

MOOR COURT HALL, OAKAMMOOR

HERITAGE, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Prepared on Behalf of the Lee Rigby Foundation

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pwa

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INTRODUCTION

Moor Court Hall is a large Victorian villa with late Victorian and Edwardian additions originally designed as a Gentleman's Country Residence, with integral service buildings, coach-house/stabling and other separate ancillary buildings. It is set within extensive landscaped parkland and gardens which were adapted and shaped to manipulate the views and the approaches and these are integral and inseparable from its significance.

It is situated to the South East of Oakamoor on North side of Farley Road, at grid reference SK 05930 44532. It is barely visible from the main road network. This appears to have been deliberately planned in order to give it great privacy.

This Statement of Significance is proportionate to the importance of the building and is designed to inform all parties about the building and its development so that informed decisions can be made.

Care will be needed to ensure that alterations do not lead to adverse impacts on the building or its setting. However, it is recognised that some degree of intervention should be feasible, given that parts of the building have been significantly altered internally primarily during the buildings use as a women's open prison but also subsequently when it was used as a care home.

Philip Wootton is an AABC accredited conservation architect and Chartered Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He has worked extensively on the repair and alteration of historic buildings including the carrying out of Quinquennial surveys and the preparation of Heritage Statements where required. He is on the Lichfield Diocesan Panel of approved architects and acts as a technical advisor to the Baptist Building Fund. He is also a graduate of the SPAB course on the care of historic buildings.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

It is proposed to alter and adapt the rear two-storey former coach house/stable block that was converted to bedroom accommodation during the 20th Century. This is known as the 'Annex'. The proposed works to form new en-suite bedrooms and ancillary amenity space will reduce the total number of rooms in this wing from 12 to 8. This will involve carrying out works of internal alteration to remove existing partitions and ceilings dating from circa 1957, inserting new partitions and ceilings, replacing existing windows, creating new openings and the removal of incongruous additions such as shed structures in the existing courtyard. The courtyard wall and levels will also be altered to facilitate disabled access.

Philip Wootton Architect has been asked to design and supervise these alterations, submit applications for the appropriate consents and provide a Statement of Significance and brief Impact Assessment in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. This is in order to establish the significance of the designated heritage asset affected by the proposals and assess the impact of any proposals on that significance. Paragraph 128 of the Framework 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. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.”

This report sets out the historic development of the building and assesses the special architectural and historic interest of the building. Documentary and cartographic research has been used to inform the assessment.

SHORT HISTORY OF OWNERSHIP

The property sits on land originally owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury¹. It was procured by Alfred Sohier Bolton 1827-1901 for his new house which began on site in 1860. Alfred Bolton was the senior partner in Thomas Bolton & Sons, copper manufacturers of Oakamoor. In his diary he reveals that on 3rd August 1860 '*Critchlow delivered 1st load of stone from Alton Park on land in Farley Lane for my new house*'² He also notes on 23rd April 1862 that he '*Slept in new house for 1st time*'.³ It appears that Bolton had difficulty in securing a freehold interest in the land from the Earl of Shrewsbury only agreeing a 42 year lease in 1875⁴. His son Francis A Bolton only secured the freehold in 1919⁵. The architect for the house was William Sugden of Leek⁶. Francis Bolton lived at the property with his family from January 1880 until his death in 1951⁷.

In c.1957 the property and surrounding estate was sold to the Home Office and became a Women's Correction Centre and latterly an open prison. Cell blocks adjoining the main house and a large staff accommodation block known as Moorside Lodge was built in the grounds along with a house for the Governor known as the Governor's House and a number of other staff dwellings. The prison closed in 1983 when it was purchased by Goldstone Investments Ltd. who sold off some of the individual properties on the estate as individual dwellings⁸. Moor Court Hall was used as a principal residence occupied by Mr P Pinecoffin, with part of the main building and the 'Annex' being let as six flats (seven individual residences in total), but the division of the space was done only to a very rudimentary level. In 1989 Mr. P Thornley purchased Moor Court Hall and began refurbishment.

In 1991 Moorcare Limited a company owned by Mr Thornley purchased Moorside Lodge, operating it as a residential care home. Two of the houses on the estate were used as residential care units, Southview from 1993 and Willow view from

¹ Cathryn WALTON and Lindsey PORTER, *Lost Houses of North Staffordshire* (Landmark Publishing Ltd. 2006) Pg.109

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Deed documents provided by present owner

⁶ Cathryn WALTON and Lindsey PORTER, *Lost Houses of North Staffordshire* (Landmark Publishing Ltd. 2006) Pg.109

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Information provided by the current owner

1994. By 1997 the majority of Moor Court Hall was in use as a residential care home for adults with a learning disability.

In 2005 Moorcare ceased to operate a care facility within Moor Court Estate. The future trend of Social Services was for smaller units near to a town.

Since this date Moor Court Hall has been partially occupied by Mr Thornley as his private dwelling, the remainder being used as a retreat by the Kendo Nagasaki Foundation or left vacant. Viable uses for the remainder of the site and buildings have been difficult to establish. The part of the main building to which this application relates is known as the 'Annex' and this has not been used since this time.

In November 2017 the vacant 'Governor's House' was offered to the Lee Rigby Foundation a charity that provides respite accommodation for people and families recovering from trauma and bereavement. Their work is mainly but not exclusively with ex-servicemen and their families. Consent was obtained to extend and refurbish the house and work is now complete and the charity operates the premises which are now known as 'Lee Rigby House'.

The Kendo Nagasaki Foundation and the Lee Rigby Foundation, both charities, now intend to collaborate on the repair and development of the site and buildings to expand their work in a setting that is ideal for their purposes. The alteration and adaptation of the 'Annex' that originally housed a coach house and stables is the next phase of this proposed development.

DESCRIPTION

Setting

The main House and grounds

Moor Court Hall sits within large landscaped grounds on a site overlooking the Churnet Valley. The site slopes from the north down to the south. It is a peaceful rural environment enjoying far reaching views.



Fig. 1 The grounds

There are a number of buildings set within the grounds that were once ancillary to the main house but are now separate dwellings. There are also farm buildings within the grounds.

The grounds themselves are partly laid out in formal ornamental gardens and partly less formal paddocks. There are mature trees around and on the site and abundant and diverse wildlife. To the north there is dense mature woodland known as 'Coppo Wood' that shelters the site and buildings.

The main entrance to the site is from Farley Road via a Lodged Gateway. This Lodge known as 'South Lodge' is in private ownership. The stone built house, boundary walls and gate pillars reflect the architectural styling of the main house.



Fig.2 The site entrance and 'South Lodge'

The house is approached along a long drive flanked by pasture.



Fig. 3 The pasture and drive

It is only as one reaches the top of the drive that the main house becomes visible. An entrance forecourt around a central grassed island with a large pine tree at its centre marks your arrival.



Fig. 4 The approach to the main House

Various entrances and gates are accessed from the Forecourt including a small arch that takes you to the south of the main house.



Fig. 5 The various entrances from the Forecourt



Fig. 6 The arched gate to the southern side of the main house

To the south side of the house there is a large patio with steps descending to a large 'croquet' lawn with a stone ballustraded ha-ha. Beyond the ha-ha the landscaping becomes less formal breaking down further at a boundary wall into pasture.



Fig. 7 The 'croquet' lawn

To the west a formal lawned garden descends away from the house giving it an impressive aspect.



