

HERITAGE STATEMENT

MOOR HALL

Stoke by Clare

Sudbury

SUFFOLK

CO10 8HJ

Location Data

Plus code 3G8W+P6 Sudbury, United Kingdom

Grid Reference TL 74646 44080

574646X (Easting) , 244080Y (Northing)

Latitude 52.067553, Longitude 0.54654449(decimal)

Latitude 52.04.03 N , Longitude 000.32.48 E (degs, mins, secs)

What3Words : motoring.leaned.decent

QR Code :



History and Extracts known about the Heritage Asset of Moor Hall

1. An extract from https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/media/pdfs/stoke_by_clare.pdf merely states Moor Hall: earliest parts date from 1140, additions c.1240, alterations 18th cent.
2. An extract from Historic England / English Heritage register states MOOR HALL
Overview

Heritage Category: Listed Building Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1365755 Date first listed: 19-Dec-1961

Statutory Address: MOOR HALL, STOKE ROAD

3. Looking at the county Genealogy and Wills records, the first recorded mention of Moor Hall to the Fitch family is 14 Feb 1667 which came into the family through marriage. A Will of 1680 names Moor Hall in possession of the Fitch family but given each generation had an average of seven children and the average age at death was under 50 it is a difficult line to follow.

4. An extract from Garden History Reference Encyclopaedia refers to a book entitled *The Life of Humphry REPTON* by J C Loudon which states *inter alia* that : Humphry Repton the famous landscape designer of the Georgian period was born in Bury St Edmunds in May 1752, his mother Martha Fitch came from Moor Hall, Stoke by Clare as the daughter of Mr John Fitch - a descendant of Sir Thomas Fitch who was created a Knight Banneret on the field at Agincourt in October 1415 by Henry V.. Humphry's father, John Repton - the Collector of Excise for Suffolk - married Martha Fitch (considered a beauty). In 1773 Humphry married and stayed a while at Moor Hall but later moved to Sustead, Norfolk. Moor Hall at this time was a large estate.

5. A titlemap hangs in the hallway at Moor Hall showing land amounting to 4000 acres mainly to the East of the house. John Fitch is described as a Yeoman which meant a 'landed farmer', down a peg from 'landed gentry' who had tenant farmers. However, the Fitch family were of some standing in the region. And it is they who Georgianised and extended the original partly Jacobean timber framed house. This was the fashionable thing to do to one's house in the period after making a visit to Bath as a pleasure-ground early holiday destination. Bath was an Ideal-Home-Exhibition of its day and the architects generated commissions all over England and the continent. Moor Hall soon benefitted from new fenestration, front door and smooth plastered walls and ceilings replacing the draughty gloom of the Tudor timber framed house. At the time of "Georgianising" - assumed to be about 1780, judging by the slender mouldings on some older windows, there were no railways and the garden extended to 20+ acres to the Stour riverside as the boundary with Essex and land of Claret Hall. Some of the older trees including Scots Pine and Sequoia were probably selected by Humphry Repton as saplings in the 1770s which can still be seen in the gardens of both Moor Hall and of the two houses that are now in separate ownership to the South East of the disused railway line toward the riverside..

6. The historian and former Suffolk Archaeologist Edward Martin gives credence to Humphry Repton's influence on garden design generally and in particular to Moor Hall but given Humphry was so busy working for the great landscapes it is possible that Moor Hall was gifted occasional seedlings from more stately wheelbarrows. Repton produced designs for the grounds of many of the foremost country houses in England, Scotland and Wales. The link between Repton and Moor Hall is slender but it is the only significant popular history about an otherwise modest country manor house which belonged to his father-in-law..a Yeoman.

7. Significant damage to the history of Moor Hall was inflicted by Acts of Parliament in 1846 and 1847 to create the Stour Valley Railway. By 1865 the rail line was completed with the last section through the gardens of Moor Hall using stone from Clare Castle as ballast. There was presumably adequate financial incentive to allow this travesty of iron to pass through a superb landscaped garden because the house was extended to the rear at this time and the main staircase was relocated from the front door hallway to a turreted stairwell with Oculus, a chestnut handrail and faux stone decorative treatment (that has been reinstated). The trains ran on an embankment 500m from the house which can be seen on the modern Site Plan as a disused railway. The intrusion would have been alarming to the residents throughout the hundred years between opening in 1865 and its final closure under Beeching cuts of 1966. It was used for both passenger trains that were often empty and for coal freight trains from

Peterborough sidings to Colchester - the primary haulage. The devaluation of the house in 1865 would have been significant.

