

# Putting the heart back into Hartridge House



We've been fortunate to have previously featured several projects from the renowned historic building and specialist conservation company, A T Palmer Ltd in recent years. The features on their projects always make fascinating reading, illustrating the full breadth of their workforce's talents, skills, and their amazing attention to detail. They have built up an enviable reputation as one of the most highly respected firms in the field and recently celebrated their 75th anniversary.



Here's yet another shining example of their work, as we take a look at Hartridge House. This was the total refurbishment and extension project of an early 20th century house in Kent that was crying out to be brought up to date and to be sympathetically restored as a masterpiece of modern living.

The Grade II Listed, Hartridge House is described as standing high above the Weald of Kent, commanding panoramic views. The building is a red brick country house built in 1913 for Colonel Charles Grey, a respected horticulturalist and nursery owner. It was possibly built to designs by the Arts and Crafts architect, Mervyn Macartney. It was sold in 1920 and had many different owners over the years,

for a time it was used as an office building for an Insurance company. However, when the new owners purchased it in 2022, very little had been done to the property for over forty years. The heating system was virtually defunct, it was a very cold and run down house, in need of a total refurbishment.

The architects Stephen Langer based in Tunbridge Wells were appointed by the owners to develop the designs for the total upgrade and refurbishment of the house, with an additional orangery extension to one side. Stephen Langer is a well-known RIBA Chartered Practice with a wealth of experience in conservation projects of Listed and period properties. They have a specialist design philosophy that is ideally suited to the particular needs of this project. Their ethos is to use a conscientious approach









to energy and ecological conservation in their designs, to ensure they are as future-proofed and sustainable as possible. It follows that one of the most important considerations for the owners was that the property be brought up to date to be as sustainable and eco-friendly as possible, so the architects were the perfect choice.

A T Palmer Ltd commenced work on the sympathetic envelope repair whilst Listed planning consent was being sought. This included repairs to the roof, windows, cleaning all

the brickwork and basically getting the exterior of the house ready for the next stages of the refurbishment to begin.

The designs, along with all the structural engineers details for the total refurbishment, renovation and orangery extension included improvement of insulation to the external fabric. The existing metal cased lead light windows couldn't be touched because of the Grade II Listed status, so new secondary timber double glazed windows were fitted inside the existing windows, to improve the energy efficiency.

The highest priority was to ensure the overall energy efficiency of the house and to upgrade its eco-credentials. The solution to this was to install a ground source heat pump and a solar array, along with under floor heating in much



of the ground floor. Everything that could be done to keep the building warm and to make it sustainable has been done, even the swimming pool is heated from the ground source heat pump and solar panels.

The orangery extension constructed by A T Palmer Ltd to the side of the original house is a tour de force. It has created a substantial and generous living space that has access out on to the swimming pool area, with a double height vaulted atrium ceiling, which bathes the room with additional light. Great care was taken to match the bricks for the orangery to the original house, which are specially made for the project and being 50mm thick handmade bricks. A local handmade brick company was found, to work with A T Palmer Ltd and the owners, to

develop a blend of 4 different colored bricks and the percentages of each colour to be used to match the original bricks of the house. The effect is stunning.

Right from the start the owners took the refurbishment and construction on as their own project and have been actively involved every step of the way. They lived in the house through the build, from section to section. This was made possible by creating a self-contained living accommodation complete with kitchen on the second floor, which meant they were very much in situ and able to work with the team on the project.

The owners worked closely with the architects as they created the drawings for the design,

the layout and the flow of the house. They also chose all the interior finishes themselves and have done an amazing job in creating stunning rooms with décor that evokes the era that the house was built in, selecting wallpapers, tiles and colours that are reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement and have masterfully blended these with more contemporary styles, achieving an overall elegant and modern interior throughout. This is a real triumph.

As the principal contractor, A T Palmer Ltd was responsible for the complete project. They were also heavily involved in developing the details of the fabric and materials used, even down to sourcing secondhand clay tiles for the new orangery roof to match the existing

house. Their highly skilled and multi-talented workforce were also responsible for all the interior work creating the cornicing, exquisite detailing, all the beautiful bespoke carpentry including cupboards, paneling, flooring and also fitting the sanitary wear throughout.

The owners, the Architects, AT Palmer Ltd and everyone involved in this inspiring project should be rightly proud of the wonderful work that has gone into rejuvenating what was a tired and rather dismal dwