

The Old Cottage, Grange Road, Barcombe statement



The Old Cottage, Barcombe viewed from Grange Road, 2011.

The Old Cottage is an oak-framed and local brick property built in 1776 with later extensions added, including an artist's studio in the 1940s by local painter Majorie Hoare.

The property was in a considerable state of disrepair when purchased by the current owner in 2011. The extent of renovation works required provided an ideal opportunity to dramatically upgrade the energy performance of the whole building, to meet current requirements and to improve the internal environment to make it a comfortable, relaxed and healthy house to live in.

The planning application was led by Jon Broome and the renovation by Conker Conservation, both leading and experienced practitioners in the field of sustainable and ecological construction. The renovation adopted a 'fabric-first' approach and used the AECB (Association for Environment Conscious Building) Building Standard as its benchmark.

Conker Conservation comment:

"When we started, The Old Cottage was like many old cottages in the UK: tired condition, poor energy efficiency, having endured a myriad of alterations and additions. As such, we find a lot of similar properties are now facing obsolescence. The priority here, therefore, was to substantively improve the building's insulation and airtightness levels, undertaking repairs and alterations where needed.

This was achieved by taking a holistic approach to the retrofit and refurbishment. The roof, external walls and floors were all insulated. Where possible, sustainable, natural fibre insulations – such as rigid wood fibre sheathing – were installed to reduce the works' embodied carbon. The result is a far more comfortable, attractive and energy-efficient dwelling than before, which will last for many years to come" - Conker Conservation Ltd.

Renovation approach:

There were five objectives in renovating the property: to bring light into an otherwise dark, damp property; to re-model the internal layout so as to bring coherence to the internal spaces; to be true to the historic character of the building; to reduce its carbon footprint; and to take an ecological approach to renovating the building using breathable materials and construction methods.

Light

The aim was to bring light into the heart of the building, maximising natural light as the sun travels around the building during the course of the day and the seasons. Re-planning the internal circulation spaces helped achieve this. For example, the staircase originally bisected the property from south to north and has been moved to the corner of the new main room, allowing light to flood the space from all directions. New internal windows make the most of the light, as do new openings in the roof, and a sun-pipe outside the first-floor bathroom creates a bright internal landing. New custom-made timber windows (Accoya to the exterior/Douglas Fir for internal) were made to the front half of the house replacing the original leaded ones which restricted incoming light. New contemporary, thermally efficient double glazed and argon filled Rational timber frame windows were fitted. These windows have an aluminium exterior facing to increase the lifespan and reduce maintenance.

All these windows not only bring more light into the living space but also generate thermal solar gain which helps reduce energy consumption for heating and lighting.

Historic character

The renovation has respected the historic significance of the building and tried to reflect the renovation as part of its on-going lifecycle. For historic reasons, as well as reducing environmental waste, existing materials and features have been re-used, sometimes in a new position: the distinctive original front door (some say that it was the door to the village lock-up or 'cooler ') is now the door to the utility room.

Ecological approach

Materials from the building were reused as much as possible to try to limit the carbon footprint of removing materials from site and importing new materials from abroad. The surplus soil and hardcore from the redevelopment were re-used locally within one mile of Barcombe. Local and UK materials were used where possible, such as Cowdray Estate Douglas Fir for the exterior weatherboard and Pulborough sand in the internal render. The woodfibre insulation came from Poland as there was no a local alternative. Local sands were blended to make the internal, breathable lime plaster finish. Above ground, lime mortars and renders from Kent were used throughout. The handmade roof tiles were re-used.

Future:

It is very apparent that the 'fabric-first' approach to the renovation has produced a very comfortable home. An 'in-use' energy assessment has not been made to measure the performance of the building but, by a broad measure using current energy bills, The Old Cottage produces less than half of the CO₂ that an average household produces and costs less to run. If the new owner/s introduces a solar array on the South-West facing roof the energy performance of the building will be maximised. This would lift the EPC to B.

Summary:

The renovation of The Old Cottage was labour-intensive, taking much planning and careful execution. The attention to detail is striking. It is not often that such a sympathetic renovation can be found – true to the property's character but bringing a 21stC awareness of the need to future-proof our buildings to make them as energy-efficient as possible and try, in a modest, small way, to mitigate climate change.

Timeline of Owners:

1748 Thomas Ellis of Barcombe, bricklayer, contracted to sell part of the orchard adjoining Grange Road to Richard Cox.

1776 Richard Cox had a house built on a part of the orchard.

4th June 1776 Cox sold the house to William Pollard of Barcombe, yeoman for £60. He died intestate and the house passed on to his wife Mary Pollard.

19th December 1795 sold to Richard Jenner of Barcombe, labourer for £53 11s 0d. He dies intestate and passes to his only child Mary Skinner. She died in 1837 leaving the house to her husband Barnard Wood Skinner.

12th April 1837 Barnard Wood Skinner sells the house to his son Barnard Skinner of Glynde, gardener for £120.

19th December 1845 Barnard Skinner bequeaths the house to his nephew George Lusted of Glynde

1st May 1860 the estate was auctioned by John Verrall at the Star Hotel in Lewes and was bought by James Brook of Lewes, station master on the 21st July 1860.

3rd October 1888 James Brook, now retired, sells the house to Henry Grinyer of Stockwell, Surrey, warehouseman for £185. The conveyance contains a declaration to enlarged the 500 year term created in 1692 to a freehold.

23rd March 1931 Henry Grinyer of Penge, Kent sells the house, then called Clovelly, to Marjorie Edith Hoare of The Grange, Barcombe, spinster for £350.

2nd March 1953 Marjorie Edith Hoare dies and the house is sold to Cecil Dolmage Lovering of Haywards Heath, retired bank official on 3rd July 1953 for £1750.

29th August 1958 Lovering sells the house, now known as The Old Cottage ,to Dennis Anthony Brett of Ripe, major in the army for £3450.

1st August 1961 the house is sold to William Downes Matthews of Glynde Vicarage, clerk for £4850. He dies 24th February 1964 and the house passes to his wife Eva Newnham Matthews who herself dies on 7th January 1968.

7th January 1968 Eva Matthews executors sell the house to Elizabeth Mary Roper of Garden Cottage, Croftham, Barcombe, spinster for £6,650.

25th February 2011 Elizabeth Mary Roper's executors sell the house to Sarah Posey and Nigel Worlidge of Lewes.

Fourteen previous owners in 249 years

Further information at The Keep, East Sussex Records Office, ESRO reference: AMS 6964/1
https://www.thekeep.info/collections/getrecord/GB179_AMS6964_1