

Case Name: Great Barr Hall and Chapel

Case Number: 1432461

Background

Historic England has been asked to assess Great Barr Hall to ensure that its statutory listing at Grade II* is appropriate. The present amendment case was raised internally and follows discussions with interested parties concerning the fact that the building is on the Buildings at Risk Register. The hall was listed at Grade II* in 1971 and the designation of the Hall and the Registered landscape were last considered for amendment in 2008. At that time the boundary of the registered park was redrawn and the grades were confirmed at Grade II* for the house and Grade II for the park. The hall building functioned as a hospital until 1978, together with a cluster of purpose-built, mid-C20 hospital structures to the south-east of the hall. The C20 hospital buildings were demolished in the early-C21 and replaced by a denser residential development, grouped around a former driveway to the hall. The Hall has gradually become dilapidated and the park is overgrown in some areas. A previous owner had plans to restore the hall with money from an enabling development in part of the park, but this did not happen. The present owners also wish to restore the house to use as a wedding venue and conference centre through an enabling development. The site was formerly fenced and guarded at all times, but this constant vigil has now lessened and there are signs of vandalism on site, together with further dilapidation.

Asset(s) under Assessment

Facts about the asset(s) can be found in the Annex(es) to this report.

Annex	List Entry Number	Name	Heritage Category	HE Recommendation
1	1076395	Great Barr Hall and Chapel	Listing	Amend List

Visits

Date	Visit Type
17 February 2016	Full inspection

Context

This former country house, which is currently designated at Grade II*, was turned into a mental asylum in the early years of the C20. It stands in a park which is designated Grade II on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens and lies within the Great Barr Conservation Area. In 1978 the local health authority categorized it as surplus to requirement and since then it has suffered from neglect and vandalism and is now in category A on the Historic England Buildings at Risk Register. It is currently the subject of a restoration project for which funding is sought through an enabling development. This has prompted a request for re-assessment of the listing and grading of the house.

HISTORIC ENGLAND INVOLVEMENT: The West Midlands Office have been involved in a series of discussions with the present owners, their architect, and Walsall B.C. about the intended restoration and enabling development.

A report on the historic background to the Hall and the architects involved was commissioned from our Research Group. This report has informed our assessment.

Assessment

CONSULTATION

Our consultation report was issued on 23 February and sent to the owner, their agent, the local planning authority, the HER officer, a local history society and other interested parties, including two Members of Parliament.

We received seven responses. One, from an MP, initially asked for clarification of certain points contained in the consultation report. A subsequent response from them addressed the points contained in our Reasons for Designation of 2008, when the grading was confirmed at Grade II*, commenting that the building is a shell without a roof; that the lack of specific mention of Nash in the report was taken to mean that his involvement was unsubstantiated; that the association of the Hall with the Lunar Society is of minor importance to the history of the house and noting the lack of specific mention of the Registered Landscape within which the Hall sits. The MP concludes that, for these reasons, they do not feel that Great Barr Hall meets the standard needed to be listed at Grade II* and that the building must be judged by present-day standards, not as it was when first listed.

A local interest group (Beacon Action Group) responded saying that they had witnessed the continuing deterioration of both the house and the Registered park. They reiterated the view, voiced by the Planning Inspectorate at planning enquiries, that preservation and restoration of the park and house should be viewed as one holistic exercise and said that local residents view enabling development in the parkland, which will raise funds to restore the house, as a potential harm to the local community and noted further evidence of the poor condition of the building.

Another local MP wrote saying that they fully supported the sentiments contained in the responses received from their fellow Member of Parliament and from the local interest group.

The Walsall Civic Society responded, referring to the present planning application for enabling development on the site of the surrounding Registered park (Grade II). They felt that any restoration of the hall would be prohibitively expensive and rehearsed similar sentiments to the respondents above, adding that they consider that future resources should consequently be directed to retrieving and restoring the historic landscape surrounding the hall, but that the hall building should be replaced with a structure of similar prominence to 'hold' and make sense of the parkland setting.

The local planning authority responded, referring us to their earlier note sent as a result of our notification letter. This said that the building is in 'very bad' condition, and could be categorized as 'Heritage at Risk'. Despite these losses they felt that there is still a strong Strawberry Hill gothic presence in the design and some sense of architectural detailing in various features. They also felt that the meetings of the Lunar Society at the hall and its consequent association with some of the leading industrialists of the time, together with associations with prominent architects were of importance. Although in a visually poor condition, they felt that the building retains much of its communal, evidential and historic significance as well as its association with the grounds which are a Registered Historic Park and Garden. They felt that the building still has a story to tell and is still significant and worthy of listing as a building of national architectural or historical significance.

The local vicar responded and noted that the park and house are closely inter-related. The park is on the Historic England Register at Grade II and the park also falls within the Great Barr Conservation Area. They felt that the damage to the historic landscape, which is a fragile but complete ecosystem, that enabling development would cause was inappropriate. They helped to clarify the history of the parishes and the churches built in the C19 and provided further history of the estate, indicating the considerable changes made to the hall building throughout the C18 and C19.

The Chairman of the Great Barr and Aston Local History Society responded asking that the list description be updated to include greater reference to the Lunar Society and referred to their own paper 'Touched by Genius' which gave detailed descriptions of those members of the Lunar Society who were known to have attended meetings at Great Barr. They said that the only eye-witness accounts of meetings of the society were those held at Great Barr. They also provided possible evidence of the design of the chapel by Sir George Gilbert Scott.