8. Beginning in the early 20thC the private Cart Track of Moor Hall Farm running between the Hall and its barns opposite was requisitioned In WWI as a through route for the war effort.. General road traffic from Clare direction to Essex increased again after WWII and the house found itself sandwiched between two intrusive sources of noise and pollution, both rail and road. In the 1950's the house would have had low value and it wasn't until 1961 that it became a grade II Listed building having suffered at the hands of rail and road authorities for over a century. The public sector of the period had much to answer for in this unforgivable intrusion upon a fine manorial estate of over 4000 acres of productive land. After the 1966 Beeching closure of the railway, the title of the disused line was acquired by Moor Hall and other neighbours to preclude any future intrusion. The rail line is now a natural high boundary of tall beech trees to the SE curtilage. This disused railway line has been identified by Campaign for Better Transport as a priority 1 candidate for reopening but neighbours would prefer to see any public funds spent on creating a straightened and improved by-passing scheme for every village on the A1092. Given Tesco Haverhill and many other buildings and private gardens now block the route of the line such reopening is highly infeasible.

9. More recent relevant building history has been collated by absorbing tales and information from neighbours and the more elderly village parish council committee members as follows.

10. In 1961 [dated from a fragment of *The Daily Sketch* and from a neighbour who moved in in 1960 and still lives here], and presumably timed to avoid potential council interference from an imminent grade two listing, the front SW section of the house was underpinned, presumably because of potential collapse. The rotten sole (sill) plate and approximately 18 inches (450mm) of the lower upright post and stud timbers were sawn off. The original Georgian windows and the underbox containing the two shutter sashes were removed and disposed of. I assume acrow props held up the upper rooms and external upper walls during this process. All external lime render on lathes was also stripped at that time. And the internal walls which were the lathe and lime plaster inner face of the external walls and ceilings to the drawing room and dining room were also destroyed. The nail holes on each stud were in line with the lathes that formerly had been attached to them. The skirting boards had been removed from the two rooms and the window frame reveals were packed out off the wall by the remains of the lathe and plaster that was formerly on the walls. The same is true of the doors where the architrave stood half an inch off the wall because the plaster was formerly behind the timber surround. The fireplaces were also rebuilt on a new foundation to create an inglenook effect in front of the original four barrel chimney. There had been an internal fire at some point sustained in the principal bedroom fireplace and this had burned through the ceiling....It appears that the rebuild was designed to support those consequences.
After stripping back a 300mm thick concrete raft foundation in this SW corner section was installed approx 400mm deep . A modern stock engineering brick with sand cement mortar was laid on the raft measuring four brick courses visible inside and 7 outside with a slate dpc. New 7" x 4" sawn stained timber plates with simple end lap-joints were cemented on this brick foundation picking up the base of rotting upright timbers. The timber floorboards and joists beneath were also removed at this time and the floor is now concrete in both rooms -

presumably with a polythene DPC beneath it placed on the clay soil below. This would also divert moisture and the water table toward the SE elevation sole plate. This 1961 renewal extends from the front door to the drawing room french doors. The Georgian windows were replaced with frames and sashes of different thicker profile and without the lifting shutter boxes that are (fortunately) still in existence in the kitchen, office and music room (and now are fully working and draught proofed). The interior of the drawing room and dining room was left without finished smooth internal walls and ceilings (like before the underpinning 'modernisation' works, perhaps an influence of Barry Bucknell the DIY expert on TV at the time. 2"x 1" battens were applied to upright studs and foil backed 9mm plasterboard applied between the studs and posts which was coated with Artex painted with vinyl emulsion. The house was also rewired at this time and three bedrooms on the south east side were converted to bathrooms during the 60's 'modernisation' with attendant h & C and waste plumbing in the first floor..

