

Detailed condition survey of

Rosewarne House, Holman Park, Camborne TR14 8FE



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## General:

Rosewarne House has been subject to severe damage by water ingress from above following removal of the lead from the roof between 2008 and 2013, at which point it came into our ownership. The damp problem was exacerbated by the boarding up of windows (to unsuccessfully deter vandalism), but which kept the wet building unventilated and introduced a perfect set of conditions for the growth of fungus - especially *Serpula lacrymans*.

Holman damage between 1911 and 1967. We have been informed that the house was empty between 1897 and derelict by 1911 when purchased as a family home by two Holman brothers. It was later used as their headquarters of their engineering company. They made many changes to the layout and their intervention included the use of steels in some areas (which have saved the building from collapse) and the unfortunate coating of most wall surfaces with a thin layer of impervious Portland cement render. On becoming offices, more partitions were introduced and walls moved to make larger and more gracious rooms.

Scope damage between 1967 and 2007. The house was gifted to The Spastics Society and renamed Gladys Holman House in honour of their philanthropic grandmother. It involved the introduction of fire doors and wheelchair bumpers, large quantities of asbestos involving removal of detail from the base of doors, removal of ceiling roses for the introduction of extra plasterboard layers on ceilings, and the removal of fireplaces in favour of radiators (together with their pipe runs). Also subdivision of rooms.

Post 2007 when in ownership of Highgrove Homes, Property Developers prior to their bankruptcy: Damage when empty involved the theft of all roof lead, electric cabling, copper and iron piping and all items of door and window hardware. Most of the windows had been damaged with those on the ground floor kicked-in for access. It should be noted that not one pane of glass was intact on our possession. One of our first jobs was to remove the sheets of OSB from the openings and replace with metal grilles through which air could pass freely. Prior to our arrival, no security measures had been taken to protect the building, and although it was on the Buildings at Risk Register, no safety or security measures were taken and no attempt was made to protect the building and its grounds either from the weather or from vandalism. Rough sleepers used the house and camped in the grounds. Teenagers used it for raves and graffiti tags. Fly tippers had been busy. It was a piteous sight.

Since our ownership, the building has had 7 day a week security presence, and was watertight from above with a year. We have spent 3 years working on the doors and windows so it is now wind tight also. We are about to commence on the interior repair works.

Our survey highlights areas which are to be addressed.

Zones: (please see the zone plans for identification)

SC Stable Cottages - These are now complete and ready for occupation.

## 1 Old Kitchens

Low status

This is a younger area of the house, believed to be of early C20th construction during the ownership of the Holman family, probably between 1911 and 1930. It is north facing so relatively cold and damp.

The side entrance door has been repaired and all the windows have been repaired and reglazed.

The structure had been built with the use of peculiar half column steel posts and 'I' beams, all of which are now rusting, but which have managed to stabilise the ground floor ceiling structure. However the roof is now in danger of imminent collapse due to the removal of structural partitions and cutting out of new doorways, etc., upstairs. Various walls in this area have been much altered under the ownership of Scope which has means that they can no longer perform the task they originally provided. Fortunately the ground floors are all of concrete, so the rot was confined to the walls and ceilings in these zones. We have provided a temporary support of Acro props - tall props - the ceilings are 4.5m high in this area.

The whole area is completely riddled with dry rot. All first floor joists, floorboards (ceiling) and partitions have in part crumbled to dust, and either have already collapsed or are in danger of doing so. Downstairs the timber framed partitions have gone and dry linings to walls have fallen. It is the finest case of dry rot I have seen; textbook stuff; with remarkable mycelia growths and tendrils running all over the surface and all through the lime mortar in the stone walls.





We shall need to introduce a steel framework to support the roof correctly. This means that we can continue to replace the relatively thin partitions and keep the room proportions.

We have managed to save the interior doors which have been stored horizontally to take out the deformation caused by the water damage. There has been a heritage gain in that the



removal of damaged plaster has exposed the archaeology of the walls. Archways and various blocked doorways and interior windows can be seen, together with evidence of old fireplaces and earlier uses. Please see photographs and drawings illustrating this.