Fig. 8 The western elevation of the main house

To the north the house is partly 'dug in' to the hillside. This area was once occupied by the kitchen garden and then prison buildings which have now been demolished. A lawned area has been created with a grid of fruit trees. This elevation is has clearly always been seen as the 'back ' of the house.



Fi9.9 The view of the main house from the north

To the north east of the house there is a courtyard formed by the north elevation of the 'Annex' and two buildings built in 1997 to house a hydro therapy suite and activity rooms for the care home. It is hoped that these will be brought back into use at some point.



Fig.10 The courtyard to the north east of the house and 'Annex'

Various features have been integrated into the landscaped grounds including steps , walls, paths, ponds and miniature buildings.



Fig.11 The garden shelter to the south of the main house.



Fig.12 Topiary, gravel paths, lawns and a ha-ha to the south west of the main house



Fig.13 the fountain, lawns, gravel paths and formal shrubbery to the west of the main house



Fig.14 The ornamental wall and planting to the entrance forecourt



Fig.15 Ornamental stone shelter to the south east of the main house



Fig. 16 The terrace to the south east of the entrance forecourt

The landscaping is attractive and well maintained with great variety and lots of 'nooks and crannies' to discover. It contributes significantly to the aesthetic value of the site and the peace and tranquillity it offers is invaluable to the charities using the site.

Other buildings in the grounds

There are a range of other buildings in the grounds dating from various stages of the sites history.



Fig.17 The East Lodge (Now in private ownership)

The East Lodge, now in private ownership marks the eastern entrance to the grounds and mirrors the architectural styling and materials of the main house.



Fig.18 The former Coach house / Garage (Now in private ownership)

To the east of the 'Annex' is building that was originally built in 1913 to house Francis Bolton's cars. It was later used by the prison as a visiting and education area that housed a theatre. It has now been converted to a private dwelling. Again the materials and styling are sympathetic to the main house.



Fig. 19 The rear north elevation of the former Coach house / Garage

There are a number of houses that were built for prison staff dating from the second half of 20C.



Fig. 20 The Croft



Fig.21 South View



Fig.22 Woodlands

Some of the old Estate and Prison workshops have been converted into a private dwelling.



Fig. 23 Oakland (Now in private ownership)

The former Governor's House was built in the 1950's and was refurbished and enlarged in 2017 to create Lee Rigby Lodge which provides respite accommodation for families adjusting to trauma, injury or bereavement.



Fig.24 Lee Rigby House

There is a large block known as 'Moorside Lodge' that was originally built in the 1950s to accommodate prison staff and later residents of the care facility which has now closed. This is currently redundant and its fabric is in poor condition.



Fig. 25 Moorside Lodge



Fig. 26 Moorside Lodge

There are various other buildings on the site used for storage and stabling. There are also some redundant garages.



Fig. 27 The redundant garages



Fig. 28 Agricultural storage building on the lane to the north west of the site



Fig. 29 Outbuildings to the north of the site with Oakland in the background

Generally the more attractive buildings and features are to the south of the site with the more utilitarian service and former service buildings to the north.

The immediate surrounds of the 'Annex'

The part of the Hall to which this report relates i.e. the former coach house and stables now known as the 'Annex' is a long narrow building attached at its western end to the main house.



Fig. 30 The south (front elevation of the Annex)

To its south there is a court yard which runs the full length of the south elevation enclosed by a stone wall with a stepped access and gate at its western end. Storage buildings have been added into this courtyard and these are constructed of poor materials i.e. blockwork, cement render and profiled metal and plastic roofing. These are believed to have been later 20C additions. A fenced enclosure has also been built in the courtyard to house the now redundant emergency generator. The level of the courtyard appears to have been raised again in the later 20C and is paved with concrete paving slabs.



Fig. 31 The South Courtyard

Outside the wall there is the landscaped forecourt with a road and parking grouped around a central grassed area with mature trees on it. This forecourt is the arrival point of the main house.



Fig. 32 Entrance Forecourt with the 'Annex' to the right

To the east there is planted area containing a coniferous tree and a steeply sloping road ascending across the gable end of the 'Annex' to a higher level service courtyard to the north of the 'annex' building.



Fig. 33 The 'Annex' with the sloping access road to the eastern gable

Access to the first floor of the 'Annex' is possible from this upper courtyard. Along the north elevation of the 'Annex' there is an elaborate range of retaining walls and steps that resolve the significant level change between the front and rear of the building. This area is relatively narrow with the gable end of the adjacent building being fairly close to the rear elevation of the 'Annex'.



Fig. 34 The rear of the 'Annex'

The north elevation is very much the back being largely of rendered brickwork as opposed to stone on the south elevation facing the entrance forecourt. Part of the north elevation of the 'Annex' can also be seen from a sloping lawn planted out with young fruit trees. Because of the topography of the site and retaining walls the building appears to be single storey from this aspect.



Fig. 35 The western end of the north elevation.

Exterior

The main House

The main house is described by Pevsner as a '*neo-Jacobean house with shaped gables*'⁹ The listing statement describes it as follows :-

'Country house. Dated 1861, with additions of 1913. Ashlar; fish- scale tile roofs with plain tile bands; ashlar stacks with cylindrical shafts. Neo-Jacobean style; principal alignment east-west. South front: 3 storeys and attic with slightly lower single-bay wing of 2 storeys and attic to the left; roughly 4 bays, the 2 central ones under a shaped gable, central break to left hand wing beneath a similar shaped gable, casements. West front: 2 storeys and attic; 6 bays, north and south bays have shaped gables, the former projects. East front: 2 storey porch inscribed 1861 on the parapet with a pointed niche containing a statue of St. George.'

⁹ Nikolaus PEVSNER, *The Buildings of England – Staffordshire* (Penguin Books 1974) Pg.214

The north front is not mentioned as this consists of an agglomeration of various additions and alterations which form an almost accidental composition. Some elements are designed in the neo-Jacobean manner others are less sympathetic.

The east, south and west elevations appear to have always been considered the principal elevations as they face out into the landscape which slopes away from the house. The north side is dug into the hill and has little outlook.



Fig. 36 The eastern entrance elevation of the main house



Fig.37 The south elevation of the main house



Fig.38 The west elevation of the main house



Fig.39 the north elevation of the main house

The 'Annex'

The 'Annex' has been designed very much with this same approach. It is positioned to the north east of the main house out of the way of the views and the sun. It has been given a presentable stone face onto the house entrance forecourt and a steeply pitched fish-scale tiled roof. It is detailed on the south elevation to harmonise with the architectural styling of the main house. Its north elevation is rendered brickwork. It may well have not originally been rendered but suffered badly from spalling brickwork at some point. The windows to the north elevation of the Annex appear where needed and don't appear to be subject to any compositional rules whereas the windows to the south are more carefully placed and detailed. In keeping with the neo-jacobean style symmetry is not slavishly followed and the fusion of Perpendicular gothic features with classical elements is evident, this being a hallmark of Jacobean styling. There are perpendicular gothic arches over what appear to have been the coach house doors (partly blocked up later) and rectangular vertical emphasis windows with stone central mullions at first floor.