11. In 1991/2 the owners of Moor Hall apparently came into a significant sum [REDACTED] And it was spent on three 'improvement' projects. A diving size swimming pool 12m x 6m x 3m deep was housed in a 24m x 12m Glulam Scandinavian building with tiles and Velux roof complete with plant, hot tub, sauna and changing rooms. Secondly, A Marston & Langinger softwood double glazed conservatory was added behind the kitchen and Thirdly, An adjacent single storey timber frame barn was lifted from its saddle stones, a full height lower floor was built to create a double garage, workshop and a living room with a spiral staircase up to a large bedroom or social space. This was then connected to the main residence forming the present L shape dwelling. New oil heating boiler was installed in 1991 and the Electricity wiring was extended and altered to three phases to cope with energy demand of the pool, sauna, hot tub and other plant. A Klargester sewage plant was installed in 1992 although by 2021 was defunct and packed solid and required replacement.
12. On December 16 2022 there was a rapid thaw after ten continuous days of minus 8c temperatures. In the southern (Victorian) section of the Attic a small poor quality plumbing component burst open and sprayed hot water over the ceilings of a bathroom and landing for several hours. This resulted in significant water damage to a bathroom that served three bedrooms requiring ceilings and walls to be removed. The same fate befell the ceiling and walls of the office below this bathroom.....After three months of drying, reinstatement with Lime plaster over woodwool boards took place. The original lathes were left on. The old bathroom had two doors and plumbing and electrical infrastructure was within the external walls. A new CLS timber spine was introduced to the space to create two large shower rooms from the one bathroom. Infrastructure was relocated to the spine. The amenity value to the house was immense meaning only two bedrooms had to share one of the resulting shower rooms. This reinstatement redesign is the third matter in this retrospective application.
13. Finally, this section gives history of the Moor Hall Farm track that inappropriately became an A road which is relevant to the second item in the schedule of works below.

The A1092 abuts the property curtilage of the NW flank. It does so without any footpath or refuge space and the public carriageway is partially supported by the garden walls of Moor Hall that are around the principal driveway. Moor Hall and all the many listed properties of Stoke by Clare, Clare, Cavendish and Long Melford were all served by a cart track until the First World War. Before 1920 it was the [B1062](#).

The A1017 (erstwhile the A604) detours north to reach Baythorne End, a small village on the Essex side of the River Stour. The A1092 starts from there crossing a narrow ancient bridge over the Stour as an entry route into Suffolk. It then bears right to follow the river downstream thru Stoke by Clare and beyond Clare to Long Melford.

Moor Hall has needed protection for the past thirty years from a road that has been permitted to grow beyond its originating design. For five hundred years or more it was only the simple farm track belonging to Moor Hall that ran between its barns (now three houses opposite) and its front door. It is no wider today than it was in 1550 yet carries 40 tonne 10 litre trucks instead of 40 sack horse drawn carts.

The front garden of Moor Hall is laid out as a parterre walled garden however one side alongside the road had no wall or fence but instead a mature tall one-sided privet hedge. Evidence of the construction of the historic brick wall which supports the road carriageway a little further west indicates that this did once extend in front of the house and across the road to the barns but was probably demolished in WW1 to allow trucks to pass with grain and munitions for local airfields and military bases. Certainly the road has been reshaped over the centuries. In 2021 the tall privet hedge was bald on the inside face through lack of light. The hedge is planted in a raised bed built of stock brick on a concrete foundation. On the road side of the hedge there is a delicate Victorian iron railing and small matching 3ft gate. This gate is never used since the footpath of the track was requisitioned and adopted in WW1 and was never given back - the gate leads directly into the road and would result in death by collision....It is a decorative gate not a functional one.

Traffic approaching from the East at a legal 60mph should immediately slow to 30mph but rarely does. Thus outside Moor Hall traffic is regularly travelling at 60mph because there is no 40mph buffer zone east of Stoke by Clare.. It is suicidal to clip the hedges or mow the grass at the front of Moor Hall. There is no kerb at this point as the council have made the perfect accelerating camber on this corner...A favourite of summer motorcyclists. The road policy of Suffolk County Council in respect of the A1092 is the subject of an ETRO which has stalled with Essex County council who fear diversion of HGV traffic via Halstead that has its own problems. The straight line connection from Haverhill bypass to Sudbury bypass is a mere glimmer in Westminster.

Schedule of Works requiring Listed Buildings Approval

Two completed tasks from the laundry-list of repairs and refurbishments require permission to retain.

1. Reinstatement of internal lime plaster ceilings and walls to 're-Georgianise' the Dining and Drawing Room. Low significance
2. Reconstruction of the west (front) courtyard garden walls and redecorating front railings to recreate a walled garden to the front (west) of house and alleviate intrusive traffic noise High Significance
3. Redesign of one bathroom with two doors into two separate shower rooms

Proposed (and completed) works

Item 1. The plaster walls

As identified in Para 10 above all internal rooms of Moor Hall had lime plastered ceilings and walls with the exception of the Dining Room and Drawing Room creating visual incongruity with Artexed panels between revealed timberwork in those two rooms. They were also very cold rooms..

