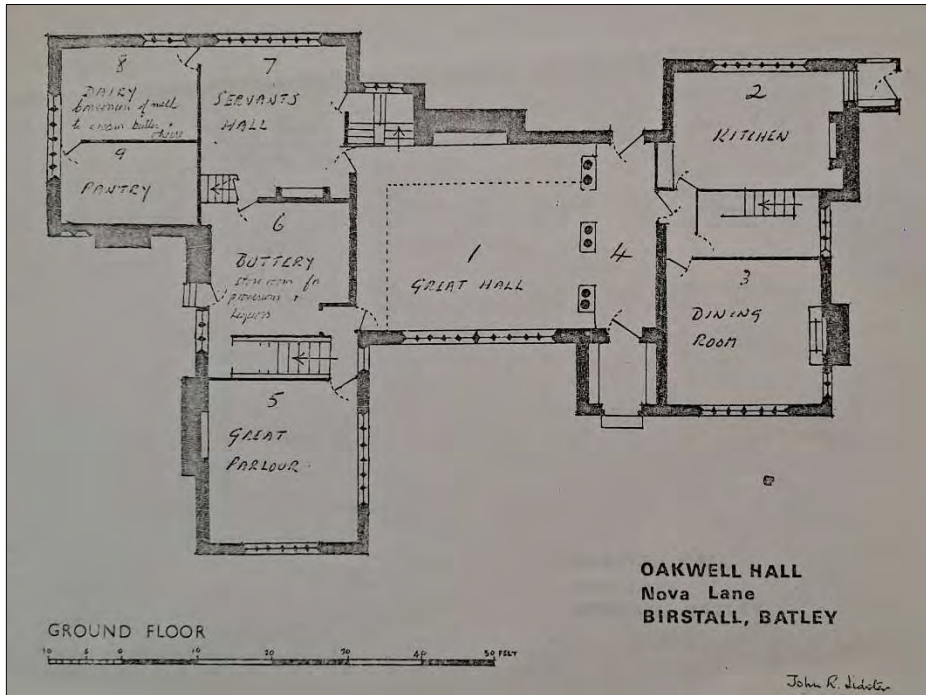


Figure 21: Ground Floor plan of 1974

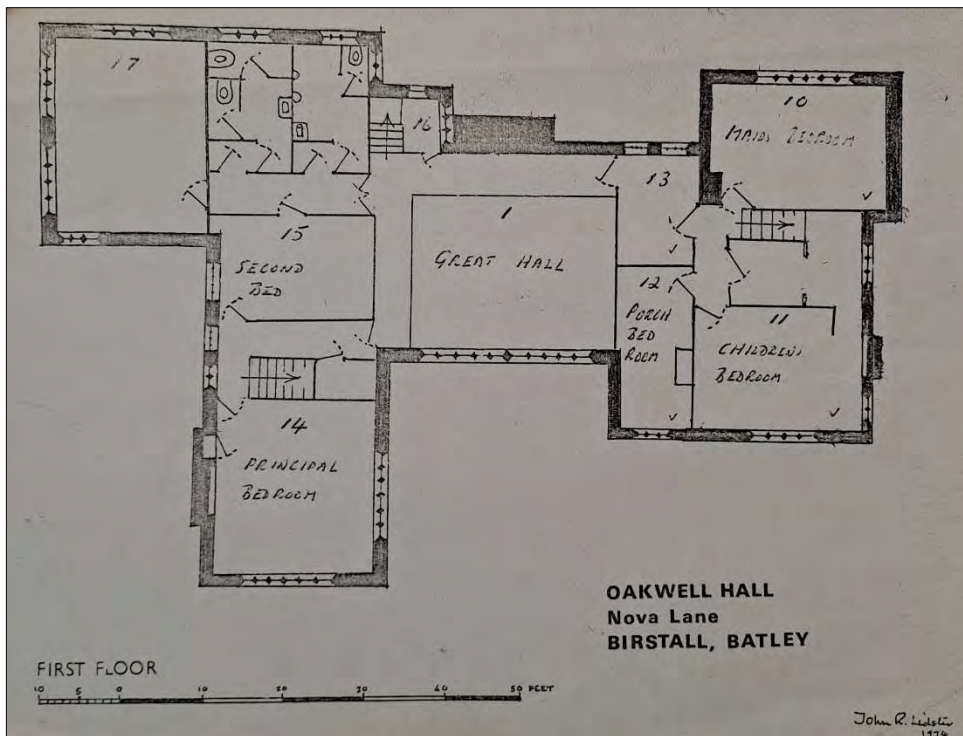


Figure 22: First Floor plan of 1974



Figure 23: Restoration work to Great Parlour Chamber



