

STANDEN HALL
CLITHEROE, LANCASHIRE, BB7 1PR
RIBBLE VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Heritage Impact Assessment and Statement of Significance

by

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Introduction

In response to a request for Pre-Application Guidance, Historic England has advised that the existing Historic Building Assessment should be expanded to include a Statement of Significance and an Impact Assessment, as per Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Historic Building Assessment for Standen was prepared by Colin Briden, an historic buildings archaeologist in October 2015. The present document, prepared to meet Historic England's requirement, does not repeat the content of the Briden Report which is a comprehensive history of the building based on detailed study of the fabric and surviving documentation, the content of which is taken. This statement is focused on the part of the building where the material alterations are planned, essentially the central courtyard and surrounding service buildings, where listed building consent is now sought for architectural reconstruction and re-planning. The analysis of this affected area is considered in the context of the special significance of the Heritage Asset as a whole, Paragraph 128 states that the information provided should be appropriate and proportionate to the significance of the listed building (Heritage Asset) and the scale of the proposed alterations and states that information is only required on the affected part of the Asset. In the case of Standen Hall this comprises the inner central area linking the principal Georgian house to the late-Victorian service areas which in themselves comprise the two principal parts of special architectural and historic interest (as explained in the Briden Report). They are unaffected by the proposals. Work elsewhere in the house largely takes the form of re-decoration and new fittings (bathrooms and kitchens) and involves little in the way of material alterations so is not referred to here. As required by NPPF Paragraph 128, coloured

photographs of the affected fabric are included herewith. The listed building description and copies of historical maps and plans are included in the Briden Historical Report which should be read in tandem with this Statement.

I. Brief Description of the Building

The Aspinalls have owned Standen since the late-15th century. The origin of the present house was an early-17th century Lancashire Yeoman's House, of H plan, built of rubble stone with wide mullion windows under dripstones, an architectural type found throughout the Pennines. Some of the fabric of this 17th century predecessor is retained in the present building, including mullion windows, partly *ex situ*. A fine moulded Lancashire door lintel has been reset in the Georgian wine cellars under the East wing between B12 and B17. This no doubt originally formed part of the Jacobean front door.

The house was rebuilt in Palladian style in the mid-eighteenth century by Sergeant at Law John Aspinall (1716-1784). The date of this work is usually said to be 1757 on the strength of the Victoria County History, but there is no contemporary documentation, and a rainwater head dated 1748 is also recorded, perhaps giving a start date. No architect is known, but a local architect influenced by Carr of York is likely, with input from the client himself. Colin Stansfield has attributed Standen to Timothy Lightoler, a Lancashire born man who was active in the 1750s. 'Pevsner' described the house as 'a fine Palladian mansion'. This mid-eighteenth century house is the major architectural element of the listed building, and is a comparatively rare survival in Lancashire as so many similar Georgian gentry houses succumbed to Victorian industrialisation and twentieth century vandalism (worse in Lancashire than

in any other county). The original design was for two seven-bay three-storeyed principal fronts (with irregular older fabric retained behind). The East front survives as designed, with handsome pedimented centrepiece of attached Roman Doric columns (a comparatively rare use of the particular Order in a mid-18th century house). The right hand side of this symmetrical classical composition contained the kitchen while the centrepiece fronted the main staircase G1c, and this architectural grandeur was intended as a backdrop to the landscaped garden with its tree planting, little valley with beck and views of Pendle Hill. (The Georgian landscape layout has been bisected by the late-Victorian entrance avenue.)

The principal original entrance was on the South side with a recessed three-bay centre with pedimented doorway giving access to the Entrance Hall G3, and two flanking projecting two-bay wings containing the dining room and parlour on the ground floor. This elevation was never completed. The projecting bond stones for the second floor storey of the centre are still visible. The intended symmetry was further compromised by the demolition and rebuilding on a larger scale of the West (left) projecting part in 1856 by E.G. Paley of Lancaster, a leading local architect. This was for a large new dining room (now drawing room) G4. The Paley work reproduced the detail of the Georgian works, especially the dressed ashlar, quoins, and moulded Doric architraves, but created the balanced asymmetry admired by the Victorians even in classical buildings. The late-19th century Victorian additions to the North, mainly carried out between 1875 and 1881 provided Victorian amenities such as a billiard room G23, and expanded servants accommodation; they show the same respect externally for the predominant Georgian character of the house as Paley. The 1875 date is given by the Victoria County History and confirmed by absence on

