
PARK HALL,
ASHBROOKE,
SUNDERLAND

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD AND
DOCUMENTARY SURVEY

January 2003



Prepared for *Barratt Homes Limited* by:

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Frontispiece: Decorated ceiling at Park Hall

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SUMMARY

This report provides a brief summary of sources available for charting the history of Park Hall, formerly known as Park House, a late Victorian residence in Ashbrooke, Sunderland. The structure is one of a number of villas constructed in the 1870s as an extension of an earlier complex of grand residences which sat in an extensive parkland landscape, comprising woodland and formal gardens, south of the new Mowbray Road/The Cloisters. Prior to this period, the area was occupied by open farmland divided by enclosure period boundaries.

The report gives details of photographs provided as a permanent record of the building which is earmarked for imminent demolition, along with the adjacent, modern Williamson Hall.

Attention is drawn to a number of interesting or unusual internal and external features of the buildings, and a recommendation is made with respect to the possible salvage of some of these features for incorporation, where appropriate, in the new building complex to be constructed on the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of Assessment

Park Hall, latterly used as a hall of residence for Sunderland University, stands on the south side of The Cloisters, on the west side of Ryhope Road, Sunderland, c 50 m to the east of Christ Church. This is part of the suburb of Ashbrooke, laid out in the 1870s, an area of well-to-do shipbuilders' villas. Williamson Hall, which stands in the same ground, a little to the west, is a plain building of the mid-20th century. Proposals for the redevelopment of the site include the demolition of the Park Hall and the adjacent, redundant college building.

This report, prepared by The Archaeological Practice, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, was commissioned by *Barratt Homes Limited (Barratt Newcastle)* following the imposition by Tyne and Wear County Council of a requirement to carry out recording work, prior to proposed demolition works, in order to provide a permanent record of Park Hall.

In addition to recording significant internal and external features of the school complex, the brief supplied by T&WCC stipulates a requirement for a limited amount of research into the origins and historical development of the complex. Accordingly, a number of historical and archive sources have been accessed and interrogated in order to present an historical overview of the site and provide appropriate recommendations with respect to further mitigation actions.

2. SOURCES FOR ASSESSMENT

2.1 Archival Material and Secondary Sources

The following sources of documentary, cartographic and photographic evidence were consulted:

- ◆ *Tyne and Wear County Archives (TWCA)*
- ◆ *Tyne and Wear County Sites and Monuments Record, Jesmond Road, Newcastle (SMR)*
- ◆ *Newcastle Central Library, Local Studies Room (NCL)*
- ◆ *Museum of Antiquities Record Room, University of Newcastle upon Tyne (MA)*
- ◆ *Sunderland City Council (SCC)*

2.2 Types of Information

Included amongst the various kinds of information used from each of the above sources are the following:

2.2.1 Documentary Records

A number of building plans are held by TWCA relating to a phase of development in the last quarter of the nineteenth century upon what subsequently became known as The Cloisters in Ashbrooke:

TWCA 269/1340 Plans of a building adjacent to Park Hall on the north side of the Cloisters bordering the Esplanade.

TWCA 269/1339-42 (pt) Plan 354 Plans by James Makepeace of Newcastle for a proposed house of brick and stone at the Cloisters (E end), dated 1875 (*Illus. 5*). This may be a plan for Park Hall, but supporting documentation is lacking.

TWCA 269/340 & 341/1 & 1343/4 Plans by Austin Johnson & (?)Ptnrs. for Christ Church vicarage, dated May 1876. The site of this building appears to be directly adjacent to Park House on the north side of the Cloisters (then known as Mowbray Road west).

2.2.2 Map Evidence

The following have been used in compiling a developmental history of the area:

NCL - First Edition Ordnance Survey, 1865, Durham Sheet XIV.2 (Illus. 1 & 2)

NCL - Second Edition Ordnance Survey, 1898, Durham Sheet XIV.2 (Illus. 3)

NCL - Third Edition Ordnance Survey, 1924, Durham Sheet XIV.2 (Illus. 4)

2.2.4 Site Inspection and Local Information

Two extended visits were made to the site for purposes of photographic recording and gathering background information.

2.3 Established and Potential Significance of the Site

The established and potential significance of the site can be summarised with respect to a number of defined categories, as follows:

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The Scheduling of a site by the Secretary of State denotes it is of at least national significance and provides statutory protection over the defined area of the monument. There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the overall defined assessment area.

