

SAVE WINSTANLEY HALL: A RACE AGAINST TIME



Though the gardens run wild Lewis Wyatt's entrance front still proudly surveys the park

SAVE has secured a reprieve to draw up and initiate a practical scheme for the rescue of Winstanley Hall in Lancashire, a 450 year old Elizabethan house near Wigan extensively remodelled by Lewis Wyatt, the talented son of James Wyatt's brother Benjamin in the early 19th century. The buildings are listed Grade II*.

The stable court and other buildings to the side of the main house are a prize example of English eccentricity, with rugged Primitivist masonry and designed with heady mix of Norman, Tudor and Baroque motifs and a Swiss cottage covered in Celtic-

style ornament at the end. Winstanley Hall and some 10 acres of grounds are currently owned by a leading local house builder, Dorbrest. After failure to gain approval for a scheme with a substantial element of enabling development the complex of buildings at Winstanley have remained disused. In 2011, English Heritage was on the point of agreeing to a scheme which would have seen the main house and some of the outbuildings demolished when SAVE stepped in.

The immediate need is to halt decay. SAVE has commissioned leading historic buildings engineers,

The Morton Partnership to draw up a scheme of emergency works as well as a strategy for long-term repair.

The grounds and parkland were subject to extensive open cast coalmining in the post-war period and, subsequently, the M6 motorway was built along the edge of the parkland, clipping off one of the lodges. The grounds however have been restored after mining and the motorway is mainly in a cutting. Winstanley remains a romantic place, secluded by trees and woodland and approached by a long drive. Its survival is the more important as so many houses in the area around Wigan have been demolished, though nearby Bispham Hall has been successfully rescued.

Other buildings saved from demolition by direct intervention by SAVE are first 18th-century Barlaston Hall, Staffordshire, which we bought for a £1 in the early 1980s when it was suffering from severe coal mining subsidence and long term abandonment. Barlaston was successfully restored as a single house with all its Rococo interiors and is lived in again.

Second, SAVE intervened to rescue All Souls, Haley Hill in Halifax (which George Gilbert Scott said was his best church). Here the spire, a major local landmark, had been condemned as dangerous. We signed a seven year repairing lease putting on a new roof and saving the spire with an ingenious new internal skin of brickwork devised by Arups, the engineers.

Third, we took on 6 Palace Street in Carnarvon, a



The five gabled Elizabethan front built by the London goldsmith James Bankes who bought the estate in 1595

house of medieval origin which had been condemned under a Dangerous Structures Notice. Here we secured a reprieve from immediate demolition in the High Court over the Christmas holiday and, subsequently, carried out a full repairs programme under our architect, Huw Thomas, after selling it as a tea room and shop.

At Winstanley our immediate need is for funds towards the emergency repairs. We are seeking grants from English Heritage and other grant giving bodies.

There are a number of exciting possible combinations of uses. Our long-term strategy is being worked up with advice from Kit Martin, the well-known



The Elizabethan front is on the right with the parapets added by Lewis Wyatt.



The stable courtyard built by Meyrick Bankes in the 1830s is a classic example of English eccentricity



Birds Eye view by Huw Thomas showing the full extent of the house and the impressive stable court surrounded by Meyrick Bankes's delightfully eccentric buildings





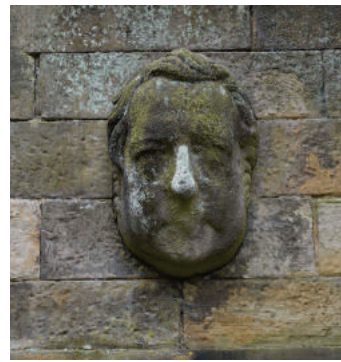
The dramatic fountain in the stable court portrays Neptune in his chariot drawn by sea horses and was carved by the Liverpool sculptor William Spence after a design by Meyrick Bankes



Cast-iron gatepost and gate



Round arches in the Norman style



Grotesque carved head over a doorway

rescuer of major country houses such as Gunton Hall, Burley-on-the-Hill and Tynningham – on the mix of uses, and from Roger Tempest of Broughton Hall, Yorkshire, who has pioneered the transformation of service courtyards, stables, coach houses and farm buildings into attractive, highly lettable workspaces for enterprising small businesses.