Figs. 40 and 41 The four centred arches to the partially blocked coach house doors

The timber casement window frames do not seem to be original. Their profiles suggest that they are later 20C and the masonry reveals suggest that they were

probably originally sash windows. The slightly lower part of the building at the eastern end appears to be later. It is difficult to believe that this building would have been built as part of the original with a different roof level, eaves level and pitch, different floor levels and a completely different fenestration pattern. The 'Venetian' window may have been moved from the original gable. Unfortunately we cannot confirm this as we have not been able to find documentary or photographic evidence to show how the building was originally built.



Fig.42 The Asymmetrical south façade of the Annex



Fig.43 The east end of the Annex showing what is assumed to be a later addition



Fig.44 Venetian window to eastern gable



Fig.45 The north elevation of the 'Annex' from the north west

Interior

The main house

The present occupier has carried out significant repair work to the existing house and made some careful and thoughtful changes many of which reversed insensitive alterations by previous occupiers. The house is in good repair and cherished by its owners and users. Many original features remain and the finishes and décor are appropriate.



Fig. 46 The entrance hall of the main house



Fig. 47 The staircase to the main house

The 'Annex'

The interiors of the 'Annex' have been altered significantly during its life and no original features of significance have survived. This wing was originally a coach house and stable which was then converted to service spaces and staff accommodation. It is believed to have housed the laundry for the hall prior to the site being sold to the Prison Service when it was altered to perform unknown functions ancillary to the operation of the prison. When the prison closed further alterations were made to allow it to be let as flats and then further alterations were made in the 1980's when it became a care home and individual bedrooms were created for residents. The interior of the 'Annex' has never been an important part of the listed buildings historic or architectural significance and any interpretive value that there might have been has been lost due to the extent of the later 20C alterations.

There have been significant damp problems in the ground floor walls and there have been roof leaks and signs of timber decay in the roof zone. The plaster finishes were in very poor condition with significant areas showing damp problems and de-bonding. The ceilings have previously been replaced with plasterboard and the remaining partitions were all timber stud. In order to allow treatment of the original timber roof structure and remedial works to address the damp problem in the walls the non-historic fabric i.e. the late 20C partitions and plaster boarded ceilings along with any loose or perished plaster were removed. It was found that little of the plaster to the existing masonry walls could be retained and consequently the majority was removed. As the works were progressing beyond repair and becoming alteration and given that a new brief and potential use for the building were developing the owner suspended works at a logical point and appointed Conservation Architect Philip Wootton to advise and prepare a listed building consent application. The current interior of the 'Annex' is therefore currently not serviceable and awaits repair and reinstatement works once approved.



Fig. 48 Ground floor interior of Annex



Fig. 49 First Floor of Annex

DATES AND DEVELOPMENT

As previously stated the main house was originally commissioned by Alfred Sohier Bolton 1827-1901. Alfred Bolton was the senior partner in Thomas Bolton & Sons, copper manufacturers of Oakamoor. In his diary he reveals that on 23rd April 1862 he '*Slept in new house for 1st time*'.¹⁰ The architect for the house was William Sugden of Leek¹¹. An early photograph gives an indication of the extent of the original house.



Fig. 50 an early photograph of the main house as it was first completed in 1862. This shows the south and west elevations.¹²

The house was significantly enlarged in 1878 with the family moving to 'Light Oaks' in Oakamoor whilst the work was being carried out. Francis (Frank) Bolton and his wife Connie were the first to move back in on 7th January 1880. They were followed later by the rest of the family. The builder was a Mr Fielding and the architect was Larner Sugden of Leek the son of William Sugden.¹³

Although the date of the photograph in Fig.51 is uncertain it appears to show how the west elevation looked after the alterations. An additional wing with gabled dormers has been added and a veranda or porch has been wrapped around the west and south elevations of the original house.

¹⁰ Cathryn WALTON and Lindsey PORTER, *Lost Houses of North Staffordshire* (Landmark Publishing Ltd. 2006) Pg.109.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.



Fig.51 The west elevation of the main house as it is believed to have looked after 1880. Note the additional wing and veranda or porch.¹⁴

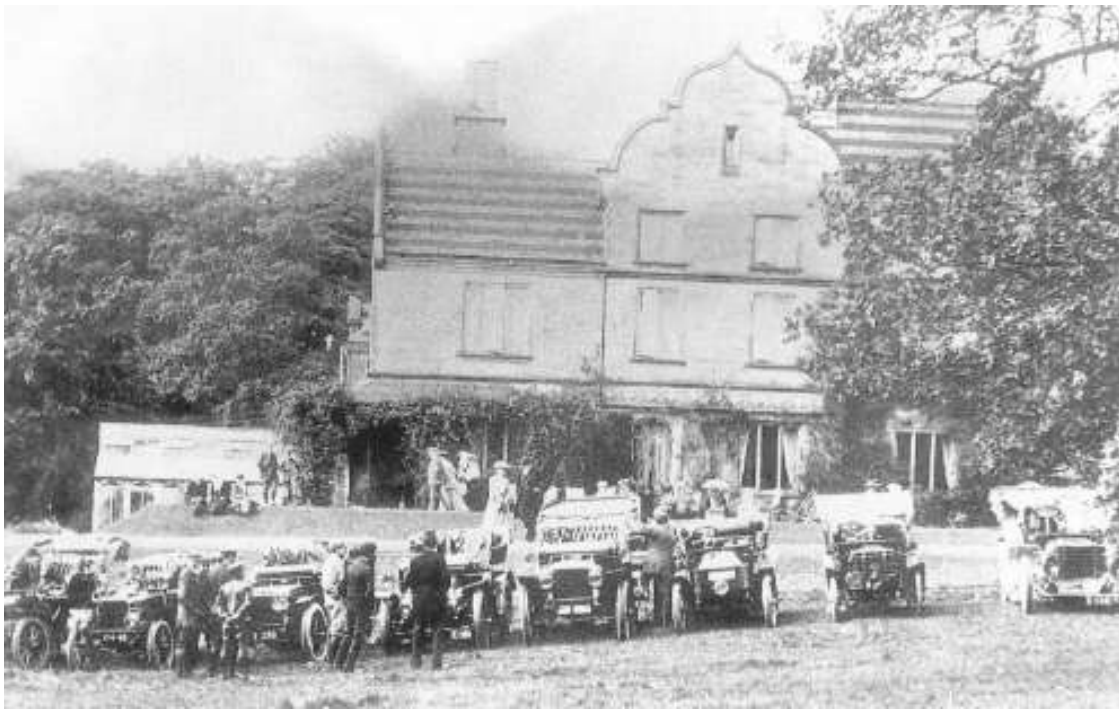


Fig.52 This photograph is of an assembly of cars preparing for a race in Cotton organised by early motoring enthusiast Frank Bolton in 1905. It shows the south elevation of the main house with the veranda or porch but no bay windows.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ <http://www.brianball.co.uk>

Further extensive additions and alterations were made in 1913/1914 ¹⁶. The wing to the north of the western range of buildings incorporating the Conservatory must have been added as it does not appear on earlier photographs. The veranda/porch appears to have been removed and bay windows added to the south west corner. There is little photographic evidence of the other elevations but a photograph of Francis Bolton in his 1903 Daimler shows the entrance porch in the background suggesting this was built as part of the 1878 works. The other entrance and wall enclosing the 'Annex' forecourt is not visible.

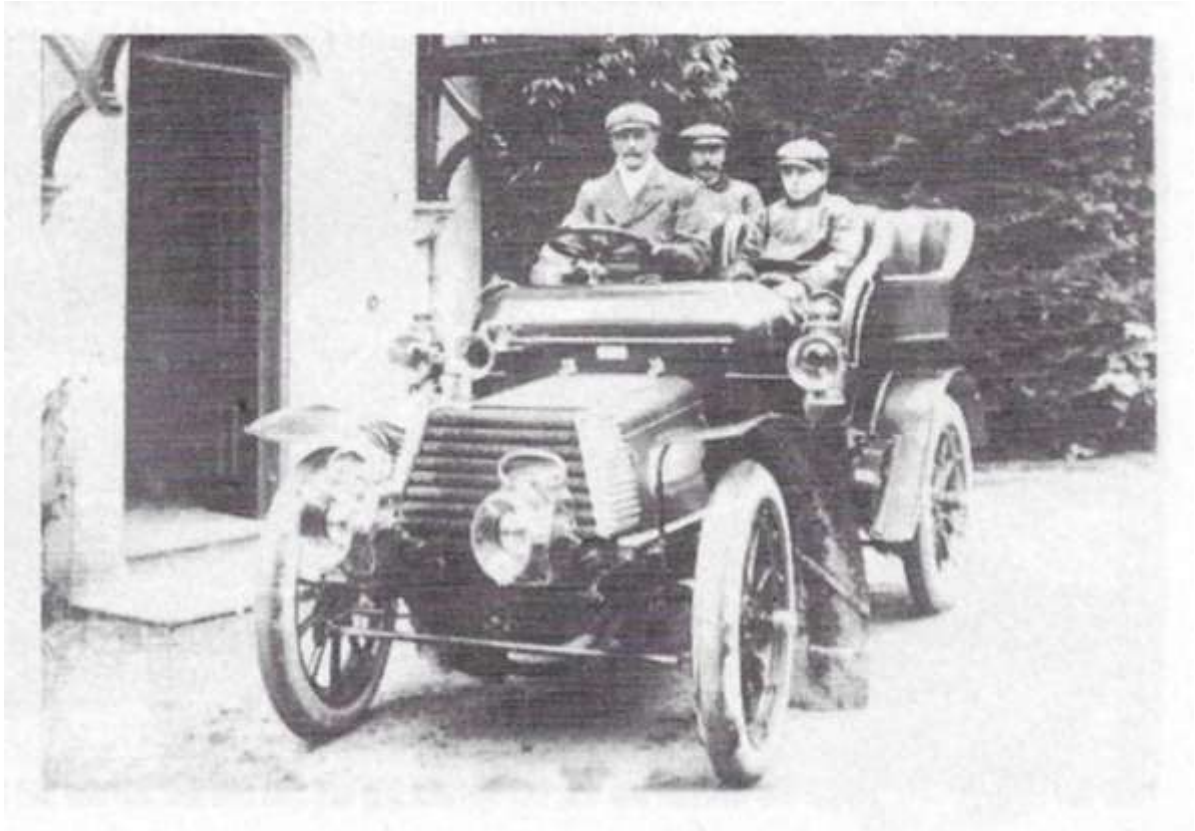


Fig. 53 Francis Bolton in his 1903 Daimler with the porch in the background.¹⁷

Francis Bolton appears to have had numerous photographs taken of his various cars in the forecourt but the forecourt wall is not seen until after World War 1 in a photo of Francis Bolton's Sheffield-Simplex which was considered to be one of the best cars in the world at the time. He owned this car in 1919/20.¹⁸

¹⁶ Listing Statement and evidence from Francis Bolton's diary

¹⁷ Article in Motor Sport Nov 1979. Vol. LV No.11 page 1673

¹⁸ Ibid. page 1678

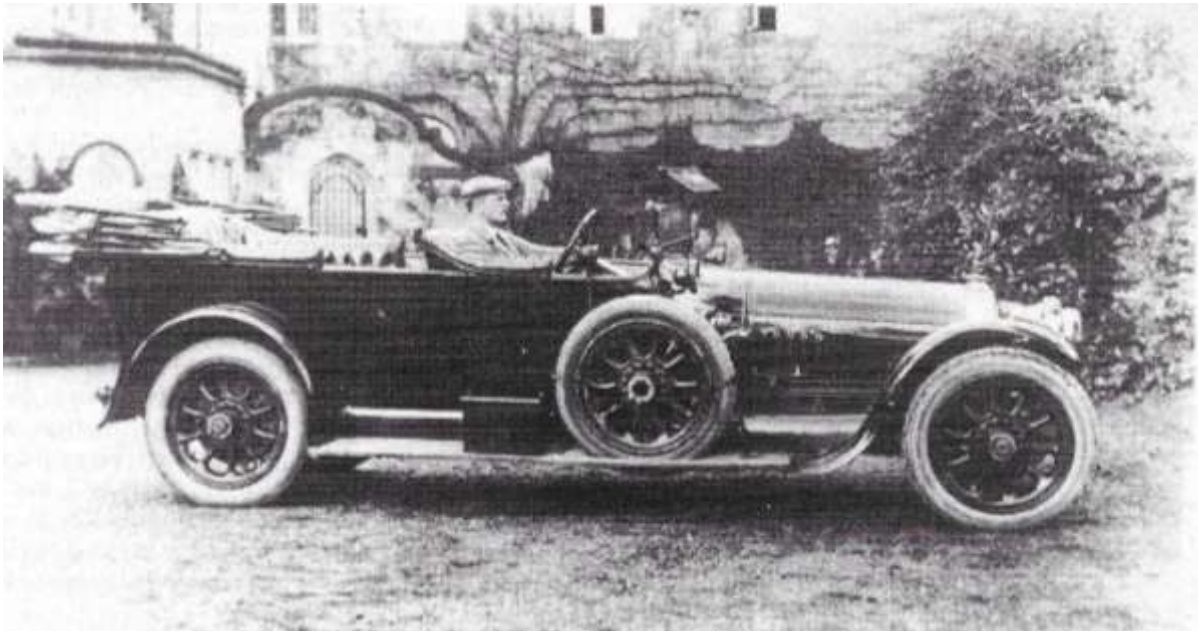


Fig.54 Photograph of c1920 of Francis Bolton in his Sheffield-Simplex with the forecourt wall and 'Annex' in the background.¹⁹



Fig 55 the junction between 1914 dated work and the 'Annex'

It is unclear when the Annex was originally constructed. It could have been built as a separate block in 1861 or built as part of the 1878 works. Some of the detailing at the junction between work with a 1914 date stone linking the house to the 'Annex' suggests that the 'Annex' was built before 1914 and was connected by the new additions at that time. The picture to the left shows how the 1914 link partially cuts across the Annex first floor window suggesting that they were not built at the same time.

¹⁹ Article in Motor Sport Nov 1979. Vol. LV No.11 page 1678

No significant alterations appear to have been made after 1914 with the footprint apparently unchanged when it was sold to the Prison service in circa 1955.



