



## Hidcote Manor Garden – Re-thatching of Thatched Barn

Hidcote Manor Garden  
Hidcote Bartrim  
Chipping Campden  
Glos GL55 6LR



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## **Introduction**

In 2022/23 plans were made to re-thatch the ridge and carry out patch repairs elsewhere on the roof. However, when the thatcher started work, he discovered that the condition of the existing thatch was much worse than first thought and a full re-thatch was recommended.

Without re-thatching the condition of the thatch will deteriorate further with an increased risk of roof leaks, which could lead to decay in the roof timbers and cause damage to the interior. Proportionate, timely investment now in re-thatching will arrest deterioration and prevent future damage to historic fabric.

## **Brief History of the Thatched Barn**

*Extracted from 2023 Conservation Management Plan (CMP)*

Hidcote Manor and its farmed estate have a long, possibly unbroken, history of human occupation since pre-historic times. In the Medieval period, the area was part of an income-generating estate, most probably owned by Evesham Abbey, around which a small village developed (larger than the village of Hidcote Bartrim that exists today). As was typical for early-Medieval farming in the Cotswolds, initially it was mixed arable with pastoral farming. By the beginning of the 16th century, the open fields were being enclosed and converted to sheep farming, which led in turn to the decline of some buildings within the village.

In 1542, the Manor of Hidcote Bartrim, which had previously been leased, was sold and eventually it was owned by the Freeman family, including the core of the village and the 'Manor' farmhouse (some parcels of land were subsequently re-sold). During the 18th century the farm was most likely a mixed corn and stock farm. The Freeman's ownership continued until the early 20th century, when in 1907 Mrs Gertrude Winthrop, a socially gregarious American from New York bought the Hidcote Manor Estate; 'a picturesque farm house, with lawns and large kitchen garden, convenient and substantial farm buildings and ten cottages'. The farm at this date comprised much of the land to the north-east, north and west of Hidcote Manor, totalling around 287 acres.

In 1907 Lawrence Johnston, Mrs Winthrop's son, arrived at Hidcote and started to develop plans for the house (a former farmhouse) and gardens. Johnston had studied agriculture for 8 or 9 years and took an immediate and active interest in the farm, winning many show prizes.

In 1907 the North Courtyard was a working farmyard. Johnston built new farm barns on the other side of the lane to the east, releasing the North Courtyard buildings for alteration for different uses such as plant growing, stables etc.



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The Thatched Barn which is located behind the North Courtyard farm buildings is thought to date from the late 19th century in its largely current form (NB date difference with Listing Entry). Before that smaller buildings are shown on the site. In 1907 sale particulars mention in this location a 'Wood Shed, Implement Shed and Saw-pit with thatch roofs and 2 Pig Styes' and the Thatched Barn is likely one of these. Since then, it has largely been used as a Potting House and Wood Shed and is now used by the NT for water storage/storage, wet-weather cover and some visitor interpretation.

After the First World War Mrs Winthrop purchased the farmhouse and cottages at the south end of Hidcote Bartrim and the adjacent land to the west and south, which enabled Johnston to expand and develop the garden.

During the Second World War, Johnston's financial situation deteriorated and eventually in 1948 Hidcote Manor was transferred to the National Trust, although Johnston retained an active part in its development until his death in 1958. When the NT accepted the gift of Hidcote Manor from Lawrence Johnston in 1948, it was regarded by recognised garden experts of the time as an example of a 20<sup>th</sup> century garden that was of national importance and interest ... and probably unsurpassed.

## **Description of the Thatched Barn**

The Thatched Barn is a single storey building with a half-hipped roof supported above huge cross-beams (unusual curved-shaped tree trunks) spanning the space between the north and south walls, with trusses above. The purlins are relatively smooth, round-wood poles. The roof timbers have been substantially repaired and the rafters were replaced in the 1960s. Some beams are now supported on internal brick piers built inside the rubble walls. The main roof is thatched in water reed and the block ridge is thatched in combed wheat reed, incorporating scalloped and diamond shapes.

The south and north external walls are made of rubble limestone with large stone quoins. Differing areas of stonework suggest that sections may have been re-built and the building possibly extended.