Listed Buildings

Listing of built structures by the Secretary of State denotes historical or architectural interest but does not necessarily include all buildings of significance or local importance. Park Hall itself is not listed and there are no listed structures within the defined assessment area.

Sites Appearing on the County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)

Tyne and Wear County Council SMR has been accessed for entries within and in close proximity to the overall assessment area which may be impacted upon by proposed developments. Consideration of sites outside the defined zone enables better evaluation of its archaeological and historical context, highlighting the nature of potential remains within the assessment area. There are no entries within the defined assessment area.

Previous Investigations

There have been no previous archaeological studies or investigations made of the site, and no information has come to light from primary or secondary sources with regard to archaeological discoveries from the site or in the immediate locality.



Map 1: Location of Park Hall in Ashbrooke, Sunderland

3. SYNTHESIS

3.1 Historical Synthesis

Park Hall is located in a suburb of Ashbrooke, an area of well-to-do shipbuilders' villas laid out in the 1870s. Prior to this period, as shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey Plan of the area (Illus. 1 & 2), the area was occupied by open farmland divided by enclosure period boundaries. The land was part of the West Hendon estate owned by the Mowbray family, who had by this time already sold off land south and west of the Park Hall site. Here, a number of large houses such as West Hendon House, Ashbourne and Nicholson House, sat in an extensive parkland landscape comprising woodland and formal gardens. An old brickworks at Barley Mow Bridge, south of these houses, shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey Plan is probably developmentally associated with them.

Ryhope Lane farm remained at this time on the east side of Ryhope Road, but it did not survive the next phase of development which included Christ Church (opened 1875) and a number of additional large villas, notably including Carlton House and Langham Tower off Mowbray Road to the east of Ryhope road, and Park House off Mowbray Road (west) to the west of Ryhope road. Langham Tower provides a particularly good example of the extensive ceiling and woodwork decoration with which many of these large houses were furnished, although each house was different in design and decoration, according to the tastes of the occupiers (Bowling n.d., 106). (The continuing influence of the Mowbray family in approving the design of properties probably did not extend to interior décor.) The generous width of The Cloisters (Mowbray Road, west), laid out at this time, was permitted by the ready availability and cheapness of land at this time, as well as by the desire to foster an image of refinement and grandeur for the area.

By the end of the nineteenth century, supported by the construction of a tramway route along Burdon road to Christ Church on Ryhope Road (and subsequently extended southwards), the area north of Mowbray Road had developed as an area of middle class housing, including spacious semi-detached and superior terraced developments (Illus. 3 & 4).

Later structural developments in the area are relatively insignificant. The area began to decline after WW1 when the cost of upkeep of the larger houses became prohibitive for many private owners. Park Hall was at some stage converted for college use (a mid-20th century extension to the building (see below) may have been added as part of its refurbishment), as was the larger, grander Langham Tower, which became an educational training college having been sold to Sunderland Corporation. Park Hall remained in use as a university residency until recent times. Williamson Hall (Illus. 6 and digital images 029-031– see Appendix), which stands in the same ground as Park Hall, a little to the west, is a plain building constructed to meet the increasing demands of the higher education sector in the 1970s.

3.2 Building description (by P F Ryder, *Historic Buildings consultant*)

Park Hall is constructed of orange brick laid in English Garden Wall Bond 1 & 5, with basement, raised quoins and dressings of sandstone ashlar, and a blue slate roof. It is a substantially complete villa of late Victorian date, in an eclectic style that combines elements including both Queen Anne and contemporary Arts-and-Crafts influences.

3.2.1 The Exterior

The house turns its back to the road; the principal (south) elevation, facing the garden, is symmetrical and of five narrow bays, and of two full storeys upon a basement, with an attic in the roof. A central flight of ashlar steps, with moulded nosing and a balustrade on each side, leads up to a (renewed) door in a lugged architrave, set in a shallow raised panel that rises the full height of the elevation; the timber porch that covers the doorway is clearly a later 20th-century addition and has a gabled roof of Lakeland slate, capped by shaped and pierced terracotta ridge tiles. On either side are semi-hexagonal bays with three-light transomed windows holding leaded casements, above smaller leaded windows serving the basement, under flat tops with dentil cornices. At first floor level the central window, in an ashlar surround with scrolled feet, has a round-arched head with sunk triangular panels in the spandrels, and radial leading to its leading; the other windows at this level are again leaded casements, set in lugged architraves. There is a bold timber cornice to the eaves with dentils and modillions, breaking forward over the centre bay. On the front roof slope is a flat-topped semi-octagonal dormer with plate-glass sashes, under a bold cornice, again with dentils; plainer flat-topped dormers on either side, with paired casements, are probably secondary, and, together with the timber porch, are the only alterations to an attractive facade.