Fig. 56 A plan of the estate as it was sold to the Prison Service in circa 1955²⁰

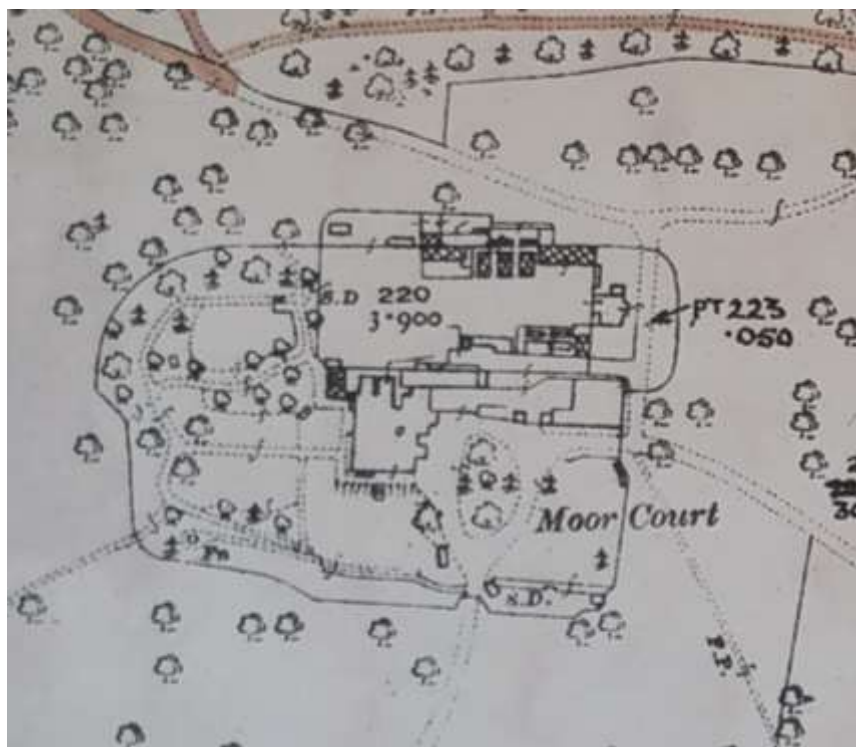


Fig. 57 A blow up of the above plan showing the house as it was in 1955²¹

²⁰ Information provided by the building owner from the deeds of the premises

After 1955 the Prison service built extensively on the site predominantly to the north of the main house with various types of accommodation cut into the hill side. It was all utilitarian in character and the majority of attached buildings were demolished by the development company that purchased the site from the Prison Service and sold off various parts. When Peter Thornley purchased the main house areas to the north of the house were partially demolished but still visible. In the 1990's the remnants were covered over with soli and the lawn and fruit tree orchard created.

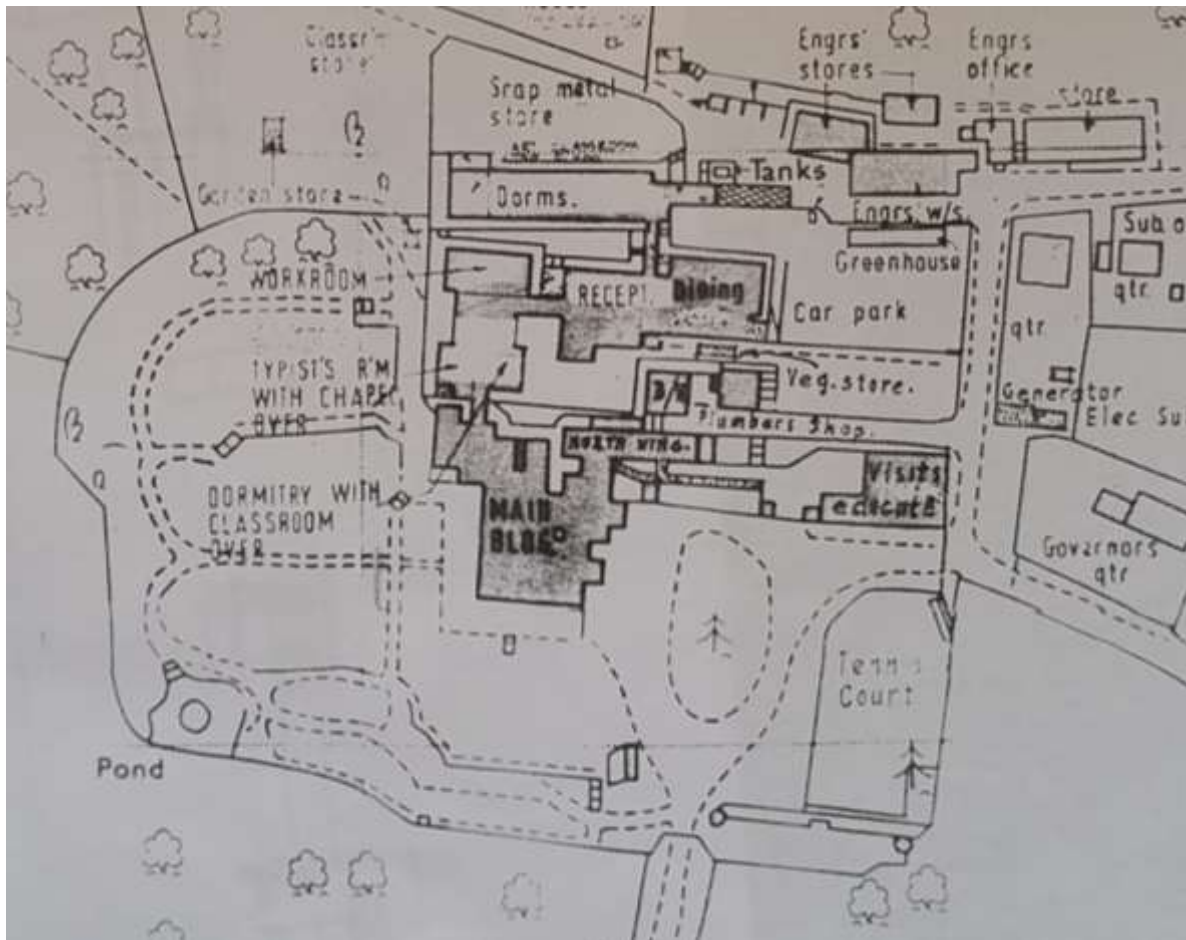


Fig. 58 A blow up of a plan showing the various prison buildings circa 1983²²

In the 1980's and 90's various alterations were made internally in the 'Annex' at first dividing it into flats and then creating accommodation for residents of the care home. Two new buildings were also constructed in the late 1990's to the north of the 'Annex' to create therapy facilities for residents. These are currently not being used but in good order.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

The plans below of the current building are shaded to show our current view on the relative age of different parts of the fabric. These are based on the documentary and photographic evidence available and a visual analysis of architectural features and materials. Some areas can be more confidently dated than others. The main question marks are on the extent of the 1878 extensions to the north east of the original house, if any minor extensions were carried out to the north post 1955 and when the original 'Annex' was constructed. Was it built in 1860/61 or in 1878?. Our working hypothesis is that it was built in 1878 as it would appear to be out of proportion to the scale of the original house of 1860/61. Visual evidence in the fabric and detailing suggest that it was built as a separate block and later linked to the main house in 1913/14. The only way to establish these matters would be to take a more phorensic approach perhaps through mortar and/or paint analysis but this is beyond the scope of this report.



