



The
Old Vicarage

WESTHEAD



A Grade II listed vicarage of 1851 that has kept its church, its land and its promise





THE OLD VICARAGE

House and church at Westhead are coeval - raised in the same age, cut from the same creamy-grey sandstone - and they have stood together ever since, the spire of St James above the trees and the vicarage settled behind its hedges with gardens and paddocks about it. Few houses keep so complete an inheritance: a Tudor Gothic former clergy house of some 6,670 square feet, Grade II listed, in grounds of about five acres, at the heart of one of West Lancashire's most quietly admired lanes.

It is a house of gables and mullions, of hoodmoulds and leaded lights, built for long incumbancies, for unhurried lives. Sunday mornings still arrive here with bells. Yet behind the ashlar there is ease in equal measure: a thirty-three foot indoor pool, a kitchen made for gathering, seven bedrooms rising over two floors. The house asks nothing of its owners but that they live well in it, as others have for a hundred and seventy-five years.





A PRIVATE ARRIVAL

A drive that divides beneath the trees - one way to the house, the other to the land

Wrought iron gates stand open onto a gravel drive that runs in beneath a copper beech and divides, clipped hedges rising close on either hand. Bear left and the drive curls towards the house; carry straight on and it slips away between the hedges to the paddocks. It is a rare thing, an arrival that offers a choice, and both roads are yours. The house waits at a broad circular forecourt framed by box, topiary and a Victorian lamp post, wisteria climbing to the first floor about the porch, the coupled gables and clustered chimney stacks composing themselves above.

Every homecoming here begins the same way: gravel underwheel, green on every side.





A PORCH, A PAINTED LIGHT, AND THE HOUSE UNFOLDS

From the segmental-pointed arch of the porch to a hall three thresholds deep

The front door sits within the porch's segmental-pointed arched doorway beneath its hoodmould, a blank shield carved in the gable above. Beyond, an oak-boarded vestibule opens through glazed double doors beneath a broad leaded transom light of rose, amber and cream, and the reception hall unfolds: dentil cornicing, a panelled dado, pointed-arched openings drawing the eye clean through the house to garden light at the far end. To one side rises the dog-legged closed-string staircase, turned balusters beneath a polished handrail, climbing to the two-centred arched stair window whose paired lancets, glazed in opaline diamond quarries with painted flowers set into the tracery, have coloured every afternoon here since 1851.



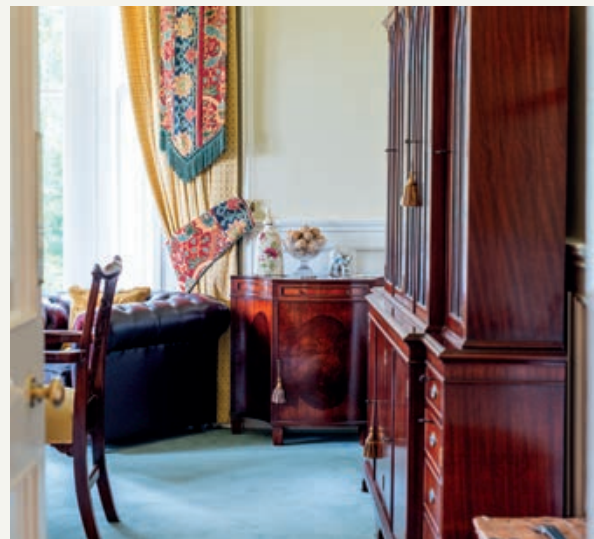


A FIRE FOR EVERY ROOM

Dining room, sitting room and family room, all with garden views

The dining room is the great room of the house, its canted bay throwing five lights around the corner towards the garden, with wainscot panelling, a ceiling rose and a carved timber chimneypiece raised on fluted columns; there is space here for twelve at table and a grand piano besides, and the room carries both without effort. Across the hall, the sitting room pairs a Carrara marble chimneypiece on carved corbels with a mullion-and-transom window holding a fitted window seat, the radiator concealed beneath - a reading perch the house was born with. The family room by the porch answers more quietly: a Tudor-arched stone chimneypiece housing a stove, its four-centred arch echoing the porch itself, with panelled shutters and reveals to mullioned windows on two aspects.





