



The Garden House at Nocton Hall



THE GARDEN HOUSE



THE GARDEN HOUSE AS IT WAS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Bernard Hunter clearly remembers the first time he and his wife Veronica fell in love with the The Garden House in the grounds of Nocton Hall.

Words: Sarah Winstanley

Bernard, now retired, had been wanting to renovate an old property for some time so when he and Veronica spotted the ‘for sale’ sign on the run down old house whilst on a Sunday afternoon drive round the grounds of the hall, it got him thinking.

By the time they arrived home to Canwick, they’d decided to return for a second look. Mr Hunter recalled: “The Garden House had been empty for twelve years and was a wreck with pigeons in the roof and boarded up windows. But the grounds it stood on were sensational – private and peaceful and surrounded by trees.”

The couple bought the place and set about making it into the lovely family home it is today. The Garden House is Grade II listed and had been built in 1831 to house the hall’s Head Gardener and his family. Its garden walls surrounded the hall’s vegetable and flower garden.

Nocton Hall itself is steeped in history having been the principal seat of the prominent Norman family of



THE BEAUTIFUL GARDENS



THE CONSERVATORY

the d’Arcys who were named as landowners in the Domesday Book of 1086. The family line lived at Nocton Hall for the next 600 years and in 1541, one of their descendants Thomas Wymbishe and his wife Elizabeth, Lady Tailboys, entertained Henry VIII and his fifth wife Katherine Howard there. It is said that the chestnut tree in the grounds to the north of the hall was planted by the monarch and his wife to mark their visit.

The first Earl of Ripon, who was Britain’s shortest serving Prime Minister, occupied the hall with his wife Sarah and in 1834, whilst the family was in London, the hall burnt to the ground. It was rebuilt on the same site and completed in 1841.

During the Great War, the hall was used as a convalescent home for American officers and between 1939 and 1942 it was an Army Casualty Clearing Station. In 1944, it became the US Army Seventh General Hospital and a year later, the hall and 100 acres of land were purchased by

the Air Ministry. It was reopened as a military hospital in 1947. The site was closed by the Ministry of Defence in 1995 and the hall later became a residential home until 1998 when it became empty.

Sadly the hall was once again badly damaged by fire in 2004 and in October 2009, it was named as one of the ten most endangered buildings in the country in a report by the Victorian Society.

When Mr and Mrs Hunter bought The Garden House, along with almost an acre of grounds in 1986, it had fallen into a state of disrepair. But this didn’t deter Mr Hunter who at the time owned Hunter Building Services, a specialist joinery manufacturers based on Queen Street, Lincoln.

He set about stripping back the

ceilings inside the house, then the rooms were re-plastered and the entire house was re-wired and re-plumbed. An old concrete kitchen extension to the rear of the house was pulled down and a temporary kitchen installed in what is now the dining room. A small third bedroom was converted into a spacious en-suite shower and dressing room to the master bedroom.

He recalled: “When we bought the house someone had painted the inside of the Gothic stone mullion windows a lavender colour, so we spent a long time stripping them back to the original stone.”

The couple moved into the house six months after they bought it, but that wasn’t the end of Mr Hunter’s vision for the place. Three months later, he began the second phase of the project to build a large extension which



THE KITCHEN



THE ENTRANCE HALL



THE LOUNGE

incorporated a breakfast kitchen, a spacious lounge, sun room, an office/bedroom with en-suite shower room, utility room and garage. As the building is listed, the couple worked hard to ensure the extension was in keeping with the original part of the house, even using reclaimed bricks from a garden wall as its outer shell.

Mr Hunter said: "We wanted to retain the original character of the house and I was in the right business to do it. We manufactured all the woodwork ourselves and everything was made to match what was already here. It's made a very nice property."

Four years later, Mr Hunter built a large store and garage in the grounds to the rear of the house.

He said: "When the hall was occupied, the gardens ran into one another and it was like being in Lincoln's Arboretum. Now our gardens are like a little oasis."

Sadly, Mrs Hunter passed away three years ago and now Mr Hunter has decided the time is right to downsize. In September, he put the house on the market with Harrisons Estate Agents.

He said: "The house is so nice I don't want to leave, but I'm rattling

about here on my own and I do need to downsize.

"I've converted the outbuildings I used as a store and garage into a two-bedroom bungalow and that will be just right for me. I will split the garden to suit whoever buys the house."

So who would be the perfect buyer for The Garden House? Mr Hunter said: "Someone looking for a bit of peace and quiet."

The Garden House at Nocton Hall is on the market with Harrisons for £690,000. For more information phone (01522) 568880.