

GLADYS HOLMAN/ROSEWARNE HOUSE, Holman Park, Camborne TR14 8FE

Heritage Statement to accompany an application for Listed Building Consent



The House and Grounds

This magnificent 2-storey building with a footprint of approximately 100 sq metres is a perfect example of Greek Revival Regency architecture, dating from c. 1815. It is Grade II* listed. It stands within 5 acres of parkland, all that remains of a much larger estate. Research to establish the architect is ongoing, so far without success, but it seems likely that the original owner Mr William Harris was the designer. Harris was related to the Harrises who owned Kenegie and also the Arundell family of Trerice. His coat of arms was the 3 crescents argent.



His daughter Mary married in to the illustrious Bolingbroke/Hartley family of Berkshire, producing one son, but the line died out with him in 1897.

From the History of Cornwall, Volume 2:

Higher Rosewarne which is near Camborne town was the seat of the late William Harris Esq. The



situation of the house is not elevated and consequently the prospects from it are not extensive but its local beauties amply compensate for these deficiencies. The gardens and walks with which the house is surrounded exhibit fertility in her neatest attire. The house is rather conveniently large than magnificently spacious but its accommodations that are adapted to every necessary purpose render it a delightful habitation for such as prefer retirement and the charms of nature to the artificial grandeur of tumultuous life.

The house became the subject of a bitter inheritance dispute, and eventually passed, apparently derelict, in to the hands of the Holman family in 1911. It was used as a house for some years and then as offices for the Holman Brothers. It is of considerable local importance both historically and because of its location at the heart of Camborne, and was well known to many of the Holman employees as the location of annual garden parties and Christmas gatherings.

It was sold to the Scope charity in 1967, and they remained in residence until 2008 when the nw owner/developer, Highgrove Homes, provided a new and more suitable facility at the north end end of the site. Also at this time, the farmhouse and barn of the old estate were converted into houses, and 6 further bungalows were built alongside. The name Gladys Holman House was adopted in memory of an earlier resident of the house who was well known for her work in local hospitals. We have reverted from Gladys Holman to the historic name of the house, Rosewarne.

Once the house had been vacated, it was insufficiently protected, and became a temporary home for rough sleepers and a target for vandals. All the substantial quantity of old lead was stripped from the ridges, flashings, and most significantly, from the parapet gutters. Some of the cast iron gutters and downpipes have also disappeared. Most of the glass in the windows was smashed by young people who used the building as 'their haunted house' for parties and raves. There had been 3 fires on the ground floor with the subsequent soaking with water. Much plaster had fallen to the floor and, once the windows were boarded up, the damp inside provided the perfect conditions for rot and fungus to take hold.

In the grounds, no-one was policing the woodland, which was used as summer camping site by homeless people, with a number of tents and sleeping bags, etc., together with needles, silver foil and other drug taking paraphernalia being strewn all over the park. Another problem was fly tipping, with cans of paint and other builders' rubbish being thrown around the back of the house and in to the roadside shrubbery.

It was considered a 'Building at Risk' and subject to enforcement notices, although no attempt was made to protect the building.

I attach a copy of the listing and of Nick Cahill's Report of Character Area 5 - Rosewarne - in 2004. (see also 'From Holman Brothers to ComAir' by Clive Carter and Peter Joseph.)

Rosewarne House is a wonderful example of the Regency Greek Revival style, which is rare in Cornwall. The elevations are of ashlar granite to the south (main entrance) and west (formal gardens) elevations, finely pointed with raised mortar. To the north (kitchens and office) the granite stonework is not coursed, although of good quality. On the east elevation, the stable buildings are faced with rubblestone and brickwork. There are no attic rooms and a single (flooded) basement room appears to have housed the heating boiler.

The symmetrical frontage of 2 pedimented wings, is dominated by the central monolithic doric columns (4 and 2 halves) which support the large balcony above. A quadrant orangery to the rear is supported by 9 monolithic rectangular granite columns. A most unusual feature is the use of granite anthemions on the corners, and on every change of angle on the orangery. These motifs also feature on the chimneys. The fenestration throughout is painted timber sashes, and it is hoped that most of these can be repaired. All the ground floor shutters appear to be in place.