After rewiring. Replaster two outer walls and the ceiling in the drawing room and dining room utilising 35mm Skanda Savolit Wood Wool Boards to Ceilings

15mm Skanda Savolit Wood Wool Boards to walls

Mechanically fixed

Two coats Limecote Universal non-hydraulic Lime Plaster trowelled to smooth finish. Wallpapered.

Impact Statement

The impact of smoothing the walls by replastering and papering is threefold. The house is warmer from the extra layer of insulation; Pipes and wires serving the necessary infrastructure are hidden within the walls; The rooms have been brought back to the formalised Georgian aesthetic of the remainder of the dwelling whilst still showing the largest components of the timber frame.

The smartest and most appropriate finish for a house 'Georgianised' in the late 18th c is that it should have a smooth plaster finish to both ceilings and walls either lightly decorated in a pale distemper colour wash or a period wallpaper with an off-white ceiling. The walls have been wallpapered in 'historic' replica papers. Art now has a formal backdrop, lighting and mains wiring has been concealed rather than dangerous and unsightly exposed wiring. The larger timbers remain exposed as they would have been in 18th C shown by some detail pelmet carving within.

Item 2 The garden wall

As identified in Para 13 above the road intruded on Moor Hall. An existing wall facing SW from the garden gate to the road wall was entrenched in Ivy and leaning at between 15 and 25 degrees from upright.

Method.

Ivy approx 2m deep x 5m high weighing about 5 tonnes was destroyed after removal to reveal the sw wall between the house and road.. The wall was leaning NE by at least 20 degrees from perpendicular. It was 2m high, four bricks thick and 20m long. Storm Eunice on 18 Feb 2022 knocked over part of the wall and the remainder was carefully disassembled. External brick faces were spalled but the lime mortar was so exhausted by the Ivy roots that it was possible to lift bricks apart. Minimal mechanical cleaning was required. 90% + of the bricks were salvaged. Those spalled were reversed. Those broken were made into halves.

A new concrete 50 cm wide foundation was laid 30 cm deep as a raft strip. This was not laid near to the cherry and damson trees that had grown through the existing wall. These trees have been preserved.

A core layer of 100mm concrete blocks was laid for future strength to withstand winds and road vibration. Bricks were then laid to the same pattern with pillars and panels of the same size as the

disassembled original wall using a lime /sand/ white cement mortar mix in ratio of 2-9-1 advisable given the vibration from traffic.

Impact Statement

The new wall has not changed the street side appearance...The delicate railing and gate has been rust-proofed and painted. The west wall has been built on the inner face of an existing raised privet hedge. The appearance from the house is significantly improved - no longer a stream of traffic, The Bullace trees are now trained into existing victorian espaliers found beneath the ivy. The intrusion of traffic noise has been reduced and privacy enhanced. A notable upgrade.

Item 3 Two smaller shower rooms made from one large shower room

As identified in Para 12 above, three bedrooms had to share one shower toilet room that had two doors.

Method

After the flood, tiled floors, two layers of levelling plywood, tiled walls, shower tray and surround, excessively ornate toilet cistern, basin and the lime plaster on ceiling and walls were all carefully removed and the room was allowed to dry for three months. Plumbing and electrical infrastructure was removed from the external and internal (historic walls). The original pine floor had been partly butchered -this was left in situ and not made any worse. The faulty components in the loft were rerouted and all pipes in the attic were

A single ply floor was levelled across the room and a spine of 4 x 2 CLS was secured. A narrow window to give 'borrowed light' created, New infrastructure was installed solely in this spine so as to preserve the historic fabric. New shower trays, glass screen, eco toilets and basins with eco taps were employed. Decorative finish remains as the lime plaster with a protective wash. Shower interiors are full-size waterproof wallboards.

Impact statement

The Build-Back-Better philosophy has been applied to this unfortunate episode of a flood that did £52,000 of damage to the house. Those funds have been spent well restoring the south face of the timber frame, renewing the plaster ceilings and walls of two rooms which were broken and damaged. Insulating with wool. AND providing an additional family shower-room for two bedrooms and a private en suite for the guest bedroom overlooking the garden. A further tasteful upgrade

Summary

By virtue of its listed status Moor Hall has some relevance to the historic housing stock of Suffolk. It has been neglected for many years and had periods of over-investment that have not been advantageous. However, it is what it is. Within the context of the overall programme (laundry list) of repair and refurbishment for 2021/23 the three sub-projects both enhance the appeal of the house and improve its longevity and carbon footprint and do not compromise any aspect of the heritage asset ...

BLF May 2023