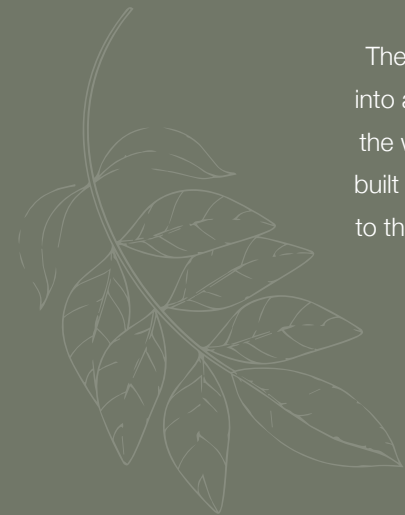


WHERE THE OLD HOUSE AND THE NEW DAY MEET

A hand-painted kitchen at the hinge of the ground floor

The kitchen holds the centre of the house, limestone flags running underfoot in a random bond as the vicarage tradition continues into a thoroughly modern room. Hand-painted in-frame cabinetry rises to a corbelled mantel canopy over the range, granite dresses the worktops and the splashback behind, and the island carries a raised, curved breakfast bar with wine racks and basket drawers built into its joinery. One sightline runs through the glazed garden door and its full-height side lights to the terrace; another carries on to the pool-side family room beyond; behind you stands the old house. Morning coffee is taken at the curve of the bar with the door open and the garden coming in.

Every good day in this house passes with time spent in this room





THE WORKING HEART OF THE HOUSE

A study, utility and cloakroom, keeping daily life in good order

Beyond the kitchen, the house keeps a practical quarter that every busy household needs and few period homes provide so generously. The study, square and usefully proportioned, offers a proper room to work from home and close the door on the day at supper time. Alongside, a utility room of genuine size takes the laundry, the boots and the business of a house with land, with a second staircase rising beside it - the old service stair, still doing quiet duty. A cloakroom with WC sits off the entrance hall for guests, so the formal rooms stay exactly as you left them. This is the machinery that lets seven bedrooms and five acres run smoothly, and the vicarage hides it beautifully.

Every house keeps one room that works so the others may rest.





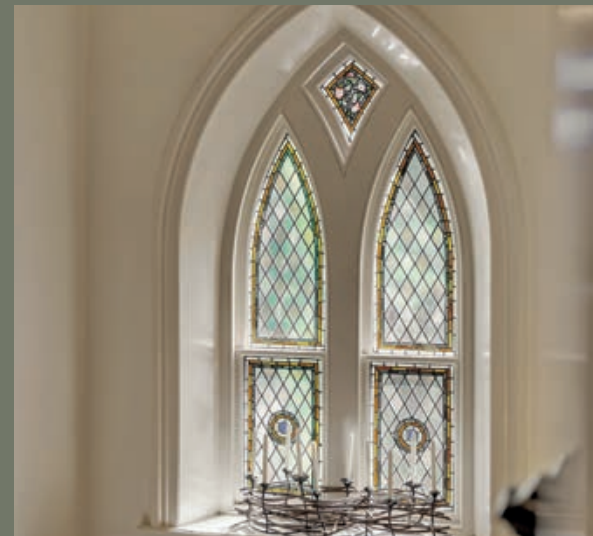
POINTED ARCHES, MIRRORED IN WATER

A thirty-three foot pool, spa bath and a sauna

The leisure wing answers the vicarage in its own language: the pool hall's window heads carry pierced arched tracery, little Gothic arcades over plain lights, so that pointed arches ride the water wherever you look. The mosaic-tiled pool runs to some thirty-three feet with a curved sweep of Roman steps at the shallow end, a sunken octagonal spa bath set into the surround, tiled walls banded with a decorative border course and garden windows on two sides holding the hedges and the sky. Behind the scenes sit the sauna, a shower room with WC and the plant room, so the whole circuit - swim, steam, shower - runs without a wet footprint through the hall. Alongside, the family room serves as the pool's own sitting room: a full wall of sliding glazing to the water, a second opening to a sheltered courtyard terrace, and the kitchen's limestone flags running through so that three rooms read as one continuous floor.