We are grateful to all the respondents for the information provided. Those points of fact regarding the details and history of Great Barr Hall have been incorporated in our report where appropriate. Although it is acknowledged that the current condition of Great Barr Hall and its associated landscape are the focus of much local concern, our assessment can only consider the special architectural and historic interest of the building as assessed against the statutory criteria for Listing. Matters such as the condition of the building, its economic viability and associated planning considerations are not relevant to our assessment and will not be discussed further here. The special interest of the building is considered in our Discussion below.

DISCUSSION

The Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings issued by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (March 2010) state that buildings of pre-1700 date that contain a significant proportion of their original fabric are listed. Also, that most buildings of pre-1840 date are listed. After 1840, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have survived, progressively greater selection is necessary. The Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings also indicate the qualities of the different grades of buildings:

Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest;

Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest;

Grade II buildings are of special interest, warranting every effort to save them.

This information is amplified by the Historic England Building Selection Guide for Suburban and Country Houses (2011) which says of country houses which date from the period pre-1700, that recognisable survivors will merit listing even when substantially altered and that houses built between 1700 and 1840 will probably warrant listing. Country houses are assessed against the criteria of age, rarity, intactness and quality of design, materials, craftsmanship and historic associations. Quality of elevational design, interest of planning, quality and survival of decoration are also factors. Some degree of alteration can be expected and may, in certain circumstances, add to the interest of the building. Integrated assessment of a house together with the surrounding structures and landscape is essential to establish the combined special interest of the group and of individual elements in the grouping.

Great Barr Hall has suffered a considerable decline since it was sold to the Poor Law Guardians at the start of the C20. In the earlier C20 its appearance was altered by the conversion and then demolition of the stable block and its clock tower and the loss of the corner turrets, which were apparently added to the house at the time of its alteration post-1767. Nonetheless, it was still in relatively complete condition when photographed and described in the Pevsner Guide for Staffordshire published in 1974 (see Sources).

Following its closure as a hospital in 1978 the building suffered from neglect and vandalism and, by the time of its listing assessment in 1986, it was noted that many of the roof tiles on the chapel were missing and many of the barley-sugar balusters to the central staircase had been destroyed. The most significant damage has happened since then, with roof coverings stripped from the main house, leading to extensive water damage to the fabric, an attack of dry rot, which led to the stripping out of large areas of plaster and joinery, and arson attacks which have significantly damaged the elaborate timberwork of the chapel/billiard room roof and that above the west range.

Great Barr Hall was last assessed for listing in 2008, at which time an enabling development in the park was planned, which would have allowed the restoration of the house. Elements of the woodwork had been stored following the attack of dry rot and the vandalism and further deterioration appeared to have been stopped by weatherproofing and a security fence and guards. However, since that time the building has been sold at auction, scaffolding has been removed and the weather proofing and the security cover have gone and the fence has been breached. The consequence has been further deterioration of the condition of the building due to rain and vandalism. This is particularly the case with the chapel/billiard room, where the south wall has collapsed and the gable tops have been removed – apparently thrown down by vandals. The pattern of the original rafters, trusses and purlins is still clearly apparent, although the extent of the damage to the charred timbers, caused by a series of arson attacks, probably means that they would all need to be replaced.

The question of attribution of the early-C19 work on the house to a particular architect cannot be conclusively resolved. Summerson's judgement, that the additions of c.1800 were by Nash, was not followed by Mansbridge in his book of 1991 or by Colvin in his Biographical Dictionary (see Sources), and a recent stylistic attribution to Francis Goodwin has been suggested as someone working in a broadly similar Gothic style in the West Midlands area in the early C19. The addition of the un-consecrated chapel c.1856 can now be more firmly attributed to Sir George Gilbert Scott. Although the chapel is not mentioned in Cole's biography of Scott of 1980, he is nonetheless recorded as designing a boat house, lodge and bridge at Great Barr in the list of his works published in *The Builder* following his death in 1878. Scott the architect and his namesake and patron, Sir Francis Edward Scott, first met at Ruskin's rooms in Venice and in 1860. Subsequently, Sir Francis wrote a polemical pamphlet in favour of Gilbert Scott's design for the Foreign Office in which he also approved of 'constructional colour'. An advertisement was placed in local newspapers in February 1856, asking for tenders for the erection of a new church at Great Barr. It named George G Scott as the architect and gave his office address, as well as naming Sir Francis Scott. The local parish church was subsequently rebuilt by William Darby Griffin of Wolverhampton for a cost approaching £4,000 and reconsecrated in 1861. It was largely paid for by the Bagnall family, who owned land in the area. It therefore appears that the building referred to as a 'church' in the advertisement, and with which Sir Francis Scott was

clearly connected, is likely to have been the chapel added to the south side of Great Barr Hall and not the parish church.

The fact that such prominent architects can be mentioned as potential authors is indicative of the quality of the designs. The rationalisation of the plan and the additions to the western front are both of a high standard and would seem, at the very least, to be informed by Nash's practice. The use of a top-lit gallery or staircase was a particular favourite feature of Nash and appeared at Aqualate Hall, Staffs, and Rockingham and Knepp, as well as at Buckingham House. The alterations to the western front also have comparable examples amongst Nash's oeuvre, including the octagonal buttresses at Aqualate and those at Knepp Castle, West Grinstead, which also terminate in small battlemented platforms. The ogee heads to the windows can be seen at Atcham and Corsham and the panels of blind tracery to the spandrels appear at Longner. Some of these motifs were becoming more usual at the start of the C19, but their combination, together with the inspired alterations to the plan indicate an architect of distinct talent who, if not Nash, was working in a manner close to his. The attribution to George Gilbert Scott is similarly attested by strong circumstantial evidence, referred to above. The design is also similar to others by him, including the chapel at Luscombe, Devon (Grade I) which also has polychromatic decoration to the walls and uses this style next to a Gothic building by Nash, to which it is attached. The motif of the cusped lights with a trefoil to the apex all set beneath a gablet is similar to that seen at Trefnant, which Scott designed. A collaboration between Scott and Sir Francis in drawing up the design might be a reasonable suggestion, bearing in mind their friendship and the similarity to other designs by the architect. The fact that names cannot be attached to parts of the design for Great Barr Hall with absolute conviction does not lessen the quality of the architecture. Many buildings of considerable merit do not have a known designer, while a chance discovery in a muniment room or archive has resulted in many attributions which are now undoubted, but would otherwise be unknown.