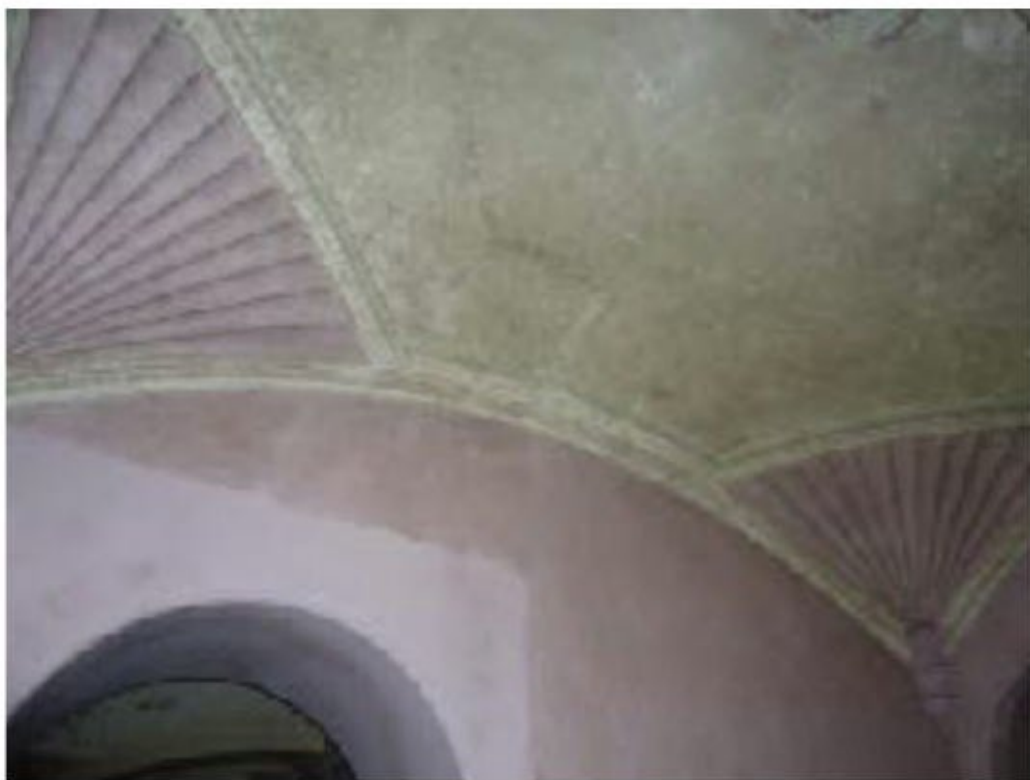
The once-magnificent entrance hall has a green and white marble floor, polished grey fireplace, and red scagliola columns (4 plus 4 halves) with Corinthian capitals. The plasterwork is extremely ornate, and throughout the ground floor of house, the Greek theme is echoed in the key motif on the doors, and the anthemions on the plasterwork. There is a marvellous elliptical staircase to the back of the hall.

The House Today

The house remained vulnerable to thieves and vandals until our purchase in January 2013, and we have employed a security firm to keep guard 24 hours a day. They are active while our builders are off site, and all weekend, but people are still regularly being escorted from the grounds, particularly at night. had been the site of regular visits, and no doubt, on the radar of the down-and-outs.



These photographs illustrate the condition of the building as we found it in January 2013.



Our first priority has been security, and then to make the roof watertight. We have seen to the removal of window boards with replacement galvanised steel mesh allowing ventilation and daylight to permeate through the building. It has already worked extremely well with all visible rot checked. We plan to leave the house empty for a year or two in the hope that this will dry it out and provide conditions unsuitable for the growth of dry rot, even where it cannot be seen behind the plaster.

At the same time, we are having the asbestos removed from the building (at a cost of just under £30,000). All of this dates from the residential home occupancy, when fire doors, pipe lagging and ceiling boards were asbestos based, and artex paint was all the rage. Fortunately almost all of it is in the stable rooms, which were used as bedrooms, and converted in the mid years of the 20th Century, at the same time as the courtyard buildings were constructed, and the lift installed.





The Proposals for Repair and Conversion

No alterations are proposed to the elevations of the building, which is almost completely original. The completion of the roof works require the demolition of the C20th single-storey constructions in the inner courtyard. All are brick construction. We also intend to remove the ugly iron fire escape in the same area. This courtyard will then be cleared and paved for future use.

We have planning permission to convert the building in to 10 units. This involves 6 extremely grand apartments in the main house (3 up and 3 down), with some communal areas, and 4 mews cottages from the stable yard buildings which are attached to the rear. Our original idea to use the house as one has been rejected as we feel the size of the house (about 26 rooms) would mean that it would be unlikely to remain as a single family home and would probably be used as a hotel or company headquarters. This single occupant use means that it could easily become vacant again, and it is less likely to be completely empty if a number of users are in residence. I believe this future-proofs the building from a third dereliction. All the new residences have 2 bedrooms and are to be sold leasehold. Internally, we shall need to remove all C20th partitions to reinstate the rooms to their original scale. Once the old carpets, fallen plaster and rubbish has been removed, we shall be in a position to assess the repair works required to windows, floors and plasterwork. We are not in a hurry and plan to concentrate our work on the stable cottages next while the house dries out. It is a 5 year project for us.