Figure 24: Restoration work to Lady's Chamber



Figure 25: Detail from Fig. 11

Photos

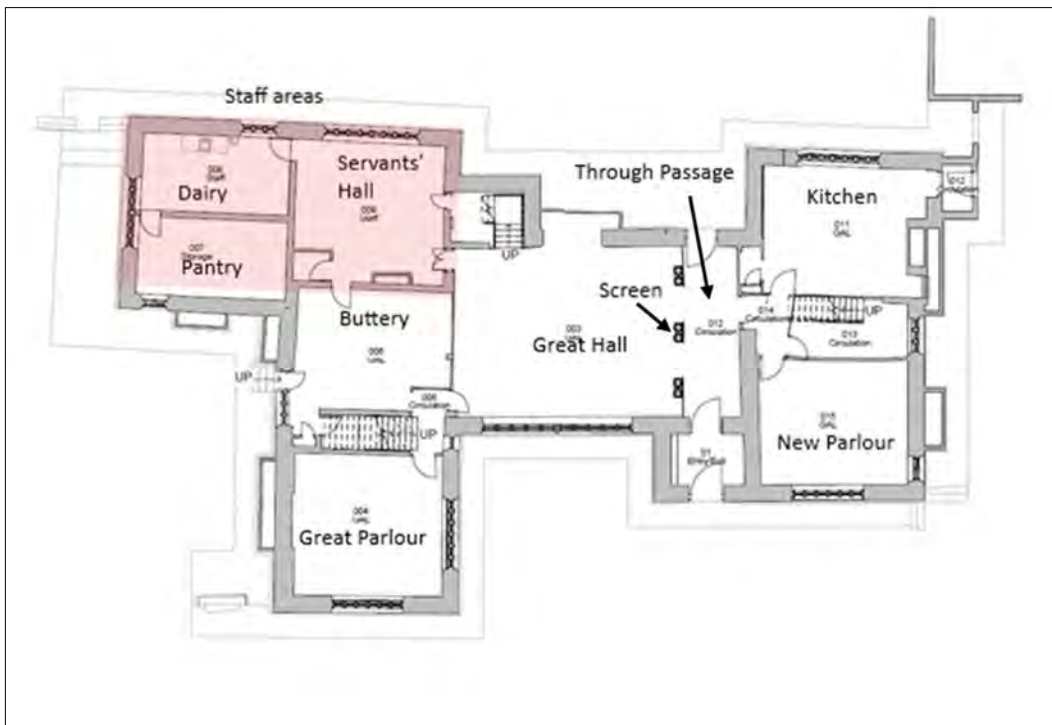


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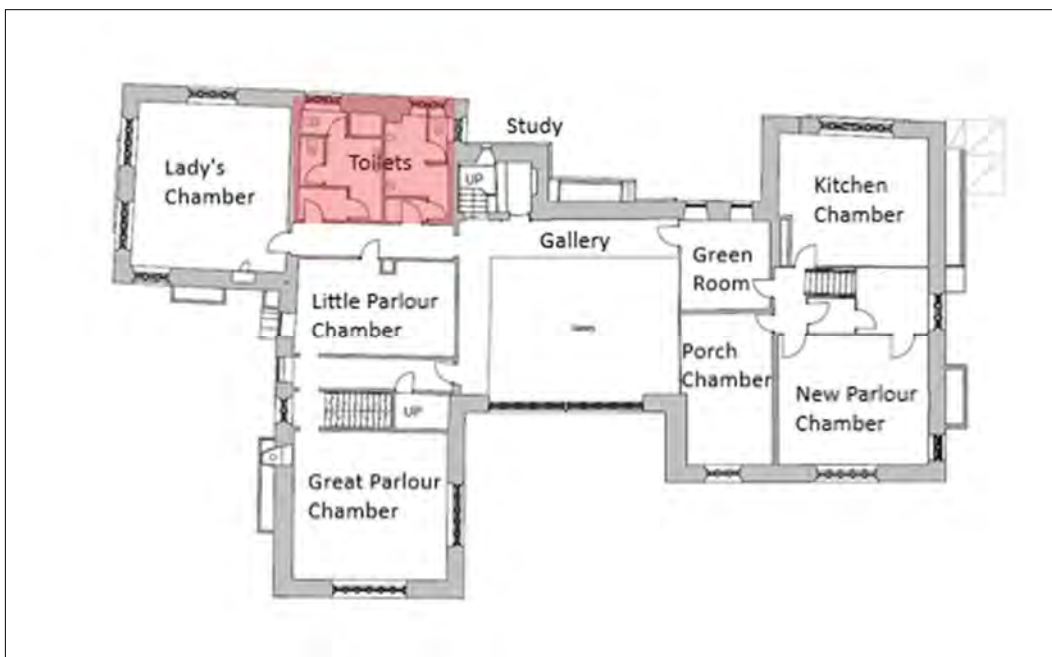