Although not usually a factor in an assessment for listing, the present condition of the building has relevance in considering the continued listing and appropriate grade for Great Barr Hall given the extent of loss of historic fabric. Although much of its detailed finish, particularly fireplaces, cornices and joinery are now missing, sufficient of the former fabric remains to give a good impression of the architectural detailing of the exterior, especially on the "show" fronts to the west and north. This includes early-C18 work on the west front, clearly seen at first floor level, and the additions of c.1800 which were made to create a highly effective picturesque composition with a rational plan. All of the interiors are damaged to some degree, and the majority of the principal rooms are reduced to their bare walls, without ceilings, plasterwork to the walls or even floorboards. The most impressive of the internal spaces is the staircase hall and significant, although partial, architectural detailing survives here, including elements of the strapwork pilaster panels and the outlines of the plaster vault with its three octagonal skylights which have further portions of strapwork decoration. The ceiling of this room has suffered from weather damage since the last amendment to the description of 2008, but the remaining fabric would still enable an accurate restoration, perhaps retaining portions of the original. The series of photographs of the interior, dating from the late-C19 and from the 1970s, also provide useful information about the former appearance of the house that would aid restoration. However, the damage caused to the fabric by weather, dry rot and vandalism is undeniable and considerable.

The association of Great Barr Hall with the Lunar Society in the C18 has been revealed in letters between participants in the meetings and in the accounts of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck (nee Galton). Indeed, they are the only eye-witness records of the society's meetings. It is acknowledged that the society met at other locations in the Midlands, including Matthew Boulton's home, Soho House, Birmingham and Erasmus Darwin's house in Lichfield, both of which survive and are now museums, and members carried on lengthy correspondence with each other in the years between 1765 and 1813. The loose and changing affiliation included some of the foremost industrialists and thinkers of the time and Samuel Galton Jnr., who leased Great Barr Hall from the Scott family between 1785 and 1797, was a member. Amongst the participants in meetings at this time were Matthew Boulton, James Watt, Joseph Priestley, Erasmus Darwin, William Withering and Josiah Wedgwood. Letters from James Watt tell of meetings at Great Barr in 1785 and 1791 and another letter from Samuel Garbett records a meeting there in 1789, following the Birmingham riots. Galton was a consistent member of the group and its importance as a forum for debate and as a catalyst in the exchange of ideas between scientists and manufacturers is well attested.

Great Barr Hall is one part of a grouping of heritage assets: the building sits within a Registered landscape (Grade II), designed in part by Humphry Repton and John Nash and possibly by William Shenstone [1714-63], who later married into the Scott family. The business partnership between Repton and Nash in the early-C19 is recognised as an important artistic collaboration and one which created notable examples of a sympathetic picturesque relationship between landscaping and architecture. Although both building and park have suffered from neglect, neither appears to be beyond careful restoration. Part of the landscape has been built over by the Netherhall housing development to the south-east of the Hall, but the valley setting means that this is not immediately apparent from the house, and the boundary of the Registered landscape was

redrawn in 2008 to take account of this alteration. The house, its landscape and various satellite buildings such as the Gothick- style Handsworth Lodge (Grade II) and the Church of St Margaret, Great Barr (Grade II) create a grouping of integrated heritage assets which are allied to the Hall.

The historic interest of the building, coupled with its impressive setting and the quality of its architecture give Great Barr Hall clear special interest, but the continued, gradual physical erosion of the fabric of the structure, coupled with the loss of fittings which were formerly stored on site, has reduced its claims to have more than special interest to a degree where its continued listing at Grade II* is no longer justified. It should now be regraded at Grade II and an amended listing description should be issued.

In recommending the extent of designation, we have considered whether powers of exclusion under s.1 (5a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 are appropriate, and consider that they are not.

CONCLUSION

After examining all the records and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing at Grade II are fulfilled. An amended listing description should be issued.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION

Great Barr Hall, Walsall, a former country house of the C17 – C19, is recommended for regrading at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * New information: research undertaken by Historic England has allowed a clearer understanding of the relationship of the Lunar Society and a firmer attribution of the chapel to George Gilbert Scott;
- * Decreased extent of intact survival: continuing degradation of Great Barr Hall, recorded on the Heritage at Risk register, has resulted in further loss of fabric.

Countersigning comments:

Agreed. It is indeed unfortunate when the mechanisms for the protection of our most significant buildings are unable to ensure their continued use and preservation. The strength of feeling and concern for the future of both the Hall and its surrounding Registered parkland, expressed in the responses to our consultation, is thus understandable. Despite this, our assessment must necessarily focus on the building as it is understood and stands now, and it is undoubtedly the case that continued exposure to the weather and vandalism has resulted in further loss of historic fabric. Against this, research undertaken by Historic England has provided a firmer context for the building. Taking together all of the factors, it is our view that the building continues to have historic and special interest as a substantial former country house influenced by Nash and with elements by GG Scott. The later associations with the Lunar Society add considerable historic interest to it as well. On balance, however, the further losses to the fabric mean that listing at a higher grade can no longer be justified, and it should be downgraded to Grade II.