However, we should like to start as soon as possible as it is a bit of a 'rescue mission'.

The courtyard buildings are photographed below:



The Future of the Park

We are reinstating as much as we can of the old park following clues from old maps and aerial photographs from 1922. It has been completely neglected for over 40 years apart from the mowing of the south and west lawns and the removal of dangerous branches. We do have a fine array of camellias and at least 9 different types of rhododendrons, and a good number of old and unusual magnolias in the 'privy garden' to the east of the house.

It is our first season on site so we are still discovering quite 'what we've got'. We are members of the Cornwall Gardens Trust and they have been out to survey and point out interesting features. Older local residents remember stone features including granite balls bordering the front lawn, a fountain, statues, a vast granite sundial, and even a number of cannons in situ. Unfortunately not one of them remains.

We have a fine selection of trees, including a good number of large beeches, some elm and ash, sweet and horse chestnut, some Monterey pines, 2 oaks and a ginkgo. Unfortunately, however, the sycamores have been allowed to seed all over and many of the historic trees have either gone or are struggling to thrive. We have a tree application in at the moment to remove 2 sycamores; this is the first of ongoing applications I expect.

The communal grounds around the house are to be open access to all residents of the estate and their guests. We intend to have a gate keeper on site to control access at all times.

Our Philosophy

Anything which can be repaired is to be retained; new work is never an acceptable substitution for repair to original or historic materials. All work will be carried with respect for the character and structure of the building or feature, and of its context. We are aiming to put into good repair the structure and fabric of the building. Repairs will be made using appropriate techniques and high-quality natural or traditional materials.

Roof: Scaffolding to be erected in two stages: first to the main building, and once this has been slated, the stable block.

Much of the roofing has been damaged and the covering is missing, but the remaining concrete tiles are to be removed and taken for crushing and recycling. No original slates remain. The existing battens to be removed, together with any scraps of remaining paper and broken tarpaulins. Roof joists to be checked for structural stability, and any requiring attention to be assessed by the architect and/or structural engineer. It may be necessary to splice in repair timbers or steel strengthening plates. All sound timbers to remain.

Chimney stacks to be assessed for condition and pointing repaired where necessary, using traditional lime mortar. Chimneys to be gently pressure washed.

New parapet gutters to be created following the guidelines as published by the Lead Sheet Association in 'The Lead Sheet Manual'. Lead is also to be used for the first floor terrace. This terrace is to be paved in order to protect the lead surface underneath.

Breather membrane to be laid on roof joists and battening of 25 x 50mm section to be used, and natural slates to be affixed using copper nails.

The existing Velux rooflights in the stable block to be replaced with Conservation-style rooflights, and the wooden lantern lights above the stairs and the orangery to be repaired as necessary.

Rainwater goods: All plastic gutters and downpipes to be removed. Existing cast iron sections to be repaired if at all possible in situ, and new identical matches to be made where necessary. There is only a section of this to the north and east of the building. When replaced to be painted soft grey.

Stonework repairs and repointing: The stonework appears to be in good condition so little repair anticipated. The whole of the building is to be gently pressure washed with plain water and brush to clean it. Graffiti to be removed using a proprietary system.

Windows, doors and external joinery: It is expected that all the doors, windows and shutters will need attention. Some will need as little as broken glass replacing and others will need to be completely remade to match.

Fireplaces: All the fireplaces have been removed with the exception of that in the hall (which has been returned), but we intend to take professional advice regarding the style, to reintroduce one in to each apartment. Where the chimneys are still open but not to be reused, we shall provide ventilation holes and grilles.

Services: We have designed the apartments to keep all water services to the back of the building with all pipework, drains, ventilation shafts, etc., venting to the courtyard. We hope this will prevent water damage to lower flats, and that the damage caused by long runs of pipework can be kept to a minimum.

All gas and electric meters are to be concentrated in the back corridor.

Conclusion

This is a special building in a special setting and we intend to secure its future for a long time. By keeping the freehold of the estate, we hope to be able to see through the repair of the house and reinstatement of the park, and to control and influence its development for many years to come

18th June 2013

Postscript: January 2018. We are still here, as is security, and the whole of the roof, rainwater goods and all the windows and doors have been repaired. Rosewarne House is now weatherproof. Interior works to the structure are about to commence although we have found considerably more asbestos under the floorboards (bringing the total cost of removal to £107,000). All the stables have been converted to cottages, and the grounds have been tidied, cleared and planted up with substantial quantities of bulbs, camellias and more magnolias. All services have been brought up to the house ready for use in the new apartments. We have invested £1.3M of our own money in the project plus £81,000 grant from the THI scheme administered by Cornwall Council.

