

History of Mackerye End

The earliest records of a house at Mackerye End date from 1307 when the Manor of Makeriesend was held by William Makary whose descendants lived in the house until the death of young Thomas Makary in the early 1400s. Following the death of Thomas the house passed to his sister Margaret and her husband Hugh Bostock, parents of John of Wheathampstead, the celebrated Abbot of St Albans. Abbot John Bostock could not personally inherit Mackerye End because of his vow of poverty, so it was held in trust for him until his death when his sister inherited.

In 1558 Mackerye End came into the Brocket family who lived in the house until 1628, when Thomas Hunsdon became the owner. In 1681 the house was sold to Samuel Garrard of Lamer. For the next 238 years Mackerye End was part of the Lamer Estate until 1919 when Apsley Cherry Garrard sold it as he began to sell off the various houses and farms of the Estate.

The oldest surviving parts of the house are to be found around the massive south chimney stack. Dendochronology tests were recently carried out and confirmed that timbers used in this part of the house date from the mid-1500s. The house at that time was timber-framed with a tiled roof and faced south with the main entrance on the south side. Substantial rebuilding took place in the mid to late 16th century, possibly carried out by either John Heyworth, Abbot John Bostock's nephew who died in 1558, or by John Brockett around 1600.

During this period the main body of the house was remodelled and extended northwards. The front entrance of the house was shifted to the middle of the east side of the house, opening into what was then a very spacious hall, with wings projecting eastwards at either end. At this time the gables would have been straight-edged.

The house was further remodelled by Thomas Hunsdon in the mid-17th century with the building of a new staircase at the north end and replacement of the old gables with the current curved and pedimented 'Dutch' gables on the east front (one of which bears the date 1665). Hunsdon also added moulded cornices to the windows and constructed the timber turret bell tower with its ogee-capped cupola.

Thomas Garrard undertook a further phase of renovation and development work in the early part of the 18th century including substantial internal decoration, particularly ornate plasterwork. This work included the delightful ceilings in the Drawing Room and Morning Room which were completed in 1720. Garrard was also responsible for altering the windows to their current Georgian form in 1760 as well as the insertion of the round-headed sash window to the main staircase. Garrard also built the coach house to the south of the house which now forms part of a new modern kitchen.

Further renovation and rebuilding was carried out in the 1880s when there were significant additions as the needs of the house changed. These included the building of a corridor on the west side of the house linking the two separated sections of the 18th century house, the construction of the kitchen corridor, a new kitchen to the west of the house and other offices.

Since 2003, when the current owners took possession of the house, they have continued to renovate the house sensitively, including the rebuilding of an early Victorian chimney stack to the west wing, rewiring and replumbing the entire house and renovating areas of badly damaged brickwork. All hard 'cement' pointing has been replaced with traditional lime mortar.

Work was recently [2019] completed to reinstate the kitchen in the building known as the coach house. Plans from the late 18th century indicate this building was formerly used as the principal kitchen for the house. The cottage in the south-east corner of the courtyard has also been extensively renovated.