Deborah Williams
1st April 2016

Annex 1**List Entry****List Entry Summary**

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: Great Barr Hall and Chapel

List Entry Number: 1076395

Location

Great Barr, Walsall,

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
	Walsall	Metropolitan Authority	Non Civil Parish

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 15 June 1971

Date of most recent amendment: 31 July 1986

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

Legacy Number: 219080

Asset Groupings

This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List Entry Description**Summary of Building**

A country house which was converted to use as a hospital in the early C20. Part of the fabric is C17 with additions and alterations of c.1767, the early C19 and a chapel building of c.1856, designed by George Gilbert Scott.

Reasons for Designation

Great Barr Hall, Walsall, a former country house of the C17 – C19, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * Architectural interest: despite unsympathetic alterations made during its use as a hospital and subsequent damage caused by neglect and vandalism, the hall has special interest as an example of C18 Gothick architecture which was later altered and extended to form a picturesque Gothic-revival country house;
- * Historic interest: the lengthy ownership of the Scott family, their development of the house and landscape and the tenancy of Samuel Galton and his affiliation with the Lunar Society, and documented meetings of the group at the house, combine to give distinct historic interest to the hall;
- * Group value: Great Barr Hall, together with its surrounding landscape, which is registered at Grade II on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens, and related heritage assets, form an integrated grouping which has special interest.

History

The building was initially known as Netherhouse and a hearth tax return of 1666 records Richard Scott as living there with five hearths in the house. In an inventory of 1675 there is reference to both old and new parts of the house and it is possible that the house was divided amongst two households, according to Richard Scott's will of the same year. It may have been a large farm house according to the evidence of inventories prepared in 1709 and 1715 with a barn and cockloft, buttery and dairy. By 1760 it was described as a "handsome and commodious dwelling house" with stables, a coach house and a walled garden. According to Stebbing Shaw in his 'History and Antiquities of Staffordshire' of 1798, "The present possessor [Joseph Scott], about the year 1767, began to exercise his well known taste and ingenuity upon the old fabric, giving it the pleasing monastic appearance it now exhibits ... and has since much improved it by the addition of a spacious dining room at the east end, and other rooms and conveniences". Shaw's book shows a watercolour depiction of the house with a symmetrical entrance front of 11 bays, having a central doorway, turrets to the corners and battlemented parapet. This is assumed to be the present west front and the flank, or south front, appears to have had three bays.

These alterations left the Scotts in financial straights and they went abroad from 1785 and let the house to Samuel Galton junior, the Birmingham Quaker, banker and gun manufacturer. In his time the house was used as one of the venues for meetings of the Lunar Society, a group of entrepreneurs and intellectuals from the area around Birmingham, many of whom were Fellows of the Royal Society and who included Matthew Boulton, James Watt, Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood. Meetings of this illustrious group at Barr are recorded in The Scotts returned to Great Barr in 1797 and more alterations to the house followed. The reason may have been given by Galton's daughter, Mary Anne, who published an autobiography in 1858 under her married surname of Schimmelpennink. She lived at the Hall between 1786 and 1797, and wrote that 'There were four or five different halls, and as many different staircases. It was more like an assemblage of several houses under the same roof, than the unity of one dwelling'. It was Mrs Schimmelpenninck who provided the only eye-witness accounts of meetings of the Lunar Society at the Hall, but other meetings are referred to in letters between participants. Joseph Scott was made a baronet in the late C18 and became MP for Worcester. The second campaign of alterations which was instigated after 1797 appears to have been intended to address the problems which Mrs Schimmelpenninck outlined, as well as to celebrate the family's new status.

It is not clear if it was Joseph or his son, Edward Dolman Scott (who inherited the baronetcy and house in 1828 and lived until 1851), who undertook this second phase of redevelopment. The central, top-lit, staircase hall was constructed at this time, and its complex arrangement of flights of stairs with landings at several different levels seems to have been devised to solve the problems which resulted from the earlier piecemeal development of the house. At the same time the ground floor plan was altered to provide an inter-connected group of reception rooms and the exterior was changed to create a more dynamic composition than the existing, slightly block-like, outline which would have looked old-fashioned by the tail end of the C18. The alterations include the three bays which project at the centre of both floors on the west front, and which replace the former five bays which were more closely spaced. At the same time the ground floor projections at either side of the centre were added, with their canted bay windows. What remained of the former façade appears to have been the three first floor windows at either side which also incorporated corner turrets (since demolished, in the early C20) that extended upwards to form an attic floor. A depiction of the earlier form of the house in Stebbing Shaw's 'History and Antiquities of Staffordshire' shows these turrets and would also seem to indicate that the earlier Gothick treatment may have had ogee heads to the windows. Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck wrote of the house having being built in the 'Ogee Gothic style' (which would place the house amongst the early examples of Gothic Revival taste in England) and it may well be that the early-C19 additions respected the existing style of c.1767. Unifying the front and adding interest across it are a series of octagonal buttresses which terminate in flat or battlemented caps which were also added at this time.

Between 1830 and 1848 major works included the addition of a clock tower, together with the extension of the south face of the hall and the removal of the entrance to the north elevation from its previous place on the west side. A chapel was added to the south west corner of the building c. 1856, apparently to the designs of Sir George Gilbert Scott who added other estate buildings including two lodges, a bridge and a boat house for Francis Scott, the patron and his architect having first been introduced by Ruskin. Advertisements in the Staffordshire Advertiser and Wolverhampton Chronicle of February 1856, naming Scott as the architect, invited builders to tender for the erection of a new 'church' at Great Barr and to respond to Sir Francis Scott at the Hall. Sir Francis died in 1863 and the chapel was never consecrated and was turned into a billiard room. Following the death of Lady Bateman-Scott in 1909 the hall was bought by the West Bromwich Poor Law Guardians, initially to house orphaned children.

