

The Bury, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire



Completion of phase two conservation work

The Bury was the Manor House of Rickmansworth. It has late 16th Century origins, the main range was built in the mid 17th Century, extended in the late 17th Century, altered in the 18th Century and restored in the late 19th Century. The building was originally a double ended hall house. The Bury is a Grade II listed building. More recently the building was used by the National Health Service after the war and then converted into separate residential properties in the late 1990's.

Stuart Little was appointed project manager to oversee the external maintenance and repairs. The first step was to undertake a detailed building survey of the building and to report back to the residents management company. A budget estimate was prepared based on the repairs recommended in the original survey. The conservation works were then undertaken in two phases; the courtyard area during 2008 and the large common sides in 2009. Additional work to the chimney stacks will be undertaken at a later stage.

The main defects identified in the survey consisted of defective pebble dashed cement external render, defective cement repointing to external brickwork, defective external joinery, defective lead roof coverings and the suspected deterioration of the original period timber frame. The original lime based render and pointing were replaced with impervious cementitious materials just before World War Two. The cement pebble dashed render was unable to accommodate movement leading to cracking, penetrating dampness and the trapped moisture causing decay to the period timber frame and dampness internally.

The building conservation philosophy for the project was to retain as much of the original fabric as possible whilst removing all the damaging impervious cement materials and replacing them with traditional breathable lime materials similar to those used originally. Other defects were repaired and poor detailing corrected to prevent further defects.



Recording the period timber frame during the phase two work

The external render consisted of pebble dashed render on chicken wire fixed to the period timber frame. This render was removed to expose a frame with extensive damage to some of the main timber members. The exposed framework was recorded by photogrammetry using large format cameras and laser scanning of the entire framework. The defective timber sections were removed back to sound timber, new oak timbers were inserted, where possible sound timber was refaced with new oak rather than wholesale replacement. Oak laths and breathable lime plaster finishes were then applied to the external walls and finished with coats of limewash. Cement render on masonry walls was also removed and replaced with lime render and limewash to allow the walls to breathe and release moisture externally.

Repairs to leadwork consisted of new large high level valley gutters between the main roof slopes, new lead flashings and new bay window roof coverings. The parapet gutters were checked and repaired as necessary; weir outlets were provided through the parapet walls and the modern rainwater pipes and small gutters were replaced with larger section copper rainwater goods. Collars at the bottom of the rainwater pipes were removed and changed to gulleys with engineering brick surrounds to prevent blockage and enable clearance. French drains were provided to the perimeter of the external walls to reduce the risk of dampness in the bottom of the lower brickwork walls. All historic windows were repaired insitu and the defective modern timber dormer windows were replaced in the concealed central roof valley areas, with the lead head details altered to prevent a repeat of the previous failure. All external joinery was repainted. Repointing to defective brick walls and chimney stacks will be undertaken at a later date.