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Photo 3: Oakwell Hall from the south looking across the moat



Photo 4: Footpath to the west of the Hall showing boundary wall



Photo 5: View from the south-east



Photo 6: The enclosed gardens to the rear



Photo 7: Oblique view from the south



Photo 8: The main south-west elevation with listed boundary wall



Photo 9: The Hall from the west



Photo 10: The west wing to the Hall



Photo 11: The Hall with gabled porch to right



Photo 12: The west wing from the south



Photo 13: Looking north to the gabled porch



Photo 14: The east wing and the gabled porch



Photo 15: The east wing from the south



Photo 16: The south-east elevation



Photo 17: Cottages to the north-east



Photo 18: The north-west elevation of the west wing



Photo 19: The north-west elevation with gabled dairy wing to left



Photo 20: The gabled dairy wing to the north-west



Photo 21: Oblique view from the north



Photo 22: The rear elevation from the north-east



Photo 23: The rear of the west wing with gabled dairy wing to right



Photo 24: Rear elevation from north-east with stair turret to left centre



Photo 25: The north-east entrance with east wing to left



Photo 26: The rear elevation west



Photo 27: Detail to main entrance (south-west)



Photo 28: Screened passage looking north-east with doorway to east wing to centre



Photo 29: Main doorway in screened passage looking south-west



Photo 30: The Hall from the screened passage



Photo 31: The Hall looking north-west

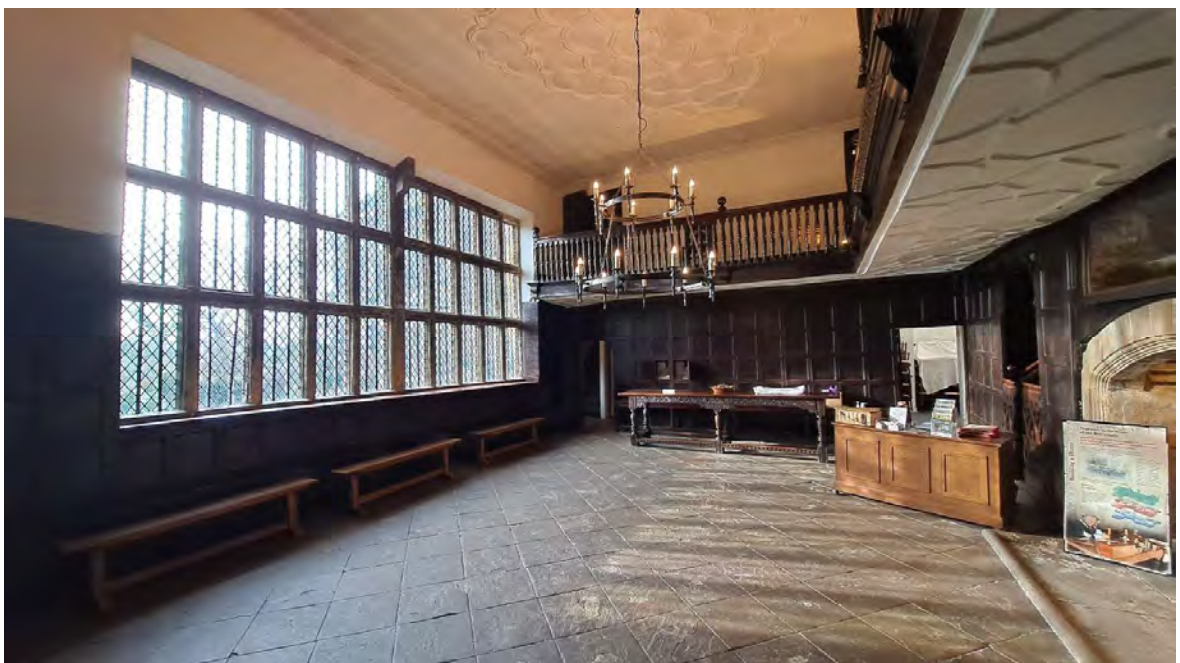


Photo 32: The Hall looking west



Photo 33: The Hall looking north-east



Photo 34: The Hall looking east



Photo 35: The west end of the Hall



Photo 36: Lobby to the west of the Hall



Photo 37: The Great Parlour looking west



Photo 38: Great Parlour fireplace with scumbled panels and landscape scenes above