On a January evening the water glows lamplit through the glass, and the garden can keep its weather.



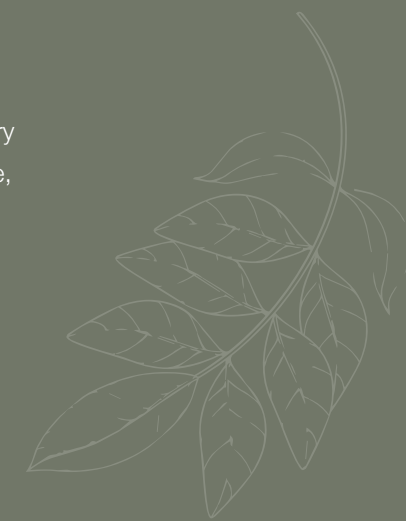


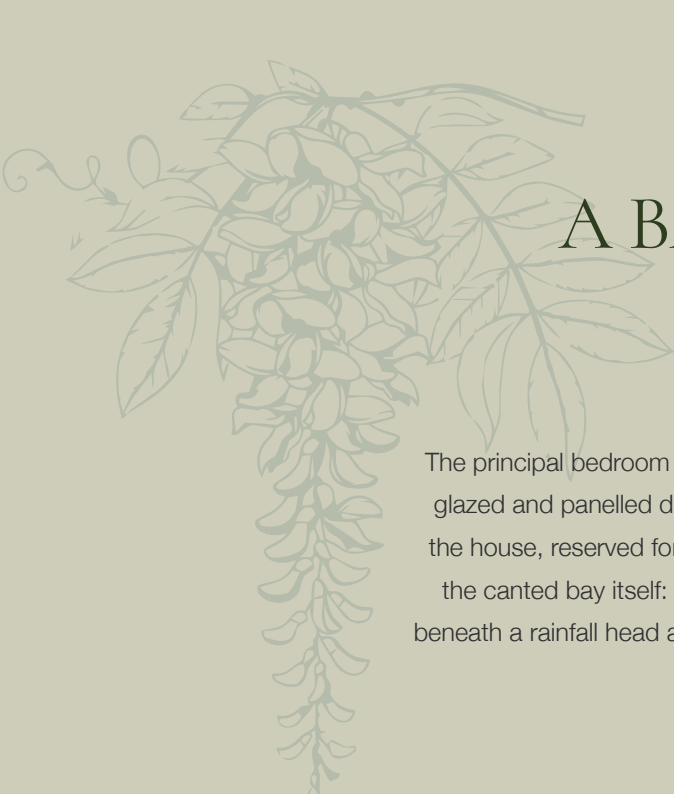
A GALLERY AT THE HEART OF THE HOUSE

The landing as the Victorians intended it - a room in its own right

The staircase rises into a true galleried landing beneath a rooflight, the dentil cornice carried round, the dado panelling climbing with the flight, and the house's Gothic vocabulary at its richest: pointed-arched doorways and openings on every side, one arch springing from moulded corbels carved with foliage. Below, the stair window lights the half-landing; above, daylight falls down the centre of the house from the roof. Every bedroom door on this floor stands under its own arch.

Cross it last thing at night and the whole house seems to keep step with you.





