

New Inn Farmhouse, Stowe

New Inn Farmhouse and its associated farm buildings is a grade II* listed building which sits within the Stowe Conservation Area and within the Registered Historic Park and Garden. It is also a Building at Risk. AVDC have been working with The National Trust and the Buckinghamshire Historic Buildings Trust to see the building repaired.

The building is currently owned by a local farming family with the principal owner being Mr L Tompkins, the son of the original farmer. Mr Tompkins is elderly; he continues to farm the land but is not in a position to look after the building. He occasionally stays on site but lives elsewhere. The outbuildings are in such a poor condition, as he has no use for them and consequently has not maintained them.

The National Trust is in the process of negotiating to purchase the property and is hoping to exchange contracts by the end of September to complete by the end of October. The Buckinghamshire Historic Buildings Trust has agreed to part fund an Archaeological and Architectural Survey of the buildings prior to the National Trust instigating a full repair of the buildings. The Trust is awaiting an estimate for the works before finalising a figure but it is anticipated that it will be in the region of £1500 - £3000.

History of the buildings

The New Inn was built in 1717/19 by Lord Cobham as he began the enlargement of Stowe mansion and the creation of the landscaped grounds of Stowe. Originally (it is said) it housed the craftsmen employed on the great project and it was later used by the many visitors who came to see the celebrated grounds of Stowe down to the 19th Century.

The designer could be Thomas Harris of Cublington, who is associated with Aylesbury, his design for it being chosen by Vanbrugh (see entry in Colvin's dictionary of Architects).

Michael Bevington's *Templa Quam Dilecta*, a guide to Stowe in Part 1 The Grand Avenue, the Corinthian Arch and the Entrance Drives suggests that Vanbrugh may have also contributed to the design and siting of New Inn Farmhouse.

The New Inn was located on the old Chackmore to Stowe Road where it crossed with the former road to Radclive.

It appears to have become a farmhouse in the 1860s when ownership passed to the Gore-Langtons whose descendants became the Earl Temples of Stowe. It was leased to the present family in 1933 and purchased by them in 1947.

Current Condition

The site consists of a Farmhouse with a courtyard of surrounding buildings. The Farmhouse is partially occupied by Mr Tompkins. It is difficult to provide a full condition of the building as access is limited, due to safety measures installed by Mr Tompkins against burglary. However, the brick structure appears to be generally sound but will require localised repairs. The roof structure is also in a good condition and the roof covering was overhauled in 2000, although the rainwater goods are lost or in a very poor condition.

All joinery including windows, doors and internal architectural detailing will need to be assessed and repaired, where necessary.

The courtyard of buildings is in a very poor condition. The courtyard consists of a partially sunken dairy and brewhouse, a series of stables and small coach house and further outbuildings. The Coach House roof collapsed in August 2003 and the rest of the buildings all require extensive repairs.

Why the buildings are important?

New Inn Farm is one of the earliest buildings associated with the creation of Stowe, arguably the greatest example of English landscape gardening. Its links with Stowe, both historically and physically, make it a particularly interesting building. It was designed by Thomas Harris and the quality of its design and construction is high. Added to this is the interest of the early 19th Century refitting, including a number of internal features of note. The survival of inns built for great estates is not unique, but the others tend to be on through roads. New Inn was only on the road to Stowe, before this was diverted to allow the gardens to be expanded. It is remarkably complete and a very interesting survival of an unusual building.

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