Photo 39: Great Parlour looking east



Photo 40: Looking south in Great Parlour with plaster grotesques to window jambs



Photo 41: Former Buttery looking south-east



Photo 42: Former Buttery looking north-west with inserted doorway to left



Photo 43: Former Servants 'Hall looking east

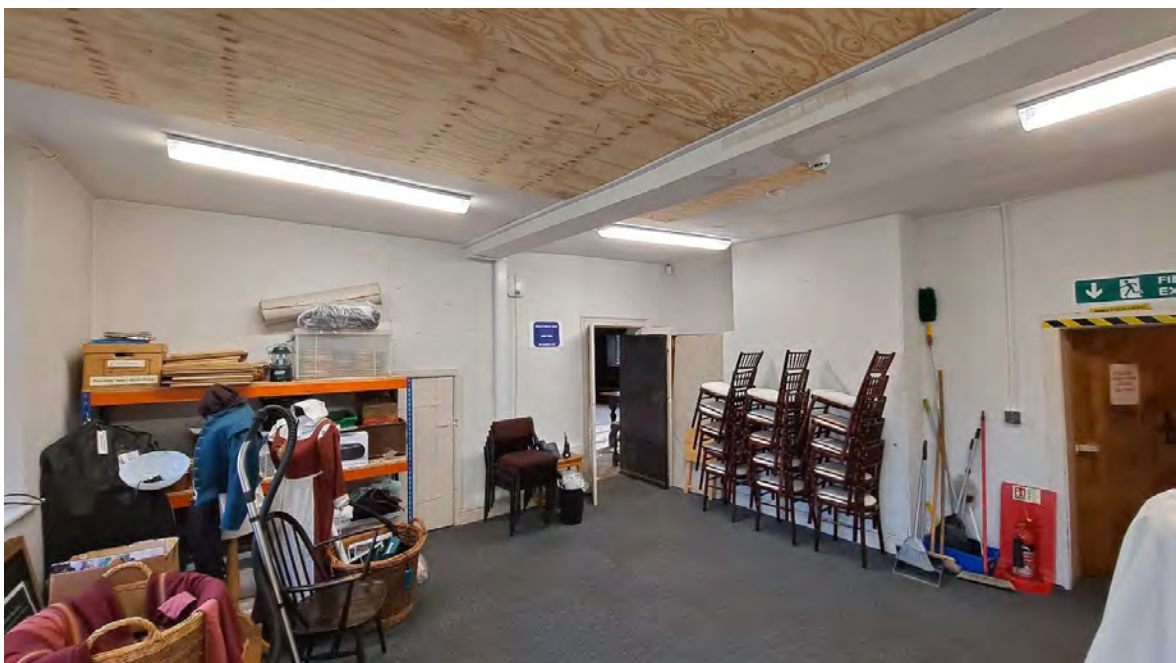


Photo 44: Looking south in former Servants 'Hall



Photo 45: Former Dairy now used as office space



Photo 46: Former Pantry with sealed fireplace and blocked window



Photo 47: Original staircase with dog gates



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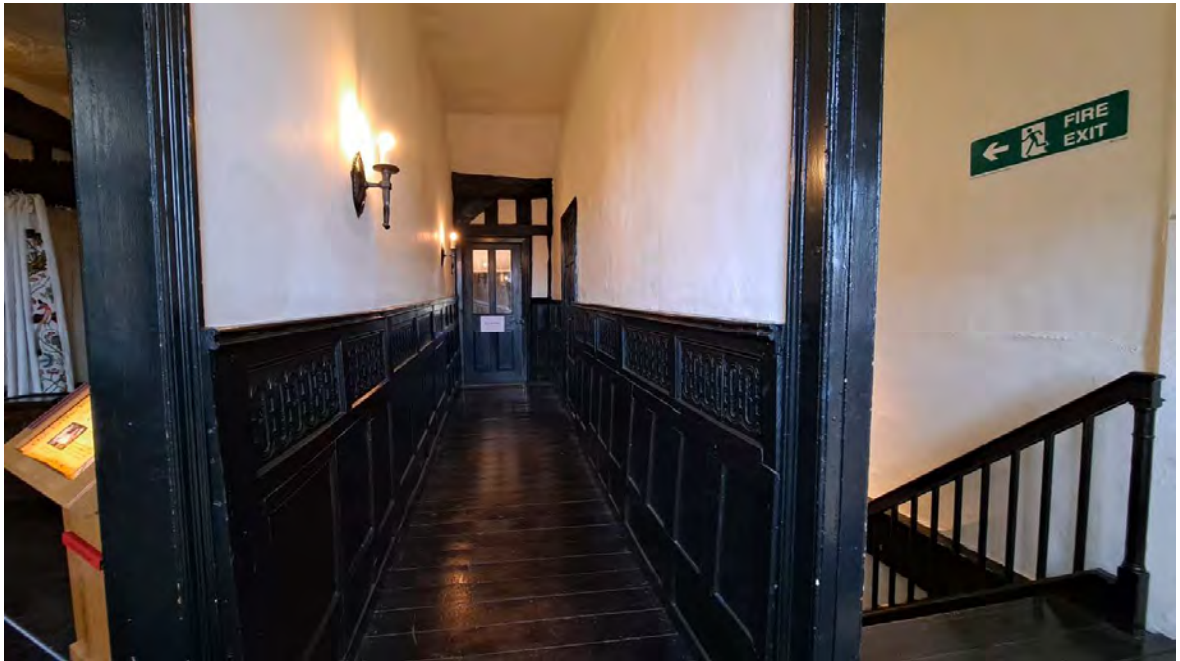