A BALCONY OVER THE GARDEN, A BAY FULL OF SKY

The principal suite

The principal bedroom is generously square beneath a high ceiling and deep coved cornice, with a wall of fitted wardrobes behind glazed and panelled doors keeping its proportions clear. Glazed French doors open to the wrought iron balcony - the only one in the house, reserved for its first room - where treetops, paddocks and sky fill the view over the garden. The en suite continues into the canted bay itself: mullion-and-transom lights wrap the room on three sides above panelled wainscot, with a walk-in shower beneath a rainfall head and a wall-hung basin in warm stone tiling. To bathe at treetop height inside a Victorian bay window is not an experience many houses can offer.

Morning begins at the balcony rail, the light moving over the paddocks.

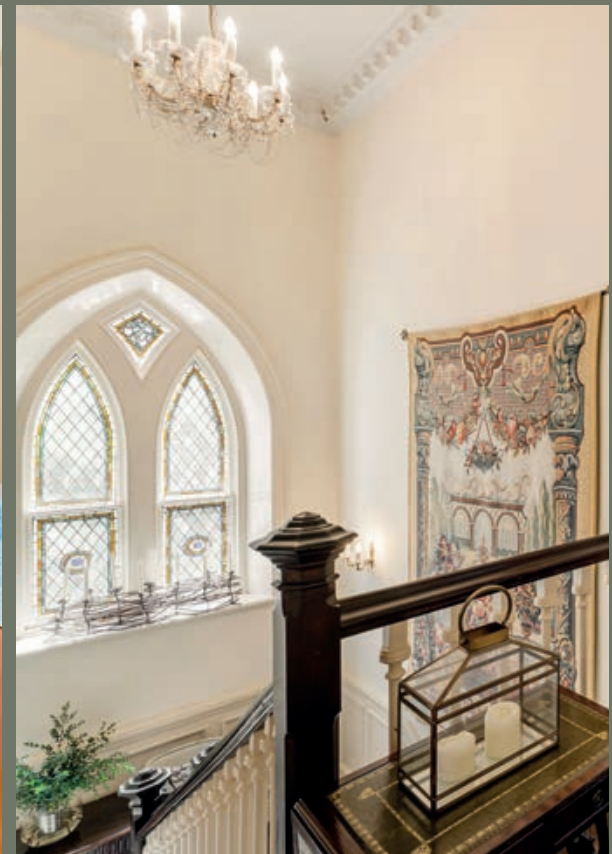




EVERY ROOM WITH ITS OWN VIEW

Four further bedrooms, the house bathrooms, and a top floor of its own

The remaining first-floor rooms hold the same standard: all set beneath high ceilings and coved cornices, mullioned windows framing green on every aspect, panelled reveals and window backs of the house's original joinery, and generous fitted storage throughout - one room finished in cherry-toned timber with its own three-piece shower room, another dual aspect with a built-in desk run. Two four-piece bathrooms serve the floor in warm travertine and stone: one with a freestanding double-ended bath set before the window and a separate rainfall shower, the other with an inset oval bath on a granite-dressed surround, twin windows and a shower enclosure of its own.





The top floor

Above, a final flight rises beneath the rooflight to a storey of its own: a charming double tucked under the coombed ceilings and a second, larger room beneath the roof slopes, currently a private sitting and media room and just as readily a seventh bedroom.

Guests, older children or live-in help can keep an entire floor here - private, peaceful and a little removed from the life below.

Even with the whole family home for Christmas, the house never feels full.





A WALLED COURTYARD, AND THE LITTLE VICARAGE

Garaging, a loft room and a yard of real charm

Between house and garage lies a walled courtyard of sandstone flags edged in setts, mellow brick walls hung with flowers, a round-arched boarded gate, and a small brick outbuilding with a pointed leaded light in its gable that carries its own plaque:

The Little Vicarage. The detached double garage stands in coursed sandstone to match the house, under a slate roof with conservation rooflights, facing its own generous gravel forecourt; above it, a substantial loft room of some twenty-three feet awaits use as a gym, studio or office away from the house, with a store below.

A house so complete it kept a little vicarage of its own.