From 1918 it served as a hospital for the mentally ill. The auction catalogue of 1911 refers to the large eastern service yard having a laundry, brewhouse, coal and wood houses, and to extensive carriage houses and stables. In 1925 a two-storey extension was added to the north elevation which encroached on the service yard and in 1955 the clock tower, stables and part of the east wing were demolished to make way for a further extension to the hospital facilities. Alterations in the 1960s included the insertion of load-bearing steel beams and the removal of the oriel windows on the north front and their replacement with metal casements (now, in turn, removed).

The house ceased to be a hospital in 1978 and was in a state of some disrepair when it was reassessed at Grade II* in 1986. In 1989 the building was bought by a private individual and they stripped out plasterwork and woodwork in order to stem an outbreak of dry rot. The owner became bankrupt and the receiver sold a part of the surrounding landscape to a property developer. The remaining land, together with the hall, was sold to another individual in 2003. The listing of the hall at Grade II* was confirmed in an assessment of 2008. The property was offered at auction in 2011 and bought by a consortium which is the present owner. In the later C20 and early C21 vandalism across the building and fire damage to the chapel has meant that the house has now lost much of its roof and internal fittings. Water penetration has also caused further damage and loss.

Details

A country house which was converted to use as a hospital in the early C20. Part of the fabric is C17 with additions and alterations of c.1767, the early C19 and a chapel building of c.1856, designed by George Gilbert Scott.

MATERIALS: the early C19 part of the building is of rendered brick with a slate roof and the chapel of c.1863 has red brick walling with blue brick diapering, stone dressings and a slate roof.

PLAN: the house is of two storeys with a basement. The garden front faces west and is raised by two terraces above a lake. The entrance front is to the north. A top-lit staircase hall, together with a small entrance hall at the north end, form the central spine of the building with reception rooms set to the west side, overlooking the landscape. Former service rooms are positioned to the east.

EXTERIOR: the building is in a state of dilapidation. At the time of survey (March 2016) the roof has been almost entirely removed; some details such as mouldings and areas of the upper walls have been lost where stucco render has fallen; brickwork has spalled and sash windows across the building have, with few exceptions, been removed. C20 additions to the eastern side of the building have been demolished. The garden front has nine bays at first floor level with ogee heads to all openings, with square hood moulds and blind tracery to the spandrels. The central three bays project forward from, and above the level of those to either side and the lateral bays at ground floor level also project forward and have canted bay windows (the northern bay has now largely collapsed). These projections appear to date from the early C19 alterations, and the recessed bays at first floor level mark the previous building line of the front. There are polygonal buttresses to the angles with battlemented caps (some incomplete) and battlements to the tops of the walls. The north front has two slightly-projecting bays at centre, in front of which is a projecting, single-storey porch with three-light casements to its flanks. At either side are ogee-headed windows with panels of blind tracery above their heads and, between them, the lower portions of polygonal brackets, which formerly supported first-floor, oriel windows which were then replaced by C20, metal-framed casements (now removed). Extending to the left of this front and set lower, is part of the walling of the service wing which has now been largely demolished. Following the demolition of large parts of the service wing and the additions and alterations made to the house by the National Health Service and its predecessors during the use of the building as a hospital in the C20, the east side of the house now largely consists of exposed internal walling.

INTERIOR: plasterwork, joinery (including fireplaces, doors and their surrounds) and floorboards have largely been removed from the building as a result of dry rot. To the centre of the plan is a rectangular, top-lit staircase hall. This connects at its northern end to the entrance hall and doors from it lead off to the three principal rooms along the west front; a central drawing room, with a doorway out to the terrace, a library at the north end and a dining room at the south end. A short passageway from the dining room leads to the chapel. The staircase hall had a central imperial staircase which started as two flights, rose to a central T-shaped gallery and then split again into two flights which climbed around the walls of the hall to a top landing on the west side. The staircase is now lost. To the upper walls are a series of pilasters which are inset with strapwork decoration. To the heads of these are projecting capitals which support depressed arches. These divided the hall into a series of bays; three to each of the shorter ends (which largely survive) and nine to each of the longer flanks (which are now fragmentary). Plaster vaulting ribs spring from the corners and sides to create an interlacing pattern. Set at the centre of the hall are three octagonal lanterns, with incomplete strapwork decoration to their drums. A further, first-floor landing has a similar octagonal skylight to its ceiling. A stretch of walling at ground-floor level on the eastern side of the house has stone footings and may be a part of the fabric of the C17 house, as may the circular well shaft, which is lined with bricks. C18 cellars with brick barrel vaults lie under the centre of the house. One has barrel stands to either side and a wine cellar has arched storage bays. The vault of one cellar room has partially collapsed.