Photo 50: Landing at the north-west end of Hall looking south-east

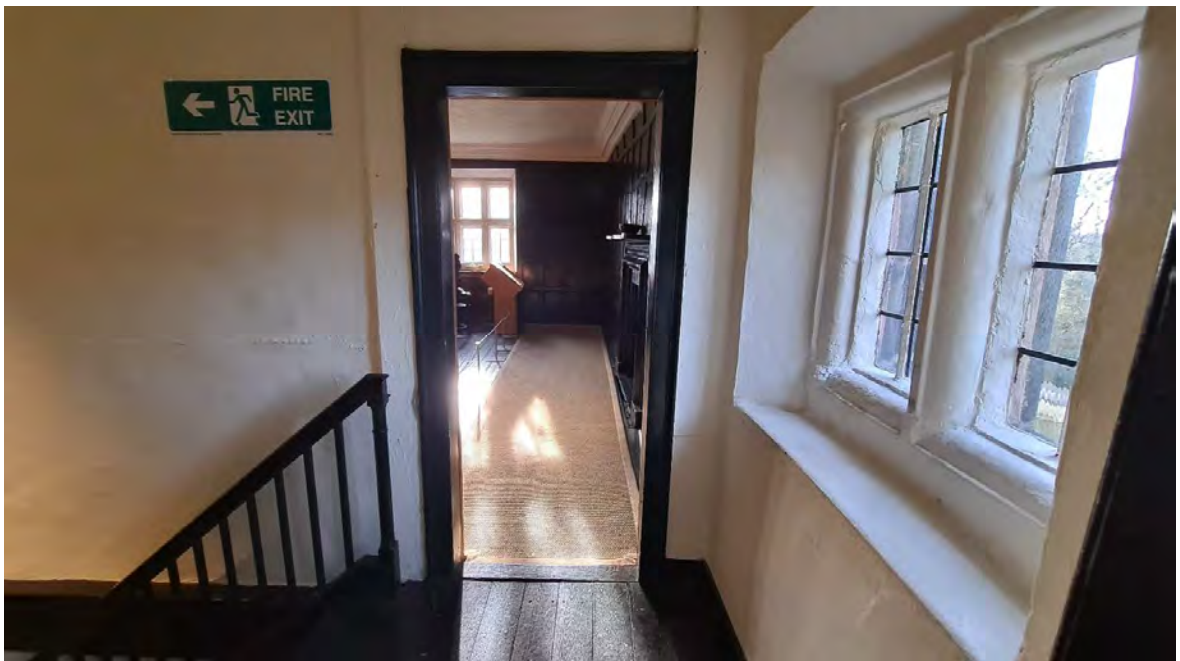


Photo 51: Landing leading to Great Parlour Chamber



Photo 52: Great Parlour Chamber looking south



Photo 53: Looking north-west in Great Parlour Chamber



Photo 54: Concealed privy or garderobe in Great Parlour Chamber



Photo 55: Little Parlour Chamber looking east



Photo 56: Little Parlour Chamber looking south-east



Photo 57: Corridor with toilets and access to Lady's Chamber



Photo 58: The Lady's Chamber looking north-west



Photo 59: The Lady's Chamber looking south-east



Photo 60: Lobby entrance to ladies 'toilets



Photo 61: Interior view of ladies 'toilet

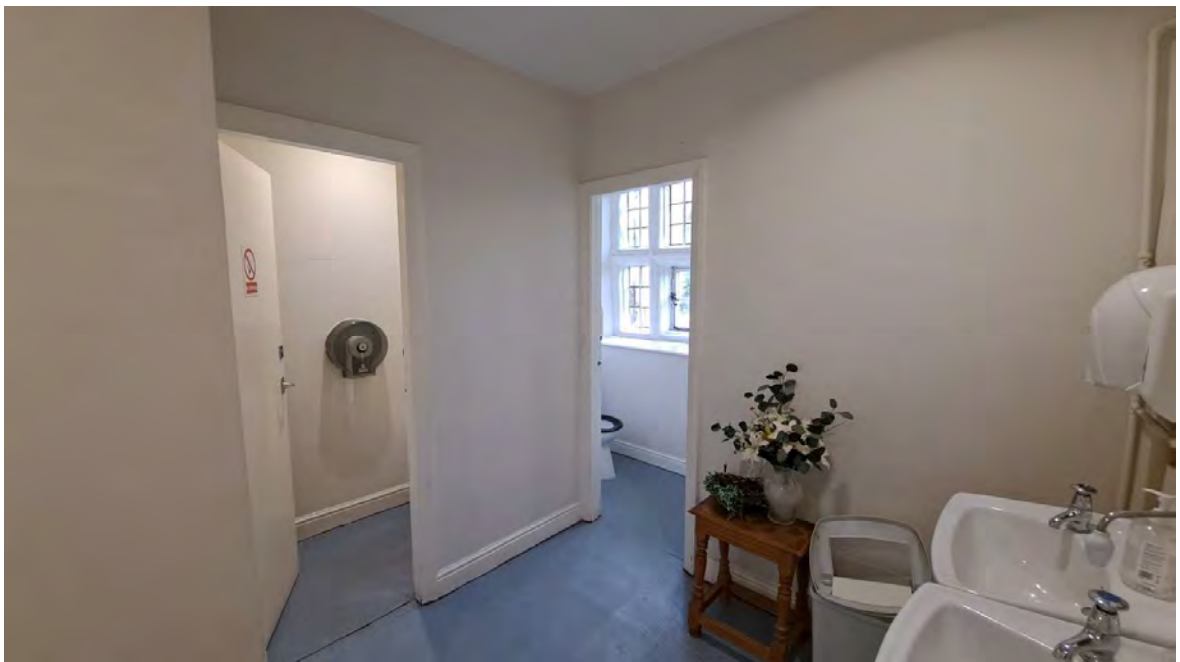