Fig. 59 Historic analysis of Ground Floor



Fig.60 Historic analysis of First Floor

SIGNIFICANCE

Listing Statement

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: MOOR COURT

List entry Number: 1374730

Location

MOOR COURT, FARLEY ROAD

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Staffordshire

District: Staffordshire Moorlands

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Oakamoor

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 26-Jul-1983

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 275144

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

OAKAMoor C.P. FARLEY LANE (North side) SK 0444-0544 11/147 Moor Court
26/7/83

GV II Country house. Dated 1861, with additions of 1913. Ashlar; fish- scale tile roofs with plain tile bands; ashlar stacks with cylindrical shafts. Neo-Jacobean style; principal alignment east-west. South front: 3 storeys and attic with slightly lower single-bay wing of 2 storeys and attic to the left; roughly 4 bays, the 2 central ones under a shaped gable, central break to left hand wing beneath a similar shaped gable, casements. West front: 2 storeys and attic; 6 bays, north and south bays have shaped gables, the former projects. East front: 2 storey porch inscribed 1861 on the parapet with a pointed niche containing a statue of St. George. Moor Court was built by the Bolton family, manufacturers of Oakamoor.

Listing NGR: SK0593044532

Selected Sources

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details

National Grid Reference: SK 05930 44532

Who values the Moor Court and why

The architectural character of the main house externally and in part internally are valued by the owners, users and the wider community as they exhibit the use of high quality materials and levels of craftsmanship as well as a strong and cohesive design concept based on a romantic historic period. The grounds are aesthetically attractive, extensive, varied and well maintained with interesting features. The relationship between the house its grounds and the wider landscape is also valued as is the peaceful location and abundant wildlife. The historical connection with the

Bolton's is also important to the wider community. Historians may value the site as an example of late Victorian and Edwardian country house design and culture.

Evidential value

The way in which the Victorians and Edwardians lived is generally well documented and understood. Moor Court is similarly reasonably well understood. Elements of its development cannot be categorically dated and therefore reliance on forensic analysis of the fabric may be required if a detailed understanding of the site's development becomes desirable. There is almost certainly evidential value in the older parts of the building but late 20C alterations may have eroded this. Similarly the grounds may hold hidden evidence of the site's development but a more detailed analysis is unlikely to provide new insights into the periods of history concerned.

Historical value

The main historical value of the site relates to the fact that it was built and occupied by the Bolton family. The Boltons were prominent Victorian and Edwardian Industrialists who as Thomas Bolton and Sons were a significant employer in the area and heavily involved in the financial, physical, social and spiritual welfare of Oakamoor. In fact Alfred Sohier Bolton 1827-1901 who commissioned the house is referred to as the Father of Oakamoor.²³



Fig.61 1900 photograph of Alfred Sohier Bolton 1827-1901²⁴

²³ Peter WILSON, *Oakamoor Remembered* (Landmark Publishing Ltd. 2004) Pg.32

²⁴ Ibid

Thomas Bolton and Sons smelted and fabricated copper products and grew rapidly as the telegraph, telephone and electrical industries developed. In 1858 a cable manufactured in Oakamoor became the first transatlantic telegraph cable linking England to America. Alfred Bolton was also a pillar of the local and county society being a JP and was also a philanthropist who donated land for the establishment of what is now Stoke-on-Trent College. Alfred Bolton was succeeded by his eldest son Thomas and died in 1901 at Moor Court. Thomas lived at Light Oaks in Oakamoor and his second son Francis who had been born at Moor Court also on the board of the company became master of the house at Moor Court. Francis was a pioneering motoring enthusiast buying his first 'tiller-steered' New Orleans in 1899. He was a founder and life member of the RAC and made a significant contribution to the development of the Motor Car and his red cars were well known at Shelsley Walsh and Brooklands. He would modify cars for racing and even built one himself. He built a Motor House and workshop at Moor Court, one of the first purpose built in the country. This has now been converted to the dwelling known as 'The Coach House'²⁵



Fig.62 c 1895 photograph of Francis A Bolton 1866-1951²⁶

²⁵ Article in Motor Sport Nov 1979. Vol. LV No.11 page 1673

²⁶ Peter WILSON, *Oakamoor Remembered* (Landmark Publishing Ltd. 2004) Pg.42

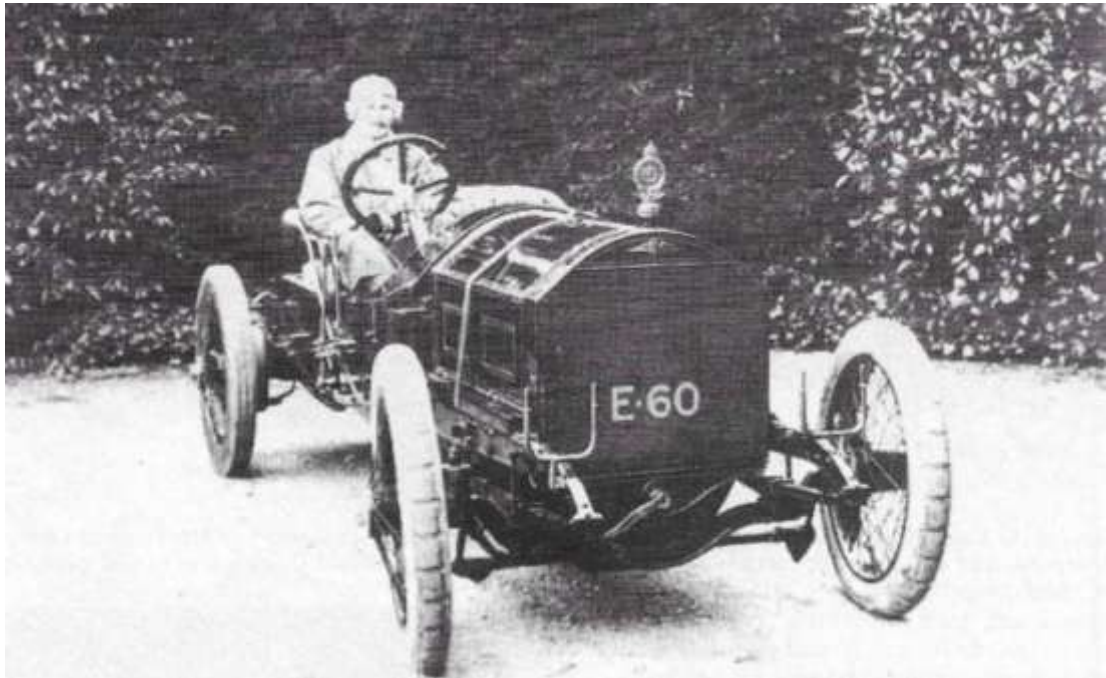


Fig.63 Francis 'Mr Frank' Bolton in his Ariel Sixty which he raced at Brooklands in 1908. Note the early number plate.²⁷

