

SUMMARY OF THE HISTORY OF BROOMFIELD HOUSE

History

Broomfield House dates, in part at least from the 16th century and is noted particularly for its splendid 18th century stair murals by Gerard Lanscroon. By the 20th century, successive waves of additions and alterations fully enveloped and concealed its interesting original core, dating from the mid 16th century, fragments of which were only revealed by a major fire in 1984 and which were recorded by the Museum of London's Archaeological Survey of the building under taken on behalf of the Historic Buildings Division of the Greater London Council.

This fire was the first of many which affected the now empty building over the following ten years, during which time a number of proposals for repair and reuse were actively considered and developed.

Continuing fires and vandalism prompted English Heritage to undertake further research and interpretation study culminating in their 1994 report "Broomfield House, Enfield, The Structural Development of the House" and Steven Brindle's "Broomfield: An Illustrated History of the House and Garden" in 1994.

Because of further damage following another major fire and consequent destruction of some supporting structure, resulting in parts of the building becoming dangerous, English Heritage reluctantly agreed to some selective demolition and clearance in 1994, with movable joinery items being taken to a protective store.

This work enabled accumulated debris and dangerous fabric in the interior of the house to be cleared out and the structure to be propped and made safe. Subsequent deterioration of the surviving fabric has been limited to minor vandalism.

In summary, the chronology of the house with a note of surviving fabric is:

1550

A hall was built with a jettied cross wing in what is now the core of the house, large parts of which survive, including the wooden wall and floor framing and a decoratively painted lintol over a ground floor window.

1570

The original building was extended to the north and a floor and huge chimney stack inserted into the hall. Much of this fabric survives.

1600

Alterations were undertaken and extensions were added to the south and east. These barely survive.

1624

A wing was added to the north of the 1570 extension and the house was extended to the east. The north extension survives in part, but is so badly damaged to be largely beyond repair. The east extension survives in part.

1726

A major neo classical re-modelling of the house took place and included the installation of the Baroque staircase, Lanscroun murals and panelling to the ground floor entrance hall and other rooms. Much of this survives.

1820

The last of the radical changes was undertaken by the Cybbe Powys family. At this time, the house was changed from a many gabled house to its surviving form with a large extension to the north, infilling in the southeast corner and the portico added. The north range survives, as does the portico and the overall building form from this time.

Early 20th century changes in the Edwardian period and subsequently in the 1930s included the addition of bay windows and entrance porch to the rear of the house and the well known faux timbering to the outside.

1984

A major fire swept through the house, by then employed as a local history museum, and largely destroyed the roof structures.

1984-1994

Further fires and vandalism culminated in another major outbreak in 1994, when wall linings and other joinery stored in the house were set afire and heavily, but, thankfully, not terminally, damaged.