the 1870 Estate Plan, and inclusion on the 1881 drains plan. The 1875 work included the conversion of the Georgian kitchens into the dining room G25 (the Paley predecessor then became a drawing room), also in a Georgian or 'Queen Anne' style, with a new access corridor G9f along the East side of the Bell Tower Court to the new North kitchen block G15, G14 on the North. The single-storeyed billiard room G23, a masculine domain, projected to the East, conveniently adjacent to the new dining room. The final phase of amplification of the domestic offices took place in 1892 with the construction of a new larger Servants' Hall G12 and Butler's Pantry G11 to the North West. At that time most of the former open Bell Tower Court (as shown on Paley's 1856 Survey Plan) was filled in with single-storeyed cross G9a, G9g to give dry access to the various expanded servants' rooms. This is the area affected by the current application. Final alterations were made at Standen in 1913 with the addition of a small Eastern extension to the Billiard Room G24, and the installation of some bathrooms F12, S17 devised by Asman of Clitheroe, a local architect, but the work was interrupted by the First World War. The house has remained unaltered subsequently to the present day. Now a new generation wishes to adapt the place for modern living.

The various dates of building and alteration over the centuries relate to the changing needs of the family in successive generations. The present house was built in the mid-18th century as a gentry seat by John Aspinall, a distinguished lawyer, Recorder of Clitheroe and later Recorder (Judge) of Preston (a post created by Charles II in 1662), who invested the profits of his legal career. He had no children of his own and bequeathed Standen to his great-nephew John (1779-1851). He hardly lived at Standen, letting it during his minority to Viscount Southwell. He subsequently bought

Little Mitton Hall North West of Clitheroe which he rebuilt in the 1840s (probably to the design of George Webster) as his favoured seat. On his death in 1851 he was succeeded by his eldest son John Thomas Walsham Aspinall (1812-1865). He employed E.G. Paley to build the new South West block but died young. His widow continued to live at Mitton. His eldest son Ralph John Aspinall (1847-1913) was only 18 when his father died, going from Eton to Trinity College, Cambridge. After his mother died in 1874 he let Mitton and made Standen his main seat, bringing it up to the standards of the houses of his Eton and Cambridge friends. As seen, his son in turn, Major John Ralph Aspinall (1878-1946) who inherited in 1913 started to make changes but stopped with the War. Like many English country houses, Standen then 'survived' through the 20th century on a shoe-string, and only now is being revived.

II. Significance

The major architectural and historical significance of Standen lies in the mid-eighteenth century house which is a rare survival of a Lancashire Georgian country house. Though the architect is not known, the building is sophisticated. The use of the Doric Order for the attached East portico is noteworthy, and is demonstrative of Roman classical scholarship, a reference to the fact that the Ribble Valley is Roman territory, with significant discoveries at Ribchester in the eighteenth century. Sergeant John Aspinall who built the Palladian Standen was scholarly (his library books survive in the house) and would have been fully up to date with regard to Roman studies. John Horsley's remarkable *Britannia Romana* (1732) was a key publication read by Georgian gentlemen and influencing their views of 'the Roman monuments in the Britannic Isles'. The preservation of a Roman sculptural relief at Standen is another manifestation of this Roman interest. It is almost certain that the

choice of Roman Doric was John Aspinall's own, making Standen an interesting example of a Georgian amateur's involvement in architecture. Much of the Georgian architecture survives including the two main elevations and significant interiors including the entrance hall, staircase hall and bedrooms.

The major historical interest of Standen also derives from Sergeant John Aspinall. He was the most significant member of his family. His ancestors were yeomen and he raised them to gentry; his career and aspirations are a clear demonstration of Georgian social mobility and social and cultural aspirations. He was a distinguished lawyer educated at Emmanuel College Cambridge, and the Inner temple, who became the Recorder of Preston (Judge for the Town) and was involved in drawing up a code for the American Colonies. He invested the profits of his legal career in expanding his landed estate and making Standen a proper country seat, replacing the Jacobean yeoman's house of his ancestors with an up-to-date classical house in a landscaped garden. In 1748 he received a grant of arms by 'Confirmation' from the College of Arms, marking his aspiration to gentility, and that was the year (date on rainwater head) that he began the rebuilding of Standen, completed in 1757.

