



THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANCIENT BUILDINGS

# MAGAZINE



**THE SPAB MAGAZINE**  
WINTER 2023

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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 80-90 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 consent often causes headaches, 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 not have attended: there was 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, completed by the 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 'high' of the party in 2019 especially rewarding, not least because it allowed a generation of the most people who I thought fit to attend the building over the years.

The building is about as good as you get from a SPAB project: an elegant and sophisticated medieval structure of the 17th century in a farmhouse but that survives now as a mere fragment. One surviving medieval tower is a long impressive 13th-century lodging block. This would originally have provided accommodation for visitors. When the Hall ceased to be fashionable and dropped down the social scale, the lodging range was reduced from high status home to a cheap one. Within a wall remains an 18th-century three-bay

Over 25 years on a case on the building suffered more trials and tribulations: absence ownership, legal difficulty over repair works, and unhelpful work to some extent on the site. All this resulted in a long-term position on the national 'at risk' register. As risk status at least drew attention to the site and ensured it remained 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 interior of Brook Hall.

important in keeping a focus on the building's condition and structural repair needs, and has also provided grant 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: clearly establishing and meeting the structure without loss of special qualities. It has included more old repairs to decayed masonry, metal stripping to detached timber joints and line-washing of the masonry. The line-work has highlighted much graffiti including a wealth of sophisticated markings.

Good for the four-bay house of the 16th the building has been the involvement of new owners who appreciate the structure.



They are Beth and Barney Jones who bought the party marking the work's completion with a celebration at the 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 historic site - as a lodging range. They intend to make it a holiday accommodation for young guests. If proved with the consistency of the initial phase of work it will be a very special holiday. So, here there might even have the party as a fitting conclusion to the decade of SPAB campaigning for the building.

**CRUCIAL TO THE** successful outcome at Brook Hall was the fact that one of the expert volunteers was able to carry out a visit at an early stage in the project. With what had good repairs to the walls for the main structure, there are still a number of areas of the country where you might find a similar situation. If you are the fortunate, east of England, or the north, or Yorkshire area and this you might like to take the opportunity to visit for a day or two. Contact the Head of Casework Campaigning at [christina.emerson@spab.org.uk](mailto:christina.emerson@spab.org.uk)

PHOTO: SPAB

## 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 in a rural area in Charlbury, Oxfordshire. The house has long enjoyed a good reputation and 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 caseworker. 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 a listed building application, so this was a perfect opportunity for them. Having studied the proposals, they visited the site with us and our former caseworker, Andrew Townsend to see the property for themselves, and to provide comments and photographs which would then be used to help complete our response to the planning application.

The owner also provided photos with a view 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 housed cruck medieval hall houses, the two elements being the open hall, and the two sections have either forming a two bay sub-tenant parlour or a west wing with a fire compartment 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 there are no signs of any. If the Oxfordshire Building Record is correct, then this makes Talbot Farm a substantial building. There is one other known for the cruck house in the Midlands and the main theme of the article from an indicator a property of some status.

If this is the original house, then the medieval screens passage and the service screen between the south and west wings are the adjacent Axminster Cottage which is a 15th-century (1507) (1500s), they have been incorporated into it. In the rear is a two-storey, and built on a raised level, and there is a substantial cellar with very thick stone walls and a brick chimney. This is a rare case of a medieval house and an opening at ground level on the rear elevation. Above this is a 16th-century medieval window ranging with a pair of other 16th-century openings and the ghost of a chimney stack. It is known that the building was used as a residence and a riding school in the 19th century. Various features from this period are the heavy stone wall with stone only and double doors with a double door. It appears to have been known for a history of some sort of 19th-century and since there very little work has been undertaken. It was



PHOTO: SPAB

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

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**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.

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