CHAPEL BUILDING: attached at right of the west front of the house, and projecting slightly, is the mid-C19 chapel building. This is of red brick with blue brick diapering in a lattice pattern. A lower, linking, corridor joins the house and chapel. This has a doorway with moulded ashlar surround. The western flank of the chapel has three bays and a projecting plinth with blue brick moulding and a flush ashlar sill band. Each window is set beneath a gable and has two lights with Carnarvon arches to the lower windows and a very generous transom, which hides the sill beam supporting the roof structure and which is set with two quatrefoil panels of foliage carving. Immediately above this are the upper arches and these rise into the gable. The heads to the windows had cusped lights and trefoils to the apex and dogtooth ornament to the outer arches, but these upper portions of the windows have now collapsed and are lying on the floor of the chapel or nearby. At the time of survey (March 2016) the central archway and window had been removed. At either end of the walling are elaborately-carved kneelers and the gables across the building have ashlar copings. The east side of the chapel is similar. The southern gable end (ritual east) has lost the majority of its upper walling, including the former window of five lights with cusped heads and quatrefoils and trefoils to the apex. The north gable end (ritual west) has a rose window with deeply-carved ashlar surround and a series of six quatrefoils surrounding a central polygon.

The building has suffered from fire damage and the roof covering of the chapel has almost entirely gone. The two charred roof trusses remain and consist of a tie, supported by arched braces, which carry a moulded king post and two ranks of purlins. There are ashlar posts connected to the common rafters. To the floor are plain tiles and the internal walls carry the same trellis pattern of diapering seen on the exterior.

MAPPING NOTE: The outline shown hatched in blue on the map which accompanies this listing indicates the historic extent of the house as it existed prior to its conversion to hospital use in the early C20 and does not show buildings and their foundations added to the eastern and southern sides of the house which were constructed after the change of use in 1918.

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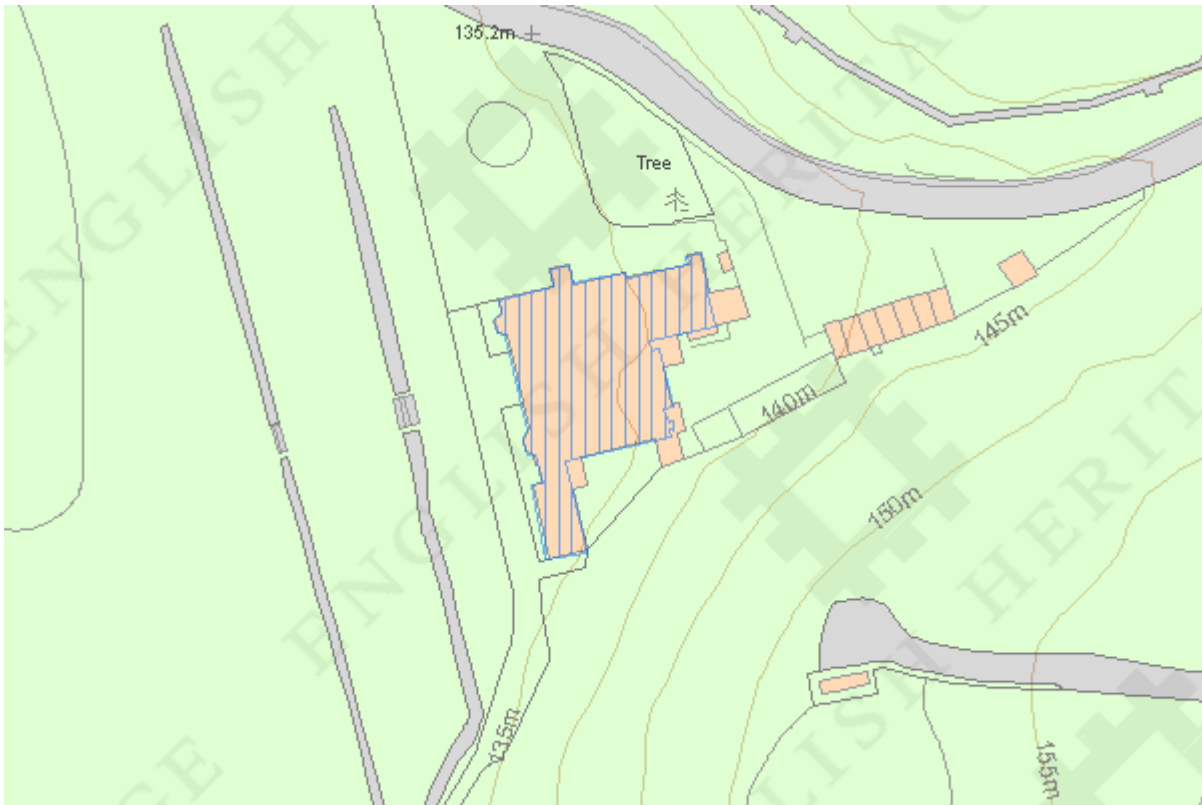
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Pamphlet: Shall the New Foreign Office be Gothic or Classic; Sir FE Scott (1860)

Peter Allen; Touched by Genius, Great Barr Hall and The Lunar Society (2013)

Map

National Grid Reference: SP0546295384



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The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - 1076395_3.pdf

Former List Entry**List Entry Summary**

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: GREAT BARR HALL AND CHAPEL

List Entry Number: 1076395

Location

GREAT BARR HALL AND CHAPEL,

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
	Walsall	Metropolitan Authority	

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 15 June 1971

Date of most recent amendment: 31 July 1986

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

Legacy Number: 219080

Asset Groupings

This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List Entry Description**Summary of Building**