Joists in the ceiling have been cut out for services and after the rot have no strength remaining.

## 2 Ballroom and Library

### High Status

These rooms are on the north side of the building so receive no direct sunlight. Fortunately there are stone walls on all 4 sides of the two rooms so we have no structural problems, excepting the ceilings, which are much deformed and subject to wholesale dry rot damage. There are 3 steels across the Ballroom ceiling but their strength cannot be assessed, so we are proposing the introduction of more to assist them. It may be that they were installed to carry the weight of chandeliers. There are two very old very substantial beams which will be retained in situ.

**Ballroom:** This beautiful room is north facing, so cooler and damper, and has taken longer to dry out. Again it has suffered from water ingress and we believe that a historic case of dry rot was already present in south corners of the ballroom below old bathrooms. There has been a plaster collapse in the ballroom ceiling where the damaged joists and laths have failed. We are dealing with large spans and the weight of the wet plaster has no doubt pushed the wood to the limit. Fortunately the steels in the ceiling, which date from the Holman occupancy, have managed to protect the upper floor from total collapse.

The old (and probably original) wall contains large, deep sections of timber, around 200mm, which has rotted and will need to be raked out and replaced by brick and/or slate for permanent repair.

The floor is of oak, dates from the Holman occupancy, and while about 1/3 of it has been damaged, the remains will be used elsewhere.

The windows have been repaired and reglazed, but the shutter boxes are in poor condition, and they, together with the huge concertina shutters, have been partially rebuilt and are being stored horizontally in readiness for reinstallation when other problems have been addressed.

There are two magnificent door cases, but they and their lintels have been completely destroyed by rot, causing the stonework above to drop. Props have been introduced to save the wall from collapse. Fortunately the two doors and some of their fancy surrounds have been saved.

We have opened up a blocked-up fireplace in this room and rebuilt the chimney above, so it will host open fires once again. We do sometimes light fires now to encourage ventilation through the room.

I have been unable to take up to date photographs of this room as, attempting to remove the floorboards, we have come across an asbestos-lined trench surrounding some old heating pipes, so the room is out of bounds until the asbestos removal can be effected on 17th January 2018.

## The Library

This is one of the finest rooms in the house but has been subject to much vandalism. We believe it was originally the estate office during the Harris's tenure up to 1897. Subsequently it was used as 2 divided offices by Holman's and, later on, by Scope.

One of the cupboards contained a safe and vandals had lit a fire under this in an attempt to force it open. This has led to the destruction of the cupboard doors and neighbouring window, together with its shutters and shutterboxes. A new window has been made and installed, using crown glass.

The room faces north and west so its damp problems are severe. The historic source of dry rot appears to have been diagonally above but on the party wall, and this wall was the most impressive for fruiting bodies when we purchased the house. There was also a blocked internal rainwater pipe running under the floor, so it was subject to water ingress from above and below. We have now replaced the internal pipework so it is working efficiently.



Behind the bookcases, dry rot has been rampant, and on removing the architraves, mycelia can be seen wending their way through the back of the plaster to attack the plaster laths.

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The skirtings and floor boards have been damaged beyond repair.



Where the door cases have been removed, the poor construction of the building can be seen. We believe this to be an early C20th change to the room during the Holman ownership.



This is the area visibly most badly infested, and from where fruiting bodies were removed on a regular basis. You will see that this is probably the finest cornice in the building, albeit the most damaged.



### 3 Communal Entrance Hall and Landing above

High Status

The Entrance Hall has major problems.



Above: the roof to the rear is collapsing and is now supported on 2-storey scaffolding.

Various sections of ceiling and cornice plaster have fallen as the now dried-out dry rot fungus has led to delamination of layers of plaster.

The floor: The green and white marble floor is damaged in one area but we intend to patch it and otherwise just clean and polish.