We are hoping this can be combined, as at Broughton Hall, with an element of public access, particularly at weekends and holidays, with an exhibition and café for visitors. There is a late 17th-century barn suitable for events and exhibitions. With the Heritage Trust for the North West we are exploring the use of one of the buildings for heritage training skills, a use for which Heritage Lottery funds are available. We have had discussions with the Landmark Trust about using the handsomely proportioned rooms around Lewis Wyatt's entrance tower as a potential holiday let, and with the National Trust about the recreational potential of the gardens and wider landscape. We have also recruited help from Mark Gibson who drew up SAVE's business plan for the rescue of Dumfries House and who has himself rescued the 3,000 acre estate of Craigengillan, in Scotland, from dereliction. Welcome help has also come from Sophie Andreae who, while at SAVE, oversaw and

masterminded the repair of Barlaston Hall amidst a hard fought and eventually successful battle to secure compensation from the National Coal Board.

The Winstanley Estate was bought in 1595 by James Bankes, a London goldsmith, who built the Elizabethan house. His east-facing front still remains with two projecting wings and a recessed centre stepped back in two stages. The large mullion window of the hall is in the centre with the original entrance to one side.

The original Elizabethan gables were replaced in the early 19th century by a parapet designed by Lewis Wyatt who worked at Winstanley in 1818–19. He designed a new entrance tower to the south with an Ionic portico. Inside, some of his plasterwork remains and a fine cantilevered staircase with iron balustrade.

On the south west corner is a wing with a three-sided bay of 1780. There are also date stones of 1843 and 1889.

The stable yard is surrounded by a series of buildings consisting of an east range of 1834 with concave facades and arched entrances. Behind this is a 17th-century barn with strutted trusses. The north stable range with central clock tower, and octagonal windows and cupolas at the corners also dates from the 1830s. Opposite is the coach house which features an exquisite double curved staircase. The Neptune



The 17th century barn is suitable as an events and exhibition space



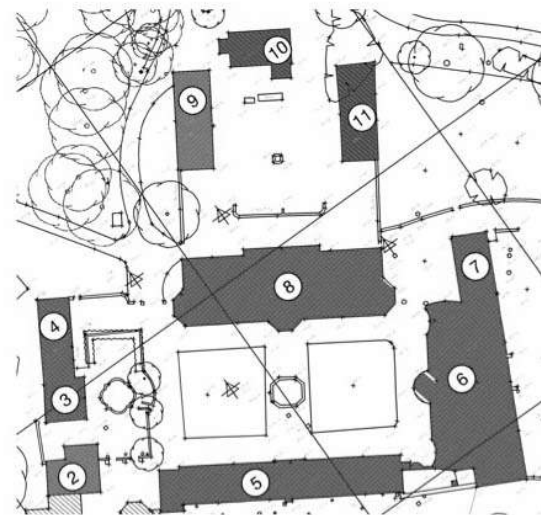
The Swiss Cottage has a hint of Celtic ornament in the masonry detail.

fountain in the centre of the stable court is by William Spence and dates from c. 1830. At the west end of the yard are the central Swiss cottage and adjoining malt house with stepped gable dating from 1884 as well as a late-18th century dairy house. A number of the Lewis Wyatt gate lodges survive.

The rescue of Winstanley Hall is a major task but since the exhibition *The Destruction of the Country House* in 1974, which led to the foundation of SAVE, we have not lost a country house of this age and quality. We hope this project will receive the strong support of SAVE's Friends – the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) has just sent us a welcome cheque and the Georgian Group has also pledged support. Donations, small as well as large, are naturally welcome. We also need the endorsement of our Friends and supporters in making the plight of these remarkable buildings better known.

You can also help us in one specific way by joining the Friends of Winstanley Hall – founder member Dan Cruickshank. This involves a one off donation of at least £5 which can be made by cheque, credit card or via our website. We did this with All Souls Haley Hill and it was a great boost to the project. Please join!

Marcus Binney, President of SAVE



Buildings

- 2 - The Malt House
- 3 - The Estates Office
- 4 - The Dairy House
- 5 - The Coach House
- 6 - Tithe Barn Mews
- 7 - Tithe Cottage
- 8 - Stable Mews
- 9 - The Forge
- 10 - Keeper's cottage
- 11 - Farrier's Lodge



A family dog sits on a circular turret



A stable range in rough hewn 'Primitive' style





The strong convex and concave curves suggest Meyrick Bankes had a taste for the baroque.

Text by Marcus Binney © SAVE Britain's Heritage 2011

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