Each end elevation has two slightly-projecting chimney breasts, with sunk panels mimicking window openings, under splayed ashlar lintels; the tops of these stacks and another on the ridge have been truncated and rebuilt at some time during the 20th century. There are moulded strings at the levels of the sills of the ground and first-floor windows; there have been some alterations in the form of the insertion of windows, and the lower part of the west end is pebble-dashed. At attic level each gable end has an Italianate window of two round-arched lights with a moulded cornice above.

At the rear of the house is a central wing of three narrow bays; the first bay seems to be part of the original fabric, but the remainder, in orange brick laid in English Garden Wall Bond 1 & 3, is clearly an addition (*Illus. 6*); its metal-framed casements suggest a date in the region of 1930-1950. On the east side of the wing a short flight of steps leads up to a doorway in a moulded surround, which seems to replace an earlier window; in front of this is a porch; on the west side of the wing is a fire escape.

3.2.2 The Interior

The current access to the building is via the entrance into the rear wing, which leads through a lobby (from which a service stair descends to the basement) under a keyed elliptical arch into the central stair hall. This has an impressive dogleg stair with a large octagonal newel post at its foot, rising to a Gothic crocketed capital; the stair itself is of open-string type, with shaped tread ends and fat moulded and carved balusters carrying a moulded handrail. The stair hall has an elaborate plaster cornice with flower and fruit, that is continued up the stair. Two principal

reception rooms, each lit by one of the semi-hexagonal bays, occupy the whole length of the south side of the main block; the southern entrance opened directly into the larger eastern room, which has later been sub-divided; it has an ornate plaster cornice with dentils and scrolled brackets. The western room remains unaltered, and is decorated in a pastiche of a mid-18th century style, with a panelled dado, moulded dado rail, Adams-style fireplace, plaster wall panels with urns and foliate motifs (*Illus. 7*), and a patterned ceiling; the doorway has a lugged architrave.

The first floor has been partitioned and sub-divided; the central hall has a good plaster cornice, and the windows on the south front panelled reveals. Only the western bedroom retains its fireplace, which has a keyed round arch with panelled pilasters on either side, and an insert of blue tiles.

The stair rises the full height of the building. At attic level there has been further subdivision.

A simple stair with plain stick balusters leads down to the basement, which has external access both from the west side of the rear wing, and a doorway on the west side of the projecting stair on the south front. All the rooms at this level, which include the kitchens, have been considerably altered.

The garden in which the house stands has extensive rockeries and path and lawn edging in the ornamental concretionary Magnesian limestone worked in the former Fulwell quarries; these, once common in Sunderland, are becoming rare, and are of considerable geological interest.

3.2.3 Summary

This is a fine late Victorian/early Edwardian villa which despite recent use as student accommodation retains much of its original character; 20th century alterations are limited to an extension of the rear wing and some internal subdivision. The interior retains an impressive stair and one of its principal reception rooms intact. Given its location within a conservation area, and its apparently sound structural condition, it would seem rather surprising that consent for demolition has been given.

Peter F Ryder 12 December 2002

4. PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDING

Photographic recording of Park Hall was undertaken in accordance with the specification provided by the county planning archaeologist.¹ Colour and monochrome prints and colour digital images were produced of the building exterior and interior on December 12th 2002, with further colour digital back-up images taken on January 13th 2003.

In addition, digital images of the modern college buildings west of Park Hall were also produced, along with a line of mature trees along the western boundary of the site.

¹ Specification for a Photographic Record of Park Hall, The Cloisters, Ashbrooke, Sunderland. Tyne and Wear County Council, December 2002.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The Park Hall complex comprises two buildings, Park Hall itself, probably constructed in or immediately after 1875, and Williamson Hall, constructed as college buildings in the 1970s, latterly part of Sunderland university. The earlier building has been photographed in detail as part of a recording exercise required as a condition of planning consent by Tyne and Wear County Council.

Neither of the two groups of buildings is regarded as of great regional importance, although both represent classes and architectural styles of buildings which are becoming increasingly scarce. The older building, Park Hall, contains a number of features, both externally and internally, which were considered significant enough to merit photographic recording.