Later features of special architectural interest comprise the Victorian additions. The 1856 block at the South West corner G4, F8 & F9 was designed by E.G. Paley (1823-95), a notable local architect and one of the founders of the well-known Lancaster firm of Austin & Paley. The drawing room, G4 (intended as the dining room) is a well-preserved Victorian room with decorative plasterwork including rich cornice, ceiling rose and wall-panels. The additions of 1875-1881 for Colonel Ralph John Aspinall (1847-1913) are also of special interest. They include the new dining room G25

converted out of the Georgian kitchen and back kitchen in the East Range. This is a fine Queen Anne Revival interior with good oak joinery, a stucco ceiling with guilloche pattern beams, and a chimneypiece containing fine Minton tiles painted with woodcock. The projecting Billiard Room G23 adjoining and the new kitchen block G15, G14 to the North are of the same date. The new Servants' Hall and Butler's Pantry to the North West (G12 and G11) are later, dating from 1892. These additions have low key exteriors showing deference to the Georgian house, and are interesting internally as relatively unaltered examples of Victorian service rooms retaining original fixtures and fittings.

The third significant feature of the house comprises the archaeological remains of the pre-existing early-17th century house. As Colin Briden's report makes clear, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much remains of this. The one identifiable area of substantial fabric is the 'Bell Tower' block, once the Servants' Hall (G27) behind the 18th century Entrance Hall. This is three storeys high with thick masonry walls and mullion windows. Elsewhere there are mullion windows and a decorative door lintel, but these are *ex situ*.

The area affected by the present proposals (G9) is the least significant portion of the building. It occupies the middle of the building between the Georgian house and the Victorian service additions. It was originally an open yard called the Bell Tower Court, but was largely infilled in the 1890s with connecting service passages and staircases intended to improve access to the servants' quarters. Only a small portion of the old inner court (clearly shown on the 1856 Paley plans) survives as an area (G9h) overlooked by the early-17th century fabric of the old Servants' Hall block.

Most of this is strictly utilitarian of rendered brick construction. One highly significant feature is the Roman sculptural relief (*ex situ*) which is inserted into the 1892 North cross wall of the surviving area. It is not known where this was previously situated in the house, but it is likely to have come to Standen in Sergeant John Aspinall's time in the 18th century.

III. The Proposals and Justification

The proposals are to create a two-storeyed top lit court (atrium) in the middle of the house, occupying and opening up the space of the old Bell Tower Yard which has been encroached on cumulatively by utilitarian late-19th century service structures of limited architectural and historical interest. This involves putting together the 6 spaces of G9a to G9g with the surviving open area G9h, to create a square space between the carefully preserved Georgian main house with the Jacobean Bell Tower block, and the Victorian service rooms (kitchen, scullery, Servants Hall and Butler's Pantry) to the North and East. This will involve the removal of various cross-walls, low level roofs and parts of two subsidiary staircases largely dating from 1892 and not affecting any of the Jacobean, Georgian or significant Victorian fabric.

The fabric affected involves the G9 spaces (on the Survey Plan 2743/102). These comprise small rooms, the remnant court area, servants' passages and utilitarian secondary stairs. On the West side is a service passage G9b. This is a plain space with no particular features and was constructed in 1892 to give access to the New Servants' Hall and Butler's Pantry (which are not themselves affected by the proposals). On the North side are two small rooms and two subsidiary staircases. They occupy the site of the Georgian Laundry and Wash House range, shown on the

1856 Paley ground plan. It was largely rebuilt in brick in 1892. The west room G9c contains a simple 'fishmonger's marble' Victorian fireplace similar to others in the house, while the east room has been subdivided to insert a straight stone staircase to the first floor and an extension to the east passage G9f.