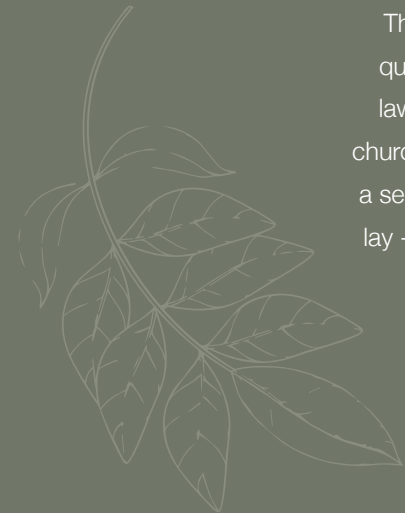


LAWNS TO THE HEDGE LINE, PADDOCKS TO THE HILLS

About five acres in all, beside the churchyard of St James

The gardens hold the house at their centre: striped lawns running from the terrace to deep tree lines, specimen planting, and a quarry-tiled dining terrace sheltered in the angle of the house and the pool wing, its arched glazing catching the reflection of the lawns. The boundaries are so well grown that the house sits within its land rather than at the edge of it - fields on two sides, the churchyard on a third, the lane at the front behind its hedges. Beyond lie the paddocks: one of about two acres held with the house, a second of about two acres enjoyed under a separate lease, running beside the old churchyard where the vicarage's glebe always lay - room for ponies, an orchard, or simply long views kept open. From the garden the land runs unbroken over hedgerows to the line of the West Pennine moors on the horizon.

Nothing between you and the hills but fields and the sound of bells.







VICARAGE LANE, WESTHEAD

A quiet lane of consequence, between open country and an ancient market town

Vicarage Lane is one of those addresses that West Lancashire speaks of with a certain respect. A country lane in the truest sense, it runs past the church and a handful of substantial homes set well apart in their grounds, with farmland folding away on every side. Westhead itself keeps the rhythm of a proper village - church, green edges, and neighbours who know one another - while giving nothing away of how connected it quietly is.

The pleasures here are unhurried ones. Footpaths lead out between the hedgerows, and nearby Ruff Wood offers shaded walks beneath old trees in every season. Ruff Lane winds down from the woodland into Ormskirk, a market town that has traded beneath its clock tower for more than seven centuries and now adds good restaurants, independent shops and the life of a university town to its Georgian streets. For the wider world, Ormskirk station runs direct services into Liverpool, while the M58 lies within easy reach, opening the motorway network, the cities of the North West and the region's airports.

Some lanes simply hold their name; this one has kept its promise.

