



# *Fulbeck Hall* – a family home

*Words and Photographs: Judy Theobald*

For almost 400 years it was the ancestral home of the Fane family, but five years ago, Fulbeck Hall was bought by Mr and Mrs William and Rié Day who moved to the county from Wandsworth in London. They knew little of Lincolnshire before they moved but when they discovered Fulbeck Hall they agreed they liked both the house and the area and decided they wanted to move. What particularly appealed to them was that it gave them what Mr Day described as ‘a completely clean sheet of paper’. The Hall was also the right sort of size to create a large family home in which they could entertain their families and friends.

The original Fulbeck Hall was built in the seventeenth century but was burned down in 1731. It was rebuilt in 1733 for Francis Fane, possibly by Stamford architect George Portwood. For almost four centuries the house provided the backdrop for the Fanes’ rich and colourful lives. However, prior to its sale the con-

tents – paintings, furniture, and other items and memorabilia – were all sold at auction

For the first three years, the Days and their three children lived in one of the cottages at the back of the Hall while restoration work was carried out to the main part of the property.

During the Second World War the Hall was requisitioned by the army and is famously known as the headquarters where the Battle of Arnhem – codenamed Operation Market Garden – was planned. However, Mr Day said: “They wrecked it and left it in a pretty sorry

state. The owners previous did quite a bit of work and it was loved and looked after and we’ve had to do all the boring stuff such as replacing window frames and pipes. Fortunately that’s all done now.

“The Hall is Grade II\* listed and we spent eighteen months working with English Heritage at the end of which they came to the view that what we wanted to do was entirely reasonable.”

One of Lincolnshire’s historic houses has been bought by a London family who are enjoying living in their new surroundings

*Below (from left): The library; Part of the eleven-acre garden viewed from an upstairs window*

*Opposite (from top right): Fulbeck Hall; The original cottages which pre-date the Hall The spacious sitting room; The four-poster bed from the original house*



When the Days bought the house it was divided into three flats and although the front doors and a wall have been removed, the two upper floors of the house still divide themselves into three convenient areas – a bedroom, bathroom and dressing-room section for William and Rié, a four-bedroom, two bathroom section for the children with its own sitting room, and, at the north end of the house, a separate area of bedrooms and bathrooms for their guests. Despite the number of bedrooms in the house, there were very few bathrooms and extra ones had to be installed. Another first-floor room has been converted into a laundry room, painted in a brilliant, bubble-gum pink, no doubt to cheer a dreary job.

In the previous owners' time what is now the Days' bedroom was displayed to the nation when designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen gave it a 'makeover' on the television programme 'Changing Rooms'. "It cost £500 to do and thousands to undo," said Mr Day regretfully. "There was a black circle on the ceiling which took countless coats of white paint to cover and he'd used black gloss paint on the window frames." However the room is now restored with a white ceiling and a pale green trellis wallpaper. The bedroom adjoins Mrs Day's dressing room, one wall of which is lined with glass-fronted wardrobes. A pretty dressing table stands between the two windows. Her bathroom has a large bath, separate shower cubicle and a chaise longue in which she can unwind after a stressful day.

In one of the rooms which are yet to be restored, the bare walls are covered with graffiti left over by soldiers of many different nationalities who were billeted





## HOMES & GARDENS



*Ms Day's dressing room*



*The newly converted kitchen*

there during the war. Mr Day intends to keep this graffiti and has plans to install army bunk beds for teenage guests. A photograph in the library reveals that he was once an officer in the Grenadier Guards.

When the Days moved into the house every item of furniture had been sold but in one of the guest rooms is a four-poster bed from the original house which Mr Day has managed to buy back again. Having lived in a family home in London, they have had to buy much more furniture to fill the Hall and it has taken quite some time and a lot of care to find just the right pieces.

On the ground floor, all the principal rooms needed very little alteration. "The proportions are such that we couldn't have done anything to them even if we'd wanted to," said Mr Day. Before the restoration work was carried out, the linked rooms provided the children with an indoor cycling circuit of about eighty feet in length although this is, of course, now forbidden. At the front of the house is a large, bright sitting room with windows looking to the gardens and the church. On Thursday nights the bellringers practice and give the family much enjoyment. The room behind this, possibly used as a morning room by the previous owners, has now been converted into a kitchen with a dining area at one end, again looking towards the church. The Days think this was probably a kitchen in the original house, has had several uses over the years, but has now come full circle to be used as a kitchen again.

To the right of the front door is the library with three of its four walls lined with built-in shelves which were there when the Days moved in. These are packed with memorabilia and books, many of which are in Japanese, Mrs Day's native language. The former dining room at the north end of the house is going to be a sitting room and although Mr and Mrs Day have designed most of the house themselves, they are using the services of an interior designer for this room. "This is going to be our grown-up room," said Mr Day. Next door is a dining room, painted in deep red to create a welcoming, intimate atmosphere.

The house is currently heated by oil and although they are surrounded by woodland, Mr Day said it would not be practical to use this to heat the house. "I do know of someone who heats a property of this size with wood but they have to employ a full-time woodsman which rather defeats the object of the exercise," he said.

"We would like to put solar panels on our flat roof but even though the only people who see the roof are the pilots of the RAF jets which fly over, as we are listed we are unable to do it. Similarly, there's nothing we can do to insulate the windows. You just have to remember to wear an extra jersey."

Outside, the Hall is surrounded by eleven acres of garden now tended by Jackie Nelstrop. "It has been a much loved garden but when Mrs Fane became ill it was neglected for four or five years," said Mr Day. However, thanks to Jackie's attention and the Days' hard work, the gardens are yet again open for charity at various times throughout the year. "The Red Cross have a very successful evening event every year and they've also been open for the Lincolnshire Old Churches Trust and local Conservatives," said Mr Day.

Immediately at the back of the Hall, is a row of cottages standing at a right-angle to the main building. These pre-date the Hall and were the original buildings on the site. The Days stayed there while their home was being restored and Mr Day's parents are now planning to come and live there.

Despite the years of hard work they have had to face, they are happy they made the move. Mr Day said: "Lincolnshire suits us down to the ground after London. It seems quite a low-key country and we like that very much. People have been very welcoming and we have more of a social life here than we ever had in London."