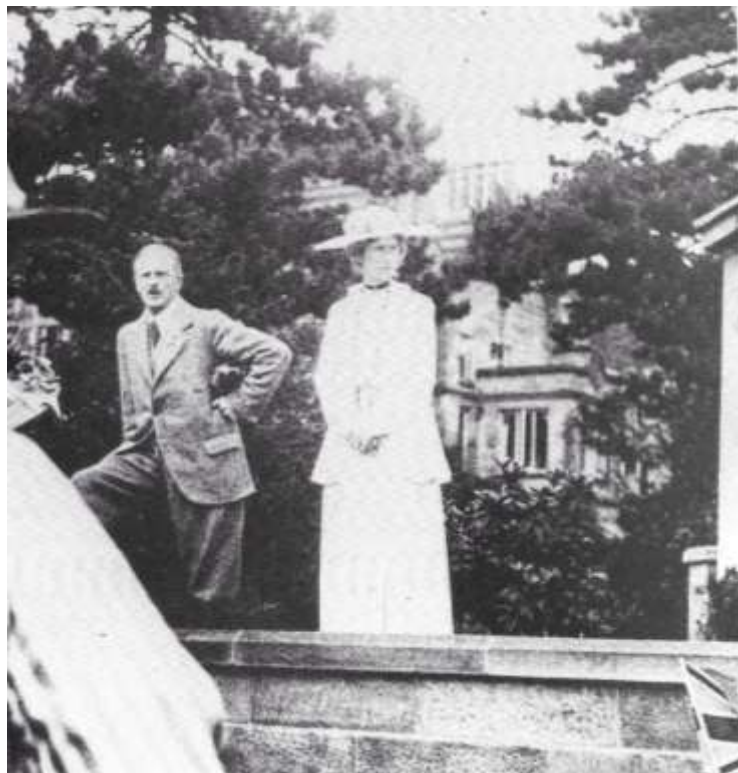


Fig. 64 Francis Bolton and his wife Gladys at Moor Court in 1919²⁸

²⁷ Article in Motor Sport Nov 1979. Vol. LV No.11 page 1673

²⁸ John MORTON, *Thomas Bolton & Sons Ltd* (Moorland Publishing Ltd. 1983) Pg.123

Francis Bolton became a local Magistrate and ultimately Lord High Sherriff of Staffordshire. He also played a significant role in local political, social and sporting life of the the village of Oakamoor. He built a nine hole golf course in the grounds of Moor Court now not evident and would open up the house for fetes and special events.

During the life of Moor Court as a prison brief notoriaty was achieved when a convicted child killer Mary Bell absconded in 1977 (Moor Court was an Open Prison at this point). She was soon re-captured.

The house is now the home of Peter Thornley. He is an ex professional wrestler famous under his Pseudonym as Kendo Nagasaki.



Fig.65 Peter Thornley AKA Kendo Nagasaki in his professional life and today in the grounds of Moor Court

Whilst the house and grounds have thus not been the scene of any particularly well known events of national significance they are significant in local history and have been the residence of locally well known historic figures and are currently the home of a nationally well known figure from the entertainment/sporting world.

Aesthetic value

You cannot visit Moor Court without appreciating its character and aesthetic quality. The building designed by William Sugden of Leek is in the Jacobean Revival style. Stylistic historic revivals characterised much of the architecture of the Victorian

period as architects sought ways to express the standing and taste of the 'nouveau riche' industrialists created by the industrial revolution and the industrialisation of Britain. There was a boom in country house building in the 1860's and 1870's but the classical styles were beginning to become less fashionable than the Gothic or Tudor from which Jacobean was derived. If you aspired to be an English gentleman at that time Tudor was the style of choice²⁹. Mentmore Towers built in 1852 by the Rothschilds and designed by Joseph Paxton exemplifies this.



Fig. 66 Mentmore Towers

An idealised romantic vision of the countryside in which the landowner paternalistically dispensed work, justice, housing, charity and presided over the leisure of his tenants was prevalent and is exemplified in the Moor Court estate. Moor Court is not a unique or early example of the Jacobean Revival Style or as Pevsner puts it neo-jacobean³⁰ nor is it a particularly large or complex house by a famous architect but it is a good cohesive example of the genre designed by local architects of a good reputation. It is also relatively complete and externally altered to only a modest degree. It is well proportioned and relates well to its landscaped surroundings. The 'Annex' plays only a supporting role in the aesthetic composition of the building, the south and east elevations acting as a scenic backdrop to the entrance forecourt. The north elevation is utilitarian in character and treated very

²⁹Simon THURLEY, *The Building of England* (William Collins, 2013) Pgs.429 and 430

³⁰Nikolaus PEVSNER, *The Buildings of England – Staffordshire* (Penguin Books 1974) Pg.214

much as the 'back' of the building. The much altered interior of the 'Annex' is in poor condition and has no features of any particular merit.

Communal value

There is little doubt that from its initial construction in 1861 until the death of Francis Bolton in 1951 Moor Court played a major part in the working, social and even sporting life of the village of Oakamoor. And would have been considered significant as the home of its pre-eminent employers and residents. During this period the communal value of the place would have been high. However, the use of the site as a prison meant that its major role in the social life of the community was significantly eroded although it still provided local employment and brought prison staff into the village to live and work. Since the closure of the prison and the occupation of new residents who have participated in village life this relative isolation has been partially reduced but still remains. In fact the relative isolation is what has made the site and buildings attractive to the Boltons, the prison service, care organisations, private individuals and now the Lee Rigby Foundation. The sites communal value is therefore moderate and largely based on communal memory of its former role and residents. This is likely to fade as those who remember this time pass on but is unlikely to disappear completely as those who come into contact with this place tend to become fascinated by it and its history. In some respects as a new generation of users benefit from the therapeutic affect of the aesthetic qualities, peace and quiet the site offers the site will increase in communal value.

Setting

The aesthetic quality of the house and associated buildings is linked intrinsically to the aesthetic quality of the local landscape and the attractive nature of the well landscaped grounds. The house enhances the site and the setting enhances the house. For both the house and landscape to be financially sustainable viable uses for the redundant buildings must be found. Uses that benefit from and contribute to the maintenance and potential improvements to the less attractive parts of the site.

Relative importance of values

It is the combined aesthetic value of the house and its setting that is of greatest importance. The house and grounds are not by famous designers and have not shaped or particularly influenced the development of landscape design or

architecture but they are good examples of their type and are set in a peaceful and attractive landscape. The residents of and personalities associated with Moor Court give it some historic value, certainly locally if not nationally. Arguably the story of Oakamoor and the Boltons should be better known nationally. There is currently limited communal value associated with the site and buildings but this may grow further as more people benefit from its use as a peaceful retreat. The site is unlikely to offer significant evidence of Victorian and Edwardian lifestyles not available elsewhere in abundance and is therefore of fairly low evidential value.

PROPOSED WORKS AND THEIR IMPACT

Description of Works

The proposed works are to the northern wing of the main house known as the 'Annex'. The purpose of the works is to upgrade the accommodation currently provided by the building which is substandard in both spacial and quality respects. It is unlikely that a viable use can be found for this wing unless it is re-configured. The works involve the removal of mid and late 20C partitions of plasterboard and stud at both ground and first floor and the replacement of the existing plasterboard ceilings. New partitions will be installed to form new en-suite bedrooms. The thermal insulation of the envelope will be improved by the installation of dry lining to the external walls and the addition of roof insulation. The dry lining combined with improvements in the courtyard should address the damp problems in the external walls. The roof improvements will involve re-roofing using the existing tiles and the repair/replacement and/or treatment of any isolated timber components showing signs of decay. A selective surgical approach is proposed. The sound insulation of the new partitions will be to current standards and the sound insulation and fire resistance of the existing first floor will be upgraded. The existing concrete ground floor will be removed and replaced with a new insulated concrete floor incorporating underfloor heating. Completely new building services and disposal systems will be carefully integrated into the new works. A new window is proposed on the south elevation to serve one of the new bedrooms. This will sit on a blank area of wall externally and be designed to match the existing first floor windows. At ground floor it is proposed that the cill of the main original coach house opening is lowered. This has been built up in the past probably as part of the 1913/14 works and will be taken

back to its original configuration and a new glazed screen with an entrance door installed. An existing door at ground floor on the south elevation that has been sealed and become a window will be reinstated as a door. The historic sash windows to the north elevation will be repaired and the 20C windows and doors replaced as required on all elevations with new higher quality joinery that will reflect the configuration of the original. The rainwater goods and disposal systems will be overhauled and replaced as required with new painted cast iron. In the front courtyard to the 'Annex' the late 20C sheds/outbuildings and the generator and its enclosure will be carefully removed and the courtyard wall repaired as required. The late 20C concrete paving will be removed and the courtyard level and finishes improved. Stone flags or sets or a combination of the two are envisaged in the new courtyard which will provide amenity for the building users. To enable wheelchair access from the entrance forecourt of the house to the new facility a new opening is proposed in the courtyard wall. This will avoid the need for extensive ramps to negotiate the steps to the current gate which will remain unaltered. New pillars in stone to match the existing wall will be installed in one bay of the wall. A new wrought iron gate will be installed in the opening.