The gable ends are timber clad with roughly sawn, horizontal lap weather-boarding. The large horizontal, crudely-sawn planks to the upper gable west and east walls likely date from Johnston's time. The timber lap-boarding to the lower gable west and east walls have been partially repaired and replaced with modern lap-boarding.

Both gables have planked loft/attic doors with original strap hinges. The east gable loft door has been replaced in the 21st century.

There are plank doors with strap hinges at both ends of the building; single in the east and double in the west gable. The planking has been replaced in the 20th century. The east door has an iron hook and loop catch, with the wooden peg that would have been used to secure the catch nailed to the door post.



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Internally there is a close-boarded partition of uncertain age which separates the easternmost bay from the rest of the barn.

Originally the floor would have been earth, but it is now concrete.

### **Significance of Heritage Asset**

The gardens, nursery garden and garden yards surrounding Hidcote Manor are collectively registered as a Grade I-Registered Park and Garden and are therefore considered rare and nationally important.

The Thatched Barn is Grade II listed and is located adjacent to the Grade II-listed Hidcote Manor House.

The Thatched Barn is considered to be of medium significance in the CMP.

#### **Evidential and Historical value**

- Good representative example of this type of 19<sup>th</sup>-century barn;
- Basic structure that remains largely intact with high levels of 'readability';
- Despite being substantially repaired, it remains an interesting structure with unusual tie beams and weather-boarding;

#### **Aesthetic value – significant**

- Impressive example of the local vernacular;

#### **Communal Value**

- Seen by the very many national and international visitors that come to Hidcote Manor Garden to enjoy the gardens and local landscape;
- Dry space in which the National Trust can provide interpretation to the visitors which helps them to understand the development of the site and its historical context.

### **Proposed Works**

The proposed works are relatively straightforward and involve the re-thatching of the half-hipped roof:

- Careful removal of the existing chicken wire and thatch;
- Replacement of the existing felt membrane, which is torn in numerous places, with new traditional felt membrane;
- Recovering of roof using new thatch to match the existing material and details;
- Installation of new chicken wire to protect the thatch



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## **Impact of works on heritage asset**

The Thatched Barn will have traditionally been periodically re-thatched, re-ridged and patched repaired over the years. The proposal continues this maintenance regime.

Historic thatch material will be lost, but depending on the extent of decay discovered as the decayed thatch is removed, it may be possible to retain some of the lower layers which are likely to be the most historic.

The main roof thatch will be replaced like-for-like with water reed. The block ridge will be renewed like-for-like with combed wheat reed, retaining the existing pattern of scallops and diamonds. Traditional wooden spars will be used to fix the layers of thatch in situ. The roof membrane will be replaced like-for-like.

The barn is overhung by a large, mature *Davidia* tree which contributes to the damaging build-up of moss and localised destruction due to branch contact in windy weather. Whilst some very minor pruning of the tree is acceptable, this tree is a significant feature in its own right and major pruning could cause harm and is therefore unacceptable to the National Trust. There is a smaller *Prunus* tree on the north side of the building which also causes issues with moss build-up and branch damage. The roof is currently covered in chicken wire and this detail will be reinstated to provide some protection to the thatch from impact damage and birds (jackdaws are prevalent in the area).

## **Other Photographs**



1. West Elevation



2. South Elevation, showing close proximity of *Davidia* tree



3. East Elevation



4. North Elevation, showing close proximity of *Prunus* tree



5. Close up of thatch condition





6. Eastern End of South Elevation



7. Internal view of roof timbers



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8. Torn traditional felt membrane

## **References**

Teasdale, J. (2023) *Hidcote Manor Garden Conservation Management Plan*

## **Listing Information**

SP 14 SE EBRINGTON HIDCOTE BARTRIM

5/50 Barn behind ticket office at Hideote Manor

II

Garden Store. Early C20. Probably designed by Lawrence Johnston. Limestone rubble side walls. Weather boarded gable ends. Weather boarding and double doors to ground floor left gable end which has an unusual, exposed curving tie beam also. Thatched, half-hipped roof. Single storey and attic with access to roof via plank door with strap hinges in left gable end. National Trust property.

Listing NGR: SP1762142890