Photo 62: Interior partitions to ladies 'toilets



Photo 63: Partitioned lobby to gentlemens 'toilets



Photo 64: Interior view of gentlemens 'toilets



Photo 65: Internal partitions to gentlemens 'toilets



Photo 66: The gallery looking south-east



Photo 67: The original staircase in the stair turret



Photo 68: Study formed in the stair turret



Photo 69: The gallery looking west



Photo 70: The Green Room looking south-east



Photo 71: The Green Room looking north-west



Photo 72: Landing beyond The Green Room



Photo 73: The Porch Chamber looking west



Photo 74: The Porch Chamber looking north-east



Photo 75: Detail of roof structure from Porch Chamber looking north-west



Photo 76: New Parlour Chamber looking south-west



Photo 77: New Parlour Chamber looking north



Photo 78: Room to rear of New Parlour Chamber looking south-east



Photo 79: Kitchen Chamber looking east



Photo 80: Back stairs and corridor looking north-west



Photo 81: Corridor leading to back stairs looking south-east



Photo 82: Kitchen looking east



Photo 83: New Parlour looking north



Photo 84: New Parlour looking south



Photo 85: Doorway to screened passage



Photo 86: Possible former entrance to external cellar

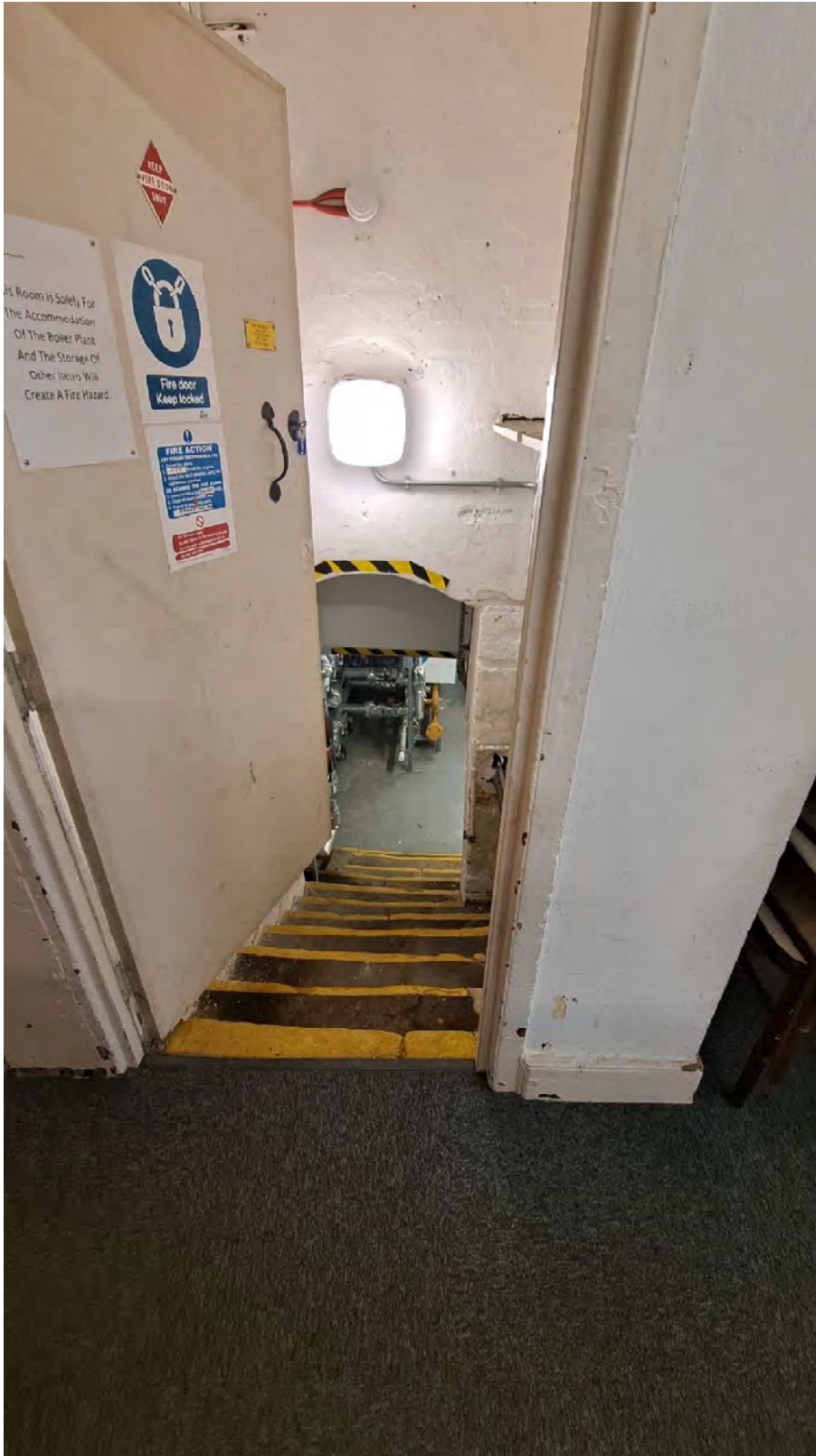


Photo 87: Entrance to cellars from former Servants 'Hall



Photo 88: Stone table in cellars



Photo 89: Modern boiler equipment in cellars