Impact of the works on the evidential value of the site

Most of what is to be removed is late 20C and of low quality. The older fabric currently present is eroded only very minimally and no fabric of evidential value will be completely lost as a result of the works. Given this the impact of the works is neutral.

Impact of the works on the historic value of the site

The works do not alter the historic value of the site and affect no elements associated particularly with events or people connected with the building and site. The impact on the historic value of the site is therefore neutral.

Impact of the works on the aesthetic value of the site

The proposed works are confined to the interior, exterior and immediate surroundings of the 'Annex'. The main house and wider grounds are unaffected. The interior of the 'annex' currently contributes little if anything to the aesthetic value of the site. In fact its contribution is actually negative. The new interior will be simple and sympathetic to the character of the 'Annex' and will improve its aesthetic

contribution to the site. The north elevation of the 'Annex' will remain largely unaltered with only some of the poor quality 20C joinery being replaced. The south and east elevations of the 'Annex' act as a back drop to the entrance forecourt which is why they have been faced with stone. The alterations to this elevation are relatively minor and in part reverse earlier harmful changes. The additional window will not be detrimental to the proportion and composition of the elevation. The alteration to the courtyard has a minor negative impact but this is mitigated by the significant benefit of creating disabled access. The removal of the poor quality 20C structures in the 'Annex' courtyard combined with its resurfacing will have a significant beneficial impact on the aesthetic quality of the immediate surroundings of the 'Annex' and provide valuable amenity space. The overall impact of the proposals on the aesthetic value of the buildings and site is therefore positive.

Impact of the works on the communal value of the site

The works will have no negative impact on the current communal value of the site and buildings but have the potential to facilitate an increase. Fusilier Lee Rigby was cruelly murdered by terrorists in 2013 simply because he was a soldier. He represented some of the best qualities of our young people. Being prepared to put himself in harms way to help protect his family and wider society. He embodied a form of heroism that is highly valued by our society and that is why the public responded so generously when making charitable donations in his memory.



Fig. 67 Fusilier Lee Rigby

The response that the Charity set up in his name continues to receive from the public demonstrates that there is a high level of support for their work and a strong desire

to support the men and women of our armed forces and their families. The association of the Charity with Moor Court and the way in which the site is used for the benefit of those that it supports will only increase the communal value of the site and buildings. The works will enable the Lee Rigby Foundation to expand its activities and provide supported living accommodation. It is difficult to see how the development of this facility could have anything but an extremely positive impact on the communal value of the house and site.

Impact of the works on the setting

The wider landscape and grounds are largely unaffected by the works. The addition of the additional pedestrian access through the 'Annex' courtyard wall has a very minor negative impact but this is mitigated by the significant benefit of wheelchair access and the removal of the poor quality 20C outbuildings cluttering the courtyard. Overall the impact of the proposals on the setting is positive.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Use

The existing established use of the House and 'Annex' is for a mixture of a private dwelling and a care facility. The 'Annex' contained 12 bedrooms with communal bathrooms for residents with learning disabilities. The intention of the Lee Rigby Foundation is that the newly altered 'Annex' will provide supported living accommodation for those adjusting to new circumstances as a result of physical and/or mental trauma. This will complement their existing facility on the site at Lee Rigby House which caters for families making similar adjustments and those suffering from bereavement. This work has come about as a result of the experience of Lyn and Ian Rigby, the parents of Fusilier Lee Rigby who was murdered by terrorists in 2013. They found that there was little if any support for the bereaved family and nowhere for them to escape from the intrusion of the press to grieve in peace. As a result of generous donations made by the public in memory of Lee his parents were able to set up the Lee Rigby Foundation a charity intended to provide this facility and support. The Foundation also works with and supports ex military families and servicemen experiencing physical and mental challenges. Their work tends to be connected to ex military personnel but those with no connection to the

military are also welcome to seek its support. The proposed use of the building is therefore entirely appropriate. It complements the site giving it a valuable and sustainable purpose and in turn the use is supported by the aesthetic qualities of the site and buildings combined with the tranquil location.

Amount

The existing 'Annex' housed 12 bedrooms with communal bathrooms for former residents with learning disabilities. These existing rooms are far too small and fall well below the space and quality standards recommended by the Care Quality Commission. The works will not change the floor area but divide it up into larger units. Four self-contained bedsits, one of which will be wheelchair accessible, are to be created along with four ensuite bedrooms, a common room and shared kitchen which will double as a training kitchen. The number of potential residents of the 'Annex' will therefore drop from twelve to eight. The amount of development is therefore the same but the density of occupation is marginally reduced.

Layout

The external layout of the wider site is unaffected and the only minor change to the immediate surroundings is the removal of the poor quality outbuildings in the 'Annex' courtyard and the creation of the new pedestrian access through the courtyard wall. The internal layout is dictated to a significant degree by the shape of the building which is long and narrow. A series of rooms are connected via corridors running along the south side at ground floor and the north side at first floor. This layout is fairly logical and legible.

Scale

As the works add no floorspace or volume they have no impact on the existing scale of the main house or the 'Annex' which are appropriate for their use and setting.

Landscape

The works do not affect the landscape of the wider site but the hard landscaping of the courtyard will be upgraded and this will significantly improve the immediate surroundings of the 'Annex'.

Appearance

There are few changes to the buildings existing external appearance. The the new first floor window will be carefully designed to match the existing and positioned to complement the composition of the elevation. The reinstatement of the original full height arch will improve the proportion of the opening and the elevation as a whole. The new pedestrian entrance through the 'Annex' courtyard wall will be constructed in matching stone and carefully detailed so as to complement the existing wall.

Access

One of the key objectives of the works is to improve access for the disabled. The new pedestrian access through the 'Annex' courtyard wall will allow level access directly to the new facility which will provide a self-contained wheelchair users bed-sit, an accessible WC and fully accessible communal facilities.

CONCLUSION

A thorough analysis of the various heritage values of the site and buildings has been carried out and the relative importance of these values assessed. The proposed scheme is sensitive to these values and seeks to negate or at least mitigate any potential harm to the heritage asset. In fact the impact of the proposals is positive. The potential benefit to society resulting from the works far outweighs any harm that may be caused and provides an opportunity to develop a viable and sustainable use for the site that will protect its future and thus the long term future of the heritage asset.