The walls: The scagliola columns have suffered from damp and are spalling in areas while their iron central posts are rusting and causing the plaster to crack.

A fire which was started in the adjoining Library has caused surface smoke damage, which fire led to the swamping of the area with gallons of water from the Fire Service. The south wall (to the right) is of thin timber construction and attempting to hold up the first floor walls and partitions. It requires extra strengthening.





The lintels and door cases in all 4 main doorways have rotted and will require repair or replacement.

The staircase: This is one the finest features in the house and we are attempting to save in its entirety.

The structure of the semi-circular drum is (again) of undersized timber posts, all of which have been damaged by rot. The photographs show our investigations through from ground level in the rear corridor looking in to the drum, where the dry rot has done its damage. It is clear therefore that extra propping in steel between the existing posts will be required as the drum extends over 7 metres up to the ornate lantern light above.



There are a number of missing balusters which are already being made up in wrought iron by Tristan Kessel. We have had several samples made, including by 3D printing, but finally we have found an artist capable of making a direct copy. The treads are oak but thin and much damaged so we are devising a scheme whereby they are the top layer of a strengthened (and invisible) tread supported by the interspersed steel posts behind.



**Above in the upstairs corridor and landing**

All much damaged by water ingress and vandalism





The drum around the staircase is in need of extra support, and the moving of the landing partition 120mm towards the front of the building (west) means that it is no longer supporting the weight of the roof. This area requires steel framing within the depth of the existing partitions and floors to avoid changes to room proportions.

A proposal has been drawn up and will be forwarded to you separately.



## 4 Drawing Room and Blue Room

High Status

### **The Drawing Room**

This fine room is south facing with 3 pairs of French windows (newly repaired and reinstated, together with their shutter boxes) on to the lawn outside.

Unfortunately this room has also suffered from water ingress above and there is still evidence of damp around base of the stone walls on all four sides. These walls are of rubble stone construction mortared (in the Cornish fashion) with mud and straw, which means that they are taking a very long time to dry and we are uncertain if they ever will do, as they may be drawing moisture up from below - rising damp.

The dry rot outbreaks are strongest around the opened-up fireplace and party wall backing on to the Blue Room. Below floor the joists, boards and wall plates are completely covered with mycelia and have no strength. They have been incinerated. The sub floor is now drying out at last.

Structurally there is a big problem as the thin timber partitions are having to support upper walls.

The spans are so great that the upper floor timbers cannot successfully support the corridor walls and bedroom partitions, particularly now that they have been damaged by rot. We are proposing the introduction of 4" steel posts in between the 2" x 3" timber posts to assist them. This means that we do not need to thicken the walls and the fancy cornices and room proportions can be maintained.



## The Blue Room



At first glance this appears to be the room in the best condition, however, the area around the doorway in to the Entrance Hall is riddled with dry rot. We have been dismayed to see that there is still a live body to the left of the door.

You can see evidence of the earlier infestation, when we removed large yellow-orange fruiting bodies from the door case. We shall have to remove this to check that there is no damage to structural elements.

The floor itself was very badly damaged and has been destroyed by burning.

Fortunately the ceiling appears to be in fair condition, as is the floor above. The windows and shutters and shutter boxes have been repaired, although a single shutter leaf still requires attention.



## 5. The Music Room and Bathroom

High Status

Music Room

This charming square room is in poor condition. It is one of only two places where the dry rot appears to be still active behind the old dry lined plaster walls - we believe it is being maintained by the wet in the mud-mortared rubble stone wall behind.



We need to remove the lath and plaster to expose the wall to assist its drying out



The timber trim to the alcove has been destroyed by rot; we shall reinstate with plaster, keeping the use of timber to a minimum for longevity.

Fungus fibres cover the surfaces of the walls, and even the relatively new timbers from Scope occupation have succumbed to the rot.

4 photographs illustrating the condition of the window reveals and lintel above. We shall replace the lintel and patch the walls with lime mortar.