An extensive search of local archives for buildings records and other information of significance to the history of the site met with limited success. It remains possible that records survive in the possession of architects offices or other professionals previously engaged in work on the site.

5.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that consideration is given to the preservation of certain, highly representative features of the building, such as interior plasterwork, particularly if these can be incorporated into the fabric or furniture of the successor structure on the site.

Concretionary Magnesian limestone blocks worked in the former Fulwell quarries and used ornamentally in the grounds of Park House may also merit retention for similar use in the grounds of the planned successor buildings complex.

6. REFERENCES

BOWLING H G, n.d., Some Chapters on the History of Sunderland. Privately published

TWCC (Tyne & Wear County Council), 2002, Specification for a Photographic Record of Park Hall, The Cloisters, Ashbrooke, Sunderland

7. PHOTOGRAPHIC APPENDIX

COLOUR PRINT REF. No.	DESCRIPTION
PH/C1	View of house frontage from the South
PH/C2	View of main entrance from south-west
PH/C3	View of West side of building
PH/C4	View of west side of building and later northern extension
PH/C5	View of entrance to east side of northern extension
PH/C6	View of North side of Park Hall from The Cloisters
PH/C7	First floor South frontage centre window and central attic window
PH/C8	Ground floor internal stairs
PH/C9	Stair newel
PH/C10	Ground floor West room door
PH/C11	Ground floor West room fireplace
PH/C12	Ground floor West room cornice and wall plasterwork decoration
PH/C13	Ground floor West room ceiling and wall decoration
PH/C14	Ground floor East room fireplace and cornice
PH/C15	First floor centre bedroom
PH/C16	Ground floor arched doorways
PH/C17	Stairway
PH/C18	First floor West bedroom fireplace
PH/C19	Central first floor window
PH/C20	Stairway
PH/C21	Stairway
PH/C22	Detail of stairway balusters

<i>MONOCHROME PRINT REF. No.</i>	DESCRIPTION
PH/M1	View of North side of Park Hall from The Cloisters
PH/M2	View of entrance to east side of northern extension
PH/M3	View of house frontage from the South
PH/M4	View of house frontage and west side from South-West, also showing Christ Church
PH/M5	View of West side of building
PH/M6	View of west side of building and later northern extension
PH/M7	View of main entrance from south-west
PH/M8	First floor South frontage centre window and central attic window
PH/M9	Internal stairway
PH/M10	Stair newel
PH/M11	Internal stairway
PH/M12	Ground floor West room door & cornice
PH/M13	Ground floor West room fireplace
PH/M14	Ground floor West room
PH/M15	Ground floor West room decorated ceiling
PH/M16	Internal stairway
PH/M17	First floor West bedroom fireplace
PH/M18	First floor West bedroom window
PH/M19	First floor South frontage centre window lookint south onto playing fields
PH/M20	Detail of stairway balusters
PH/M21	Internal stairway to attic
PH/M22	Attic bedroom window

DIGITAL REF. No.	DESCRIPTION
PH/D 0011	South view
PH/D 002	South steps and porch from SE
PH/D 003	SW view
PH/D 004	Central first floor S facing window
PH/D 005	W end and rear wing from SW
PH/D 006	Inside view of gate from The Cloisters
PH/D 007	Park Hall from NW (The Cloisters)
PH/D 008	Ground floor east room
PH/D 009a	Ground floor east room cornice
PH/D 009b	Ground floor east room cornice detail
PH/D 010	Ground floor kitchen tiled wall
PH/D 011	Ground floor West room
PH/D 012	Ground floor West room cornice and wall decoration
PH/D 013	Ground floor West room wall decoration
PH/D 014	Ground floor West room wall decoration
PH/D 015	Ground floor West room door
PH/D 016	Ground floor West room ceiling
PH/D 017	Rounded doorway arch at foot of stairs
PH/D 018	Rounded doorway
PH/D 019	Cornice next to arch
PH/D 020	Stairwell
PH/D 021	Stair
PH/D 022	Stair newel at foot
PH/D 023	Stair balusters
PH/D 024	Stair cornice
PH/D 025	Cellar stairway
PH/D 026	First floor centre bedroom S window
PH/D 027	First floor W bedroom fireplace
PH/D 028	Attic centre bedroom looking south
PH/D 029	Williamson building, E face N end
PH/D 030	Williamson building, E face S end
PH/D 031	Williamson building, N end from The Cloisters
PH/D 032	Line of trees, W site boundary



