



Rectories Revisited

Pendragon House
before work began



Rectories are a significant feature of English towns and villages. They are symbols of our ecclesiastical, social and architectural history, and a centre of community life. As the most high-status of the ecclesiastical residences, rectories were often relatively luxurious houses and redundant rectories make particularly desirable homes.

Owners of these important listed buildings feel a deep connection with the history and character of their home, which means that specialist architects and craftsmen are often involved when repair and renovation work is being considered.

While understanding, and desiring, that the history of their listed building is retained, new owners will typically want to

personalise their home. Two nearly completed projects on rectories in Cornwall illustrate just what can be achieved with guidance from experienced conservation architects, and of course, the careful input from the owners.

The South West is particularly rich in listed buildings, with the highest number of any region in England. In Cornwall alone there are around 150 listed rectory buildings. Pendragon House in Stoke Climsland and The Old Rectory in St Mawgan were purchased by new owners in 2007, and Gilmore Hankey Kirke Limited (GHK) were appointed as architects.

PENDRAGON HOUSE, STOKE CLIMSLAND

Pendragon House sits within its own walled boundary on the outskirts of the village of Stoke Climsland, in the Tamar Valley. This grade II listed building dates principally from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while incorporating fragments of an earlier structure. It is a fascinating example of a house built from the relative wealth of a succession of parsons.

When the current owners purchased the house, they took on a building which had been sold into private hands in 1978 and converted to a residential care home. Parts of the building had not been occupied for some time and were in a dilapidated condition. Original historic features survived in abundance.



In 2007 GHK were approached by the new owners and tasked with returning the building to a family home, removing many of the alterations from the nursing home conversion. The new owners were fascinated by the history of their future home and had already begun extensive research into the history themselves, including discovering of a set of mid-nineteenth century plans and elevations. Simon Crosbie, a practice Associate, developed a scheme for the house based on their research, which was consolidated into a full report by a specialist researcher.

The archive finds were fundamental in steering the philosophy for the proposals and historic features uncovered during the project also helped to bring the

history of Pendragon back to life. A cobbled floor and a well found beneath floorboards evoke the bustle of a former external courtyard and the nineteenth century wire bell-pull system (which the owner hopes to restore to working order) harks back to the days of domestic service.

Pendragon House principally dates from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although

Top:
Rebuilding of chimney to original profile

Bottom:
Pendragon House north-west elevation circa 1900

documents survive to describing the building in 1680. The early building was extensively remodelled, with programmes of building in 1785 and the mid-nineteenth century.

The house has a rich history, with connections to the royal family. The manor belongs to the Duchy of Cornwall and several rectors of Stoke Climsland were in the service of the Crown. George V's heir, ➡



Edward, given the title Prince of Wales in 1910, became a friend of the Rector, Revd. Martin Andrews and made numerous visits to the house.

GHK's extensive experience of working with historic buildings led the refurbishment to be planned as three phases of work. Phase one of the works, currently nearing completion, was intended to make the structure weatherproof. The works were planned to allow a period of settling of the internal environment ahead of internal refurbishment. The only internal works being carried out as part of this first phase were those that needed to be considered concurrently with the external works, to arrest further deterioration of the fabric.

The work carried out on the elevations was largely informed by the drawings and specifications of 1851, together with necessary repairs to arrest further decay of the fabric. There was extensive wet and dry rot, together with beetle infestation. Pendragon House required complete re-roofing; many of the slates were salvaged and reused, and new Trevillet slate used where necessary. The numerous chimneys are an important feature of the building, but in all but one had been removed, and two others reduced and encased in modern cement. The chimneys were reinstated to the 1851 drawing and this reintroduced much of the lost character of the house. The house has been re-rendered in lime, except for an area which displayed the scar

Stripped roof during repair and restoration works

The Rev. Martin Andrews

of a former glasshouse roof, and this historic evidence has been retained. The numerous sash windows have been painstakingly repaired.

The historic interest of Pendragon and the high quality of the conservation repairs being undertaken attracted a visit from the regional group of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, as the repairs undertaken follow the SPAB philosophy. The owner has also kindly led tours of the house for the local history society, rekindling the historic relationship between the owner of Pendragon and the residents of the village of Stoke Climsland. ➡



An original Butterfield fireplace dominates the sitting room

THE OLD RECTORY, ST MAWGAN

This rectory situated in the village of St Mawgan was designed by William Butterfield circa 1858, and is an excellent example of his Gothic Revival style. Its outstanding importance is recognised by its grade II* listed status. The rectory was made redundant in the 1970s and became a private house.

William Butterfield (1814-1900) was a dedicated Gothic Revivalist, and his main interest lay in ecclesiastical buildings. Over his career he designed approximately 25 country parsonages, and other buildings such as houses and schools.

The village of St Mawgan is particularly rich in the architect's work, which can be found at the

church, the lych gate and the local school. Butterfield's rectory was built on a new site some distance from the church, to replace the existing "very picturesque and exceedingly inconvenient" Elizabethan rectory.

The statutory list description provided a useful starting point for detailed research into the building. Original documents were consulted in the local history archive and the Cornwall Record Office, together with books and other literature on the building and the architect. The resultant historic building report demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the history and significance of the house and this was enhanced by detail uncovered during the restoration work.

The report proved a fascinating

read for the owner of the house and those involved in the project. It was an invaluable tool for the architects in developing sensitive proposals for the listed building, and in discussing these proposals with English Heritage and the local Conservation Officer.

Butterfield's plans for parsonages were consistent, and The Old Rectory provides a clear example of his standard design. The basic shape was nearly always a rectangle, although the design of the elevations was typically asymmetric, reflecting the Gothic Revival belief that the exterior of a building ought to be adapted to its internal requirements.

Little of the layout of the plan had been altered from the original Butterfield design, and a number of important internal features survived.



New elements are treated as furniture to touch the building lightly

Contemporary lighting contrasts with the elegant original panelling and staircase



The architect undertook the removal of areas of modern partitioning to return the building to the Butterfield plan. All remaining historic features were retained and restored, although some fireplaces and other elements had been lost over the years.

Against this historic context, the client was keen to display his passion for modern design and contemporary furnishings, to design a high-quality property. The result is an exciting mix of exemplary conservation work, and contemporary intervention.

For those inspired to spend some time in the luxurious surroundings of The Old Rectory, enquiries should be made through www.uniquehomestays.com.

GHK have specialised in conservation and sensitive

contemporary intervention in historic and listed buildings since 1973, working from their offices in London and Plymouth. Information on GHK can be found at www.ghkint.com/architects.

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