The old doorway to rear corridor: you can see the outline of a rectangular opening, presumably a doorway before the house was remodelled in the late C19th/early C20th.

(The modern plaster is a temporary intervention for privacy in bathroom but will be removed for the insertion of a doorway.)

## Moving to the Bathroom Area behind Music Room



As in every other room, this north facing room has suffered from water ingress from above. The floor surface in the bathroom above is of marble on a lead tray so the water has been cascading down the walls, the weight leading to the failure of the ceiling structure, which has collapsed.



In these photographs you can see the evidence of dry rot mycelia and an earlier higher ceiling height. These traces of earlier walls still have their paint surfaces.

We shall be reinstating the lower ceiling (probably early C20th) as the room will be retained as a bathroom.





There is a single doorway in this area which opens on to the Drawing Room. Unfortunately its architrave has been damaged by rot, but the door itself and the windows in this area have been repaired and kept safely for reinstatement.



## 6 Orangery, Anteroom and Laundry

Mid and low status

### The Orangery

The windows and doors which had been kicked in and every pane smashed, have been repaired, glazed and reweighted. The broken concrete tile roof surface has been replaced with a fine lead covering.



The terrazzo floor (Holman period) has been polished.



It still requires wiring and heating and we have a horizontal leak through the stones above the double doors which we have to address, probably with prompt cement pointing.



Some patching of plaster will also need to be carried out, fortunately on to a solid base, so no dry rot problems in the Orangery.



## Anteroom

Archway looking through from Orangery requires replastering where failing, including 'broomstick' at front edge of arch

Lintel between Laundry and Anteroom has completely rotted out; fortunately steels have saved it from collapse. Requires smooth finish as part of door lining repairs.



Looking at same lintel between Anteroom and Laundry, the damage to architrave can be seen clearly. The door has been repaired and stored for reinstallation but the door lining and architrave will require replacement.



Note that the windows, shutters and shutter boxes have already been repaired, as has the single interior door.



The ceiling central section of plasterboard will need to be removed once the cornice has been propped with the intention of saving most if not all from falling. The floor structure above has been badly damaged by water and dry rot but we are looking at mechanically fixing the cornice back to the walls - all of which are stone or brick.



Water damaged plaster on exterior wall which will need to be repaired

## 7 Nursery

### Mid status

This area is north facing so following the roof damage it has retained the moisture for longer than the south facing rooms.

The floor has completely rotted out and the walls are much damaged.



This has reached to the ceiling battens in places, but we intend to retain most of the roof structure. However, the timber partitions, which had already been much damaged by later cut-outs for new doorways, have failed completely. They were of small dimension and had been moved across the room to a position where they have been unable to support the roof above. We shall need to reinstate structural support without altering the dimensions of the rooms.





The walls themselves have deep horizontal timber fillets (to which to attach the plaster framework), all of which have rotted, and which we shall replace with brick and slate as a permanent repair.



Fortunately all the windows, doors and shutters have been salvaged and repaired.



We have retained a fallen arch to replicate and reinstate.



Again we have some heritage gain in terms of archaeology - we can see that narrow later boards have been set over the wider older boards - as far as we know the only original floorboards in the building.



We have managed to identify the location of a boarded-up fireplace, and a long hidden chimney flue.



There is even a small scrap of wallpaper in a pipe box...



## 8 Balcony Bedrooms

Mid status

Bedroom 1 is a vast room above the Ballroom. Its ceiling is still in place but the floor has suffered catastrophic collapse through to the room below.



We believe that the original fireplace area (which was later used as an internal bathroom) is the original source of the historic dry rot outbreak - probably a small undetected leak over a number of years.

You can see the three large I beams which have saved the floor from further collapse.

We believe these were used to support the chandeliers in the ballroom below.

There are also two very large original timbers at a slight angle; all are to be retained. The floor is very much deflected, however, by as much as 120mm in the hall, so we shall need carefully considered intervention to create a level floor.



