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THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANCIENT BUILDINGS



# MAGAZINE



**VAN GOGH HOUSE**  
The artist's London lodgings become cultural centre

**UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY**  
SPAB Scholar ensures old building meets new needs

**BETJEMAN AWARD**  
St Oswald's Church, Grasmere, Cumbria wins first-honed trophy



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# MAGAZINE

The Society's official publication is a 72-86 page full colour quarterly magazine. With a print run of 7,000 and at least 60% of members whom live in old or historic houses. The readership includes architects, surveyors, town planners, local authority conservation officers, engineers, builders, craftsmen, interior designers and homeowners.

The magazine offers heritage news, casework, technical advice, special features, a comprehensive book review section and has 80 regular advertisers.

In addition to regular main features on traditional materials and repair techniques, **SPAB** campaigns on a wide range of conservation issues. Extensive coverage of controversial topics like architectural theft and airport expansion has attracted onwide media publicity.



## 27 LODGING RANGE BROOK HALL, HEYWOOD, WILTS

Matthew Scoble

Mourning the loss of SPAB casework often causes frustration, but perhaps the answer is simple: was there a celebration at the end of the work, and was the Society invited to the party?

In the case of the Lodging Range at Brook Hall, there was one party I would rather have attended than the one to mark the end of the project's first phase. As a case, the Lodging Range had gone very well in its first year since conversion by SPAB, back in 1992. Over the years it was among the most remarkable of the restored 18th work. The building was always surprising, but as a case it was sometimes deeply disappointing. This made the 'night of the party' in 2019 especially rewarding, not least because it allowed a group of us the most people who had thought of or assisted the building over the years.

The building is about as good as you get from a SPAB project: an important and historically significant structure of the kind that inspired Moore and Wells. Brook Hall is the remains of a high status 18th-century house. It is credited to a surname long that comes about. Though not far from a noble residence there is still a sense of detachment from modern life. In the medieval period the Hall is believed to have stood on a site, but that site was not a mere fragment. One surviving medieval tower is a long impressive 14th-century building block. The model originally had provided accommodation for visitors. When the Hall ceased to be fashionable and dropped down the social scale, the lodging range was added from high above and bound to a stone base. Within a wall remains an 18th-century stone house.

Over 25 years on a case the building suffered more trials and tribulations than one might expect, legal difficulty over repair works, and mismanagement work to restore the tower. All this resulted in a long-term position on the national 'at risk' register. At risk means at least one attention to the site and consented a retained a priority for local government and national government. English Heritage / Historic England has been particularly

## 27 CASEWORK CAMPAIGNING

Left: Owners Beth and Barney Jones celebrate the completion of repair – and their birthdays. Below: The beautifully repaired exterior of Brook Hall.

important in keeping a focus on the building's condition and structural repair needs, and has also provided grant aid for emergency work.

The party, held in May 2019, was to celebrate completion of the main phase of repair works to the Lodging Range. This has been carried out in exemplary fashion by Andrew Townsend Architects, and has received SPAB Co-ordinator, Andrew Townsend and Oliver Wilson, Andrew's own involvement with the site, has spanned the last quarter-century. His visit was as an expert casework volunteer for the SPAB, providing advice on the building's condition. He was subsequently commissioned to oversee emergency works and has used the opportunity to take groups of SPAB Scholars to the site. The repair work beautifully illustrates the SPAB Approach: gently stabilising and treating the structure without loss of special qualities. It has included some old repairs to decayed masonry, most involving detached timber panes and lime-washing of the masonry. The listworks has highlighted much graffiti including a wealth of superstitious markings.

Good for the four-hour day of the day the building has been the involvement of new owners who appreciate the structure.



They are Beth and Barney Jones who combined the party marking the work completion with a celebration at their 40th birthday in 2019. Now the building is secure and in good shape, they plan for the longer term in the modern equivalent of a lifetime: use as a lodging range. They intend to make it a holiday accommodation for young guests. If pressed with the possibility of the initial phase of work it will be a very special holiday. So, during these months even have the party as a fitting conclusion to decades of SPAB campaigning for the building.