Behind the housekeeper's room G9c a parallel timber staircase gives access to the first floor, while below a stone flight leads to the cellar. The east passage G9f was built in 1875 in connection with the new dining room and kitchen to which it gives access. It is a two-storeyed structure G9g, F14f of random rubble stone with new Jacobean mullion windows at ground and first floor levels. To the south of the former Laundry range a single-storeyed cross passage G9a constructed in 1892 cuts through the former inner courtyard. The remnant of the latter survives as a light well adjoining G9h. This is overlooked by the elevation of the Jacobean Bell Tower or old Servants' Hall block with two original mullion windows G27, F12. The north wall of this light well incorporates the Roman Relief of a goddess which is thought to have come from Ribchester and was relocated here from its Georgian resting place in 1892.

The rooms at first floor level in the former "laundry range" are of little interest. Dating from 1892 they are plain and altered. They comprise a top-lit bathroom F14h, a housemaid's cupboard F14j, and room F14e which has been refitted as a modern kitchen. (F13a contains a box mahogany w.c. dating from circa 1912 which it is proposed to reuse elsewhere). It is not considered that the loss of any of this fabric is significant.

All these spaces are secondary spaces mainly constructed at the very end of the 19th century in an ad hoc manner, and contain no historic 18th century or 17th century fabric. Nor do they add much to the historical understanding of the surrounding Victorian service quarters which would still read as Butler's Pantry, Servants' Hall, Scullery and Kitchen, and they would not be affected by the works.

There would be considerable benefits in clearing these various accretive structures from the old central service yard. It would create a light rational space at the heart of the house serving as an orientation focus between the Georgian main block and the Victorian service additions. It would reveal the elevations of the 17th century Bell Tower/Servants' Hall block with its interesting mullion windows, which at present is only visible from the constricted light well. The Roman Relief of a goddess (currently concealed in the lightwell and so obscure that it is not even mentioned in the listing) would be reset in the adjoining wall where it would be a visible witness to the antiquarian interests of John Aspinall, the Sergeant at Law. The new top lit space would simplify and improve the maintenance of the house. The low level passages all have different roof pitches and inaccessible gutters which are difficult to keep weather-tight. Their removal and the new high level roof with lead flats round a roof-light would greatly assist roof inspection and repair in this vulnerable area and improve routine fabric maintenance of the listed building and assist its long-term preservation. It is considered that the architectural and practical benefits greatly outweigh the loss of the late-Victorian passages and service stairs that currently occupy the area. None of the building proposed for removal is of architectural interest. The service stairs are merely straight flights between enclosing walls, without bannisters or any features of interest. The design, scale and traditional

materials are considered to be appropriate with lead flats, and an architectural skylight. The enclosing walls will reveal the history of the building, while the design will contribute a handsome new element to the architectural interest of Standen which is a cumulative architectural composition showing the contribution of many generations, of which the atrium will be the latest. It is considered that the fabric affected by these works is of minor significance, and that the aesthetic and practical gains far outweigh the loss of any historical interest in the structure removed. The principal features of historic and architectural interest are completely unaffected by the proposals and their setting will be enhanced.

The work is considered necessary to make the house more practical and easily inhabitable, creating an airy open space at the heart of the house giving easier access to the various parts of the building. It will replace a muddled labyrinth of little passages and stairs with a coherent, architectural space.

APPENDIX

Photographs of the affected portion of the building.



1. Lean-to roof of ground floor infill G9A.



2. Room F14e on first floor converted to modern kitchen.



3. Redundant north staircase 1892 viewed from G9d in former laundry range to be removed.
(Even with the removal of three redundant service stairs, the house will still retain two back stairs.)



4. Plain Victorian chimneypiece in ground floor west room of former laundry range (G9c). To be salvaged for re-use).



5. Internal window from cross passage G9a to west room G9c.



6. Stone flight to cellars in the former laundry range. To be retained in situ and floored over. Viewed from G9b.



7. Simple Victorian back stairs (off G13). One of five service stairs in the house. To be removed.



8. Investigations under plaster of the former laundry range ground floor south wall, revealing 1892 brickwork (G9a).



9. The cross passage (1892) looking east. (G9a). Former laundry block on left. Door to remaining yard on the right.



10. Mullion window of 1875 from inner yard, 1892 cross passage infill on left. Note Roman relief carving of goddess (To be relocated).



11. Re-used door leading to inner yard from 1892 cross passage.



12. Staircase from ground to first floor inserted in former laundry range in 1892 view from G9g.