The linking corridor of these two rooms has also suffered. Fortunately none of the ceilings is ornate and the running mould cornices will be easy to repair and replicate.

To left, you can see the pattern of fungus behind the architrave.

Below you can see the deflection from left to right.



Bedroom 2 is west facing. Unfortunately its ceiling has collapsed, together with its laths, and the floor is deflected by 175mm, so major structural work is required to bring the room back in to use.



Unfortunately dry rot has been active in the whole of this area.

However, we have managed to save all the windows, doors, shutters and shutterboxes.



## 9 Above Entrance Hall (Piano Nobile)

High Status

This room has suffered greatly as a result of the missing leadwork and subsequent water ingress..



The floor has dissolved in places, and been abraded in others. It is very fragile.



The room has serious structural problems as the flimsy partition has been moved back from its original position (presumably to widen the landing) where it was holding up the roof. Now that it is so badly damaged, it can no longer serve this function and major structural repairs are being designed. At the same time, there is at least one massive original timber in the floor void, and this will be kept as a structural member if at all possible.



The plaster has already been removed from the partition to lighten its load and to allow the damp within to disperse.



Dry rot has been active here also and the affected timbers will need to be destroyed by incineration.



Even relatively new timbers dating from Scope's ownership have suffered rot at their bases. I don't think we should underestimate the amount of water which flowed through this building for at least 5 years...





## 10 and 11 South Bedrooms

Mid status

### 1. Southwest corner

Being on the south side these rooms receive most sun and have, subsequently, dried out more quickly. That said, the damage has already been done in that much of the timber has lost its strength and is no longer useful. Unfortunately, and to our surprise, dry rot is still active behind the plaster in this one corner room.



Obviously it has all been soaking wet as the parapet gutters above had been stripped of their lead over the years prior to our arrival. This has led to cracking of the ceiling plaster, damage to floor boards and the growth of mould.

We opened up the fireplaces soon after our arrival to aid ventilation through the window grilles and up the chimneys so hopefully some further damage has been avoided.



While the doors and windows and shutters have been repaired successfully, the architraves and skirtings are for the most part beyond repair and can be replaced.



Here you can see the thickness of the plaster around the fireplace.



The corridor: Looking through to the corridor beyond, the cracks in the plaster are remarkable.



And just as remarkable, is the dry rot in the door frames. However, we have removed the architraves for repair and treatment. They have been labelled and are being stored in the house.



Second bedroom: Looking down where boards have been removed shows the extent of the infestation and the serious service cut-outs which have been made to further damage the joists.



The ceiling has fallen but fortunately there is no ceiling rose or cornice to save.



The door frame will need attention.

Some of the floors are abraded; we do not know the cause of this although it may possibly be damage from the use of wheelchairs..



The third bedroom is above the Music Room. It has also suffered as the other rooms in this area. You can see the mycelia between the joists - a cashmere blanket of fungus.



Its doorframe is also particularly affected, although the door has been saved. The windows and shutters are also in useable condition.



Bedroom 4, however, is the most severely affected by dry rot issues. It is situated below an old rainwater collection tank which had originally and recently been lined with lead until it was stolen along with the roof lead. This meant that most of the water hitting the roof on the whole of this wing was directed through the room (and down to the Anteroom below).



Going back in to the corridor area (previously a bathroom), it has a green and white marble tiled floor sitting in a lead tray. It is much deflected and broken, but we hope to save it to reuse in this area, perhaps by turning it over. We have also managed to retrieve matching marble slabs from this area which were used vertically.. from the courtyard behind where they had been removed and smashed in an attempt to steal them. Some will be reusable and whatever we can use we shall.





There are various areas of plaster fall, and due to removal of supporting walls, there is a major structural issue in this area which we shall resolve by use of cantilevering steels (invisible when in situ).



Dry rot in the door frame (much altered) and dry rot fringes beside some of the marble cladding.

## Outside

There are still various elements to address but we are now weathertight and keen to get on with the internal repair works!