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

<p>WALSALL MB Hall and chapel Hospital including Aldridge and Brownhills UD)-</p>	<p>GREAT BARRSP 09 NE8/40 (formerly listed as St chapel, under Great Barr CP,15.06.71</p>	<p>Great Barr Margaret's</p>
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II*A country house which was converted to use as a hospital in the early-C20. DATE: Part of the fabric is C17 with additions and alterations of c.1767, c.1800 and a chapel building of c.1863.ARCHITECT: The early-C19 work has been attributed to John Nash or Francis Goodwin. The chapel building of c.1863 has been attributed to George Gilbert Scott.MATERIALS: The early-C19 part of the building is of rendered brick with a slate roof and the chapel of c.1863 has red brick walling with blue brick diapering, stone dressings and a slate roof. PLAN: The house is of two storeys with a cellar. A central, top-lit staircase hall connects with the ground-floor reception rooms along the west front.EXTERIOR: The garden front has, at its centre, a portion of three-bays which projects forward from and above the level of the lateral bays. To the centre is a double doorway. At either side are windows and there are three windows to the first floor. All of the openings have ogee heads and square hood moulds with blind tracery to the spandrels and this feature is common to all openings on the front. Set between the bays are polygonal buttresses which have offsets to their lower bodies. The central two buttresses flanking the door are missing their caps. The lateral buttresses, which clasp the corners of the projecting three bays, have miniature, battlemented parapets as their capping, set half up the first floor walling. To either side of the central three bays, and flush with them, are ground floor bays which have projecting canted bay windows to their centres and further polygonal buttresses to their corners. Above this at first floor level and set back (apparently at the level of the earlier-C18 building line of this front) are three bays, again with ogee heads, square hood moulds and blind tracery. At attic level at the far right and left corners were formerly small square turrets which were removed in the C20. To the tops of the walls are battlemented parapets. The north side of the house has to its centre a projecting porch with ogee arched doorway, to the flanks of which are three-light casements. Immediately behind this is a slightly projecting portion of wall with two bays which has ogee-headed windows to the first floor, above which are panels of blank tracery. To either side of this central arrangement are two bays at ground floor level with ogee heads and panels of blind tracery and between these are set the polygonal brackets which formerly supported the first floor oriels. These have now been removed and replaced by C20 metal-framed windows. To the top of the walling is a battlemented parapet and to the far right and left corners are polygonal buttresses which support small, battlemented parapets, as seen on the west front. Extending to the left of this front and set lower, is part of the walling of a service wing which has now been largely demolished. Following the demolition of large parts of the service wing and the additions and alterations made by the National Health Service during the use of the building as a hospital in the C20, the east side of the house now largely consists of exposed internal walling.INTERIOR: to the centre of the plan is a rectangular, top-lit staircase hall. This connects at its northern end to the entrance hall and doors from it lead off to the three principal rooms along the west front; a central drawing room, with doors out to the terrace, a library at the north end and a dining room at the south end. A short passageway from the dining room leads to the chapel. The staircase hall had a central imperial staircase which started as two flights, rose to a central T-shaped gallery and then split again into two flights which climbed around the walls of the hall to a top landing on the west side. (In 2008 the staircase had been taken down and stored, pending restoration). To the upper walls are a series of pilasters which are inset with strapwork decoration. To the heads of these are projecting capitals which support depressed arches. These divide the hall into a series of bays; three to the shorter ends and nine to each of the longer flanks. Vaulting ribs spring from the corners and sides to create an interlacing pattern. Set at the centre of the hall are three octagonal lanterns, with more strapwork decoration to their drums. The interior has suffered from vandalism, including stripping of roof material, which has allowed water damage. Many of the walls have lost their plaster. Fire surrounds and joinery, including doors and windows have been lost. Some of the material including joinery from the staircase is stored pending the restoration.CHAPEL BUILDING: Attached at right of the west front and projecting slightly is the chapel building. This is of red brick with blue brick diapering in a lattice pattern. A lower, linking, corridor joins the house and chapel. This has a doorway with moulded ashlar surround. The western flank of the chapel has three bays and a projecting plinth with blue brick moulding and a flush ashlar sill band. Each window is set beneath a window and has two lights with Carnarvon arches to the lower windows and a very generous transom, set with two quatrefoil panels of foliage carving, immediately below the springing of the upper arches. The heads to the windows have cusped lights and trefoils to the heads and dogtooth ornament to the outer arches. At the time of survey (June 2008) the central archway and window had been removed. At either end of the walling are elaborately-carved kneelers and the gables across the building have ashlar copings. The ritual east end (south) has a window of five lights with cusped heads and quatrefoils and trefoils to the apex. The ritual west end has a rose window with deeply-carved ashlar surround and a series of six quatrefoils surrounding a central polygon. The roof of the chapel has suffered from fire damage, although charred the roof trusses remain and consist of a tie, supported by arched braces, which carry a moulded king post. There are ashlar posts connected to the common rafters. To the floor are plain tiles and the internal walls carry the same trellis pattern of diapering seen on the exterior.HISTORYThe

