





THE DRAWING ROOM

Fit for a King

When Margaret Elgood stepped inside Castle Moat House for the first time, she had a vision of a happy future living there.

Words and photographs: Sarah Winstanley

The Grade II-listed house needed work but it was in a lovely location on Drury Lane in uphill Lincoln, close to her husband Rex's work at the hospital and perfect for their children Robert (now 60) and Mary (57) to run around in.

The couple immediately agreed to pay the asking price of £10,000 and then set about making the house into a lovely family home.

Forty-two years later, ill health means the Elgoods have decided to move nearer their daughter in Northamptonshire and so they have put Castle Moat House on the market with Humberts estate agents.

Mrs Elgood said: "We have been 100 per cent happy here and had no intention of leaving until our lives finished, but it is now a sensible time to move on.

"We have so much happiness to look back on that I'm sure we will be just fine in our new home."

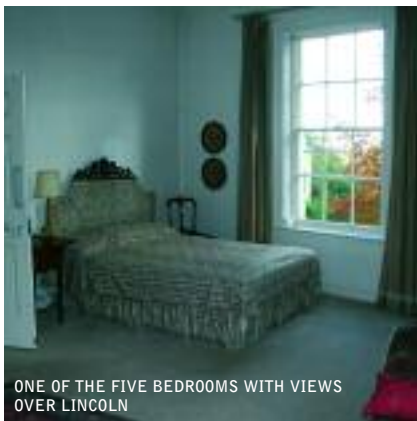
It was 1967 when the Elgoods first moved up to Lincoln from Kent where they lived in an old vicarage and Dr Elgood worked as a paediatrician at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital. Dr Elgood had been offered a position at Lincoln County Hospital's paediatric department which he very much wanted, so the couple had sold their home and registered with the estate agents in Lincoln.

Mrs Elgood recalled: "The agents phoned one night to say a house we might like was coming on the market. We drove up at 7am the next morning but were not allowed to see the house until the afternoon.

"The owner's sister opened the door with a cigarette in her mouth and showed us round. The house was in a sad state. So many of the original features had been damaged or were missing, the wallpaper was dreadful and there were brown tiled fireplaces in every room.



THE GARDEN AT CASTLE MOAT HOUSE SHELTERS UNDER THE WALLS OF LINCOLN CASTLE



ONE OF THE FIVE BEDROOMS WITH VIEWS OVER LINCOLN



GRAND STAIRCASE IN THE ENTRANCE HALL



MR AND MRS ELGOOD IN THE DRAWING ROOM AT THE CASTLE MOAT HOUSE

"But I had a funny sensation as soon as I stepped in the hallway. I had a vision of the future and saw we were going to live here very happily and I knew Rex felt the same."

Their daughter's reaction to seeing the house for the first time was a little mixed, however. Mrs Elgood recalls: "Mary was horse mad at the time. When she saw the house she was disappointed because there was nowhere to keep a pony, but she said she could have a beautiful dress, sweep down the stairs and go to a ball instead!"

With the house theirs, the Elgoods embarked on a scheme of improvements to put back its original character.

Mrs Elgood added: "I spent all that winter watching workmen making wonderful changes to the house. I used to go to the cathedral and sit quietly to get away from the banging, but gradually our vision for the house came into being."

The programme of restoration was deserving of such a grand old house which had been built in 1820 for a rich maltster and merchant called William Dawber who had premises on Newland.

Built in Queen Anne style, it has an imposing setting below the Castle Keep and overlooking the top of Spring Hill at its junction with Drury Lane. Its gardens are sheltered by the walls of Lincoln Castle and Peter De Wint's former residence is just next door.

The house itself is approached via a semi-circular driveway with extensive parking and a double garage. Stone steps lead under a latticed cast-iron porch to the front door, which opens onto an entrance

hall with central staircase. Downstairs, there is a drawing room, dining room, study and kitchen/breakfast room with glass covered courtyard and upstairs are five bedrooms, one with a balcony, and two bathrooms.

The place was certainly a fitting abode for one of its former residents, the eccentric judge the Hon Sir George Sherston Baker and his third wife, Emmeline who lived there between 1919 and 1923.

Mrs Elgood said: "There are lots of stories about the judge. He had a good reputation as a judge but loved killing chickens on the back doorstep and having parties. Everyone who was invited was expected to play murders and the judge would either hide in the bath or hang from the banisters. Anyone who found him would never be invited to one of his parties again!"

She added: "A helper we used to have told me he would be driven round to the castle by horse and coach for his morning's work and would return in the afternoon. After lunch, he would go up the hill where there was a summer house near the castle wall, have lots of drink and then throw the bottles in the trees!"

"When we first moved here, we were warned by the solicitor next door called Mason that we would find lots of bottles and also oyster shells which the Roman soldiers used to eat. We found both and I used to wash the shells and give them to children who used to visit.

"My children used to love going up the hill and recently my butcher, Kenny, in the Bailgate told me he used to creep up to the summerhouse as a boy. It gave me such a thrill to

think that Kenny remembered it!"

Once the restoration work was complete, the Elgoods ensured family life was busy and full. Dr Elgood had lots of friends from work and fishing and Mrs Elgood busied herself with charity work.

Mrs Elgood said: "We used to give cocktail parties in those days and lots of dinner parties and people were enormously friendly.

"My father was in the Lincolnshire Regiment during the First World War and loved coming to stay with us."

She added: "We once had a strawberry tea in the grounds and at 3pm the rain came down and everyone ran inside. People were eating their strawberry teas up the staircase and happily chatting away and everyone found it amusing that it had rained."

At one time, the Elgoods were not the house's only residents – Mrs Elgood admits there was a well behaved ghost. She said: "The door to the sitting room which would be properly shut would open wide enough to let someone in and then shut again. We did lots of tests but couldn't discover its cause so we put it down to a ghost. It did stop doing it after a while though!"

So now with the Elgoods soon to be moving to their new home, who does Mrs Elgood hope will buy the house? She said: "I think you must have children in a place like this. It needs children racing round the stairs just like mine used to do."

• *Castle Moat House is on the market with Humberts estate agents in Lincoln with an asking price of £925,000. For more information phone (01522) 546444.*