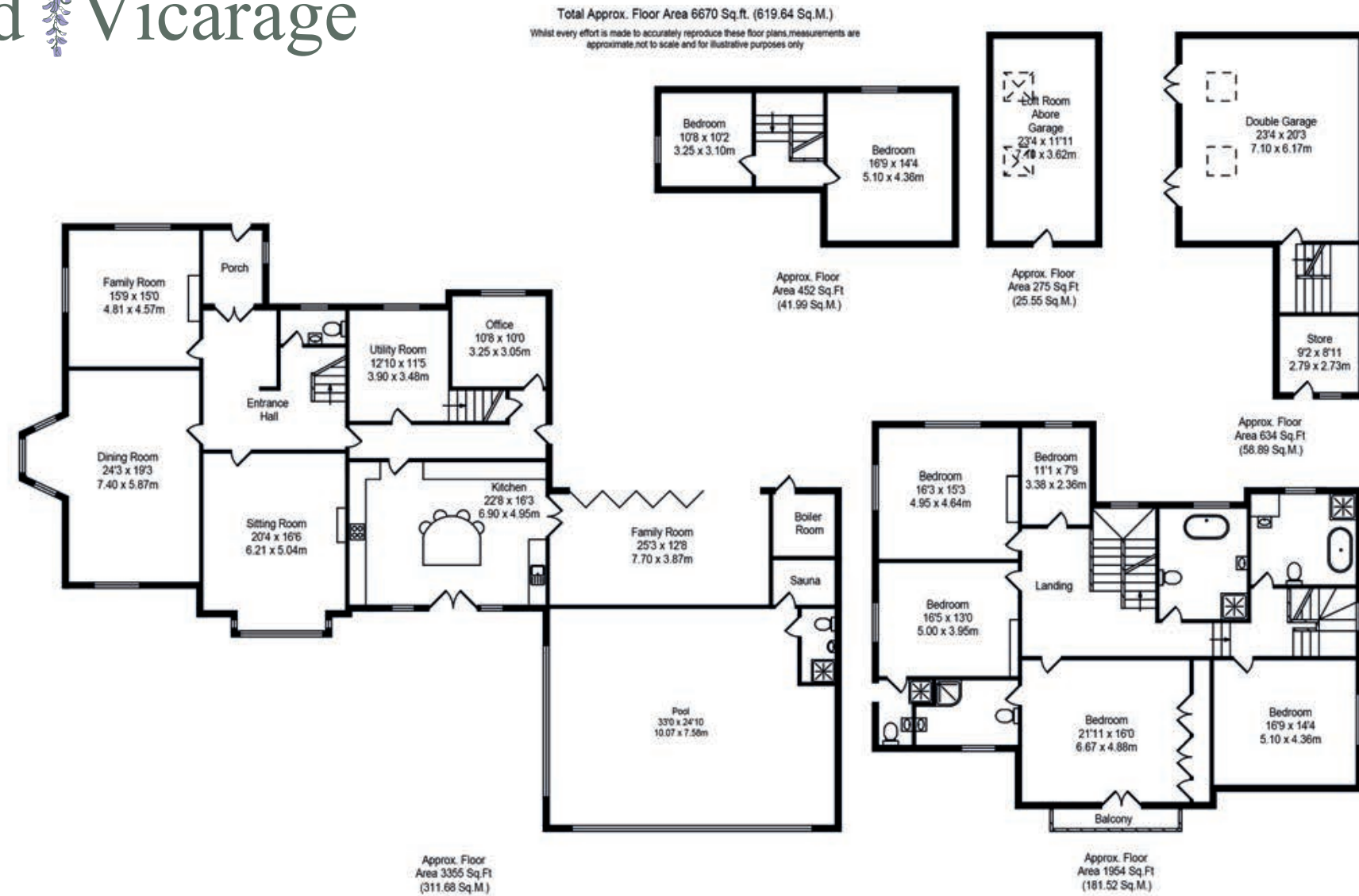


ARCHITECTURAL OVERVIEW

Tudor Gothic of about 1851, listed Grade II

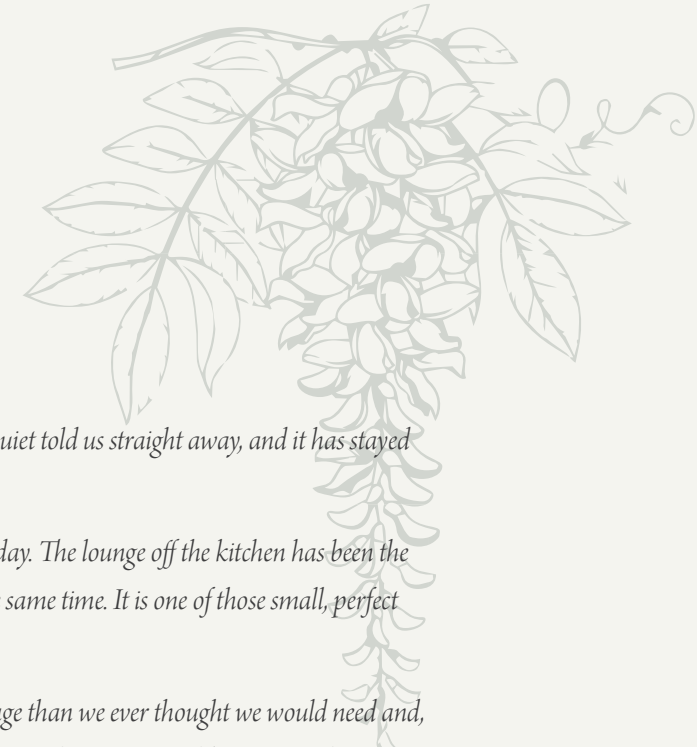
The Old Vicarage was raised about 1851 in sandstone ashlar under a slate roof, its coupled gables, mullioned and mullion-and-transom windows, hoodmoulds with foliated stops and two-centred arched stair window composing an asymmetric plan of unusual confidence. It was built as the companion to the neighbouring Church of St James, and the two form a deliberate architectural group with the lych gate on Vicarage Lane. Inside, the dog-legged closed-string staircase with turned balusters survives exactly as the listing describes it, together with panelled joinery, shuttered reveals, dentil cornicing and leaded glass throughout, while sympathetic later additions - the leisure wing among them - have brought the house gently into the present century without raising its voice.