Illus. 1: First edition Ordnance Survey Plan, c.1865, showing the area immediately prior to the construction of Park House



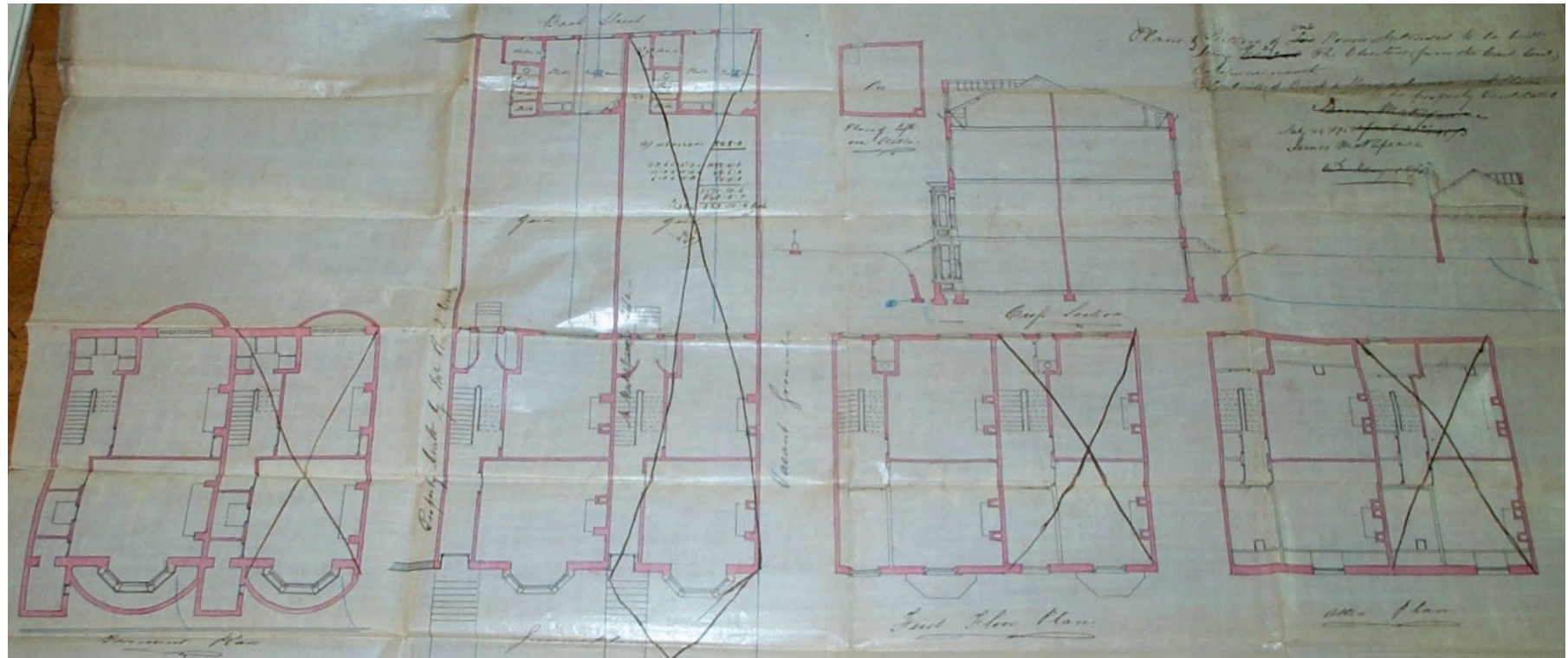
Illus. 2: Detail of First edition Ordnance Survey Plan, c.1865, showing the location of Park House (red fill)



Illus. 3: Second edition Ordnance Survey Plan, c.1898, showing the location of Park House (red underline)



Illus. 4: Third edition Ordnance Survey Plan, c.1921, showing the location of Park House (red underline)



Illus. 5: Building Plan [TWCA 269/1339-42 (pt) Plan 354] by James Makepeace of Newcastle, dated 1875, for a proposed house of brick and stone (possibly Park House) at the Cloisters (E end).



Illus. 6: North side of Park Hall and later extension viewed from The Cloisters, with Williamson Hall in the background



Illus. 7: Ground floor West room wall decoration and cornice above fireplace