**CRUCIAL TO THE** successful outcome at Brook Hall was the fact that one of our expert restorers was able to visit the site at an early stage in the project. With what had good repairs to the roof and the main structure, there was still a lot of work to be done, especially on the roof and the masonry. The work was completed, east of England, or the north, or Yorkshire area and this you might like to take the opportunity to visit or to see some of the other SPAB casework. Contact Emma on 01628 855555 or emma@spab.org.uk

PHOTO: ANDREW TOWNSEND ARCHITECTS

## 28 CASEWORK CAMPAIGNING

Left: Front elevation with 17th- and 18th-century windows. Below: 1st floor rooms with partition incorporating medieval raised cruck roof truss.

## TALBOT FARM CHARLBURY, OXFORDSHIRE

Rachel Broome

This beautiful and secure Grade II listed house is a rare survivor tucked away in Charlbury, Oxfordshire. The house has lain empty for several years but has recently been purchased and the new owner contacted the SPAB through our advice line to ask for guidance on proposed repairs. It turned out that there was already a listed building application for works currently lodged with the local authority, which we would be commenting on in our capacity as a casework coordinator. Our conversations with the new owner led to us asking if we would allow us to visit independently and bring this year's Scholars with us. They rarely get to look at and make comments on the planning application, so this was a perfect opportunity for them. Having studied the proposals, they visited the site with us and our casework coordinator, Emma Townsend to see the property for themselves, and to provide comments and photographs which could then be used to help complete our response to the planning application.

The owner had provided plans with a copy of the recently completed Oxfordshire Building Record for the house. This revealed that, based on the surviving physical evidence, the earliest phase of the property may date back to the 13th century. It appears that Talbot Farm is a remarkable survival of a large hall that raised cruck medieval hall houses, the two centuries later during the open hall, and the two centuries have either forming a two bay sub-urban parlour or a west wing with a floor comprising a ground floor parlour and an upper chamber. Within the roof space blackening can still clearly be seen on most of the roof timbers extending over two bays from where the hall was open to the roof, but on the other there are no signs of them. If the Oxfordshire Building Record is correct, then the modern Talbot Farm is substantial building. There is only one other known for bar cruck house in the Midlands and the one has been thought to have been an indicator a property of some status.

If this is the original house, then the medieval screens passage and the service rooms beyond were to the south and were either built when the adjacent Anson's Cottage was built (c.1587) (documented), or they have been incorporated into it. In the rear is a lean-to, which is a 19th-century addition, and there is a substantial cellar with very thick stone walls. This is a substantial cellar with a brick floor and a stone ceiling and opening at ground level on the rear elevation. Above this is a brick timber ceiling with stone string with a pair of other brick-wood openings and the ghost of a chimney stack. It is known that the building was built in 1915 and was recorded as such in the 19th century. Various features from this period are the heavy stone wall with stone only and dividing wall partition to divide rooms. It appears to have been known by a variety of names until 1915 when it was named and since then very little work has been undertaken. It was



PHOTO: RACHEL BROOME



## Benefits of advertising

**SPAB** provides access to a well defined and high quality audience that includes professionals who will specify or recommend, plus historic homeowners and property developers.



The SPAB's status as a leading authority on conservation, and as a useful reference source, prolongs the life of advertisements.

Although the SPAB will not endorse products and services, readers are aware that advertisers are vetted for relevance and understanding of SPAB principles.

**SPAB** focuses on all periods of the UK's architectural history.

Members include the majority of the UK's leading conservation specialists. Their education may have commenced on one of the SPAB's training schemes such as the annual scholarship training programme for young architects, building surveyors and structural engineers.

## The Society

Founded by William Morris in 1877, SPAB is the largest, oldest and most technically expert conservation body campaigning to preserve old buildings.

SPAB is a charity (no. 231307) funded mainly by subscriptions, donations and legacies. It plays a formal part in the planning system and under the Town and Country Planning Act must be notified of all applications to demolish or partly demolish listed buildings in England and Wales. SPAB is asked to comment each year on hundreds of cases of every conceivable type of structure from farmhouses to mansions or from little churches to cathedrals. SPAB still works to the principles in William Morris's 1877 Manifesto, based on conservative repair, respect for the past and regular maintenance. There is free telephone technical advice to members.

Membership offers access to programmes of lectures and visits. People who have trained through the Society's Scholarships and William Morris Craft Fellowship Programmes care for many important buildings in the UK.

SPAB lobbies the government on issues affecting old buildings and publishes low cost technical leaflets.