FINER DETAILS

- Grade II listed Tudor Gothic former vicarage of about 1851, built in sandstone ashlar to match the neighbouring Church of St James, with which it forms a listed group
- Approximately 6,670 sq ft of accommodation arranged over three floors, plus a detached stone double garage with substantial loft room over and store
- Reception hall approached through a vestibule and stained glass transom light, with dentil cornicing, pointed-arched openings and a dog-legged staircase rising to a traceried stained glass stair window
- Formal dining room with canted bay, sitting room and family room, each with a period chimneypiece; hand-painted kitchen/breakfast room with granite worktops and limestone flags, opening to the terrace
- Study, utility room with second staircase, and cloakroom/WC
- Indoor leisure wing with heated pool of about 33 ft, spa bath, sauna, shower room/ WC and pool-side family room opening to its own sheltered courtyard terrace
- Seven double bedrooms over two upper floors, including a principal suite with wrought iron balcony and en suite shower room within the canted bay, plus a further en suite bedroom
- Two further four-piece bath and shower rooms; galleried landing beneath a rooflight; self-contained second floor ideal for guests or multi-generational living
- About five acres in all: circa one acre of gardens and grounds, a paddock of about two acres held with the house and a further paddock of about two acres under separate lease, adjoining the churchyard
- Gated drive dividing to house and land, walled courtyard with the Little Vicarage outbuilding; Ruff Wood close by, Ormskirk and its railway station for Liverpool via Ruff Lane, and the M58 within easy reach



A Note from the Owner

In their own words...

From the moment we first walked through the door, we knew this was the one. It is not a house you have to fall for slowly - the quiet told us straight away, and it has stayed with us for twenty-six years since.

We have loved every room, the sheer scale of space each one holds, and the way the house adapts to however life needs it to that day. The lounge off the kitchen has been the heart of countless gatherings, opening straight onto the pool, where we could watch the children swim and talk to friends at the same time. It is one of those small, perfect arrangements you don't fully appreciate until you have lived with it.

Over the years we made our own additions, most significantly the double garage with a gym built above it, along with more storage than we ever thought we would need and, somehow, always seem to fill. Our favourite room is harder to choose than it should be, though the front lounge, with its woodburner glowing on a cold winter's night, comes close, as does the dining room, which has hosted more good evenings than we can count.

If we had to pick one memory above all the others, it would be Christmas. Family and friends filling every corner, often staying over for days at a time, and never once feeling crowded. That is the real gift of a house this size: room enough for everyone you love, all at once.

The house has never had a single season it does best. Winter brings its own particular warmth, but summer might just win, when the garden opens up entirely and the patio off the kitchen becomes the BBQ spot we have used more than any other space in the house.

What we will miss most is the quiet, and the country walks that begin practically at the front gate. For all its size, this has never felt like a grand house to live in. It has always simply felt like home, warm and easy, the kind of place our children could invite their friends to stay without anyone feeling underfoot, because there was always somewhere else to go.

We watched our family grow up here, and in time, watched them move on. Now it feels right that another family should have the chance to do the same.

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