building was initially known as Netherhouse and a hearth tax return of 1666 records Richard Scott as living there with five hearths in the house. It may have been a large farm house according to the evidence of inventories prepared in 1709 and 1715 with a barn and cockloft, buttery and dairy. By 1760 it was described as a 'handsome and commodious dwelling house' with stables, a coach house and a walled garden. According to Stebbing Shaw in his 'History and Antiquities of Staffordshire' of 1798, 'The present possessor [Joseph Scott], about the year 1767, began to exercise his well known taste and ingenuity upon the old fabric, giving it the pleasing monastic appearance it now exhibits - and has since much improved it by the addition of a spacious dining room at the east end, and other rooms and conveniences'. Shaw's book shows a watercolour depiction of the house with a symmetrical entrance front of 11 bays, having a central doorway, turrets to the corners and battlemented parapet. This is assumed to be the recessed part of the present west front and the flank, or south front, appears to have had three bays. These alterations appear to have left the Scotts in financial straights and they went abroad from 1785 and let the house to Samuel Galton junior, the Birmingham Quaker, banker and gun manufacturer. In his time the house was used as one of the venues for meetings of the Lunar Society, a group of entrepreneurs and intellectuals from the area around Birmingham, many of whom were Fellows of the Royal Society and who included, Matthew Bolton, James Watt, Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood. The Scotts returned to Great Barr in 1797 and more alterations to the house followed. Between 1830 and 1848 major works included the addition of a clock tower, together with the extension of the south face of the hall and the removal of the entrance to the north elevation from its previous place on the west side. A chapel was added to the south west corner of the building c. 1863 and is thought to have been to the designs of Sir George Gilbert Scott who is also believed to have added other estate buildings including lodges and a boat house. The chapel was never consecrated and was turned into a billiard room. Following the death of Lady Bateman-Scott in 1909 the hall was bought by the West Bromwich Poor Law Guardians and from 1918 it served as a hospital for the mentally ill. In 1925 a two-storey extension was added to the north elevation. In 1955 the clock tower, stables and part of the east wing were demolished. Alterations in the 1960s included the insertion of load-bearing steel beams and the removal of the oriel windows on the north front and their replacement with the current metal casements. The house ceased to be a hospital in 1978. SOURCES: Pevsner, The Buildings of England - Staffordshire, 1974, p.137; The Revd. Stebbing Shaw, The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire, 2 Vols., 1798 & 1801, pp.105-6; The Builder, 6 April 1873, p.360; J. Summerson, The Life and Work of John Nash Architect, 1980, p.192; M. Mansbridge, John Nash - a Complete Catalogue, 1991, p.98; H. Colvin, A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840, 1995, p.692; Margaret Hanson & Peter Drake, Great Barr, Oscott and Kingstanding, 2001, pp.9-22. Great Barr Hall is designated at Grade II* for the following principal reasons: * Despite alterations made during its use as a hospital and subsequent damage caused by vandalism, the building has considerable architectural interest.* Although attributions to John Nash and George Gilbert Scott cannot be proved, the likelihood of their involvement is strong.* The use of the house as a venue for meetings of the Lunar Society in the late-C18 is of definite interest.* The partnership between John Nash and Humphry Repton was short-lived but highly influential for the Picturesque movement throughout Britain and Europe. The setting of Great Barr Hall in a landscape designed by both, and possibly also by William Shenstone (which is included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens at Grade II), gives added interest to the building. Listing NGR: SP0546195385

Selected Sources

Books and journals

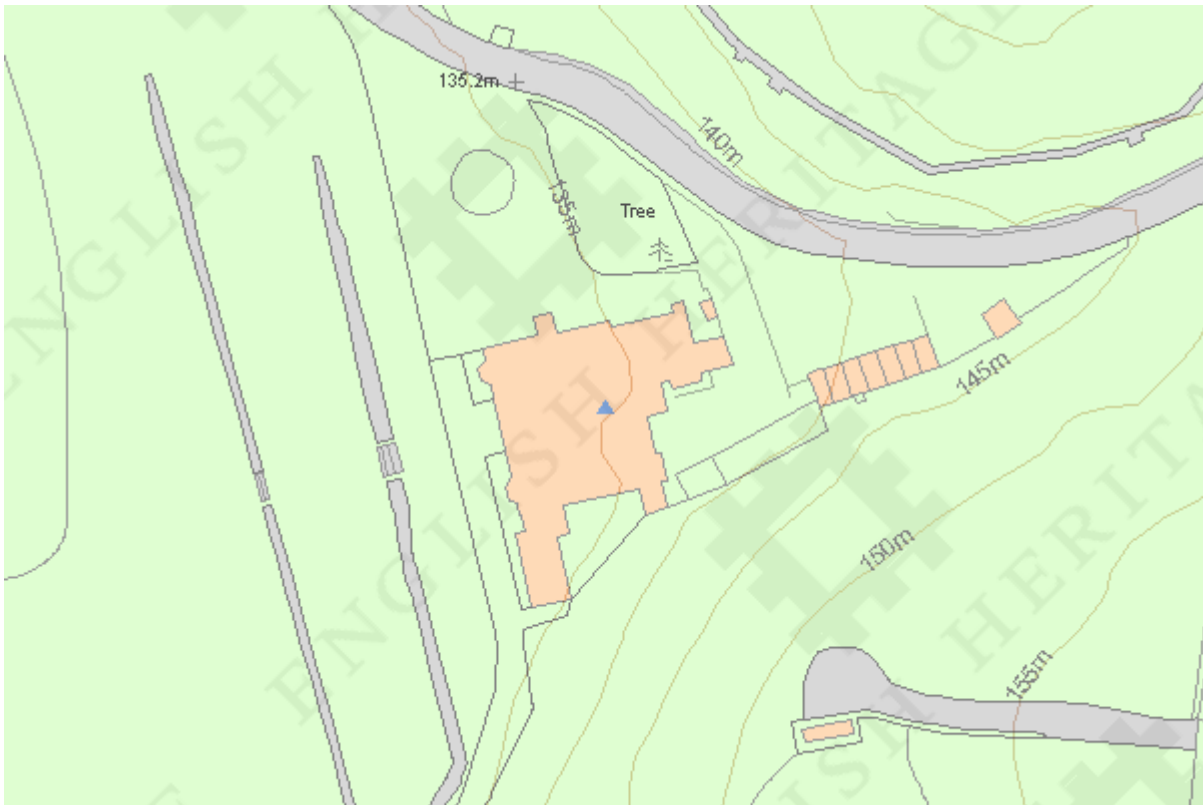
Landscape Survey of Great Barr Walsall, (1985)

Other

Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England, Part 43 West Midlands,

Map

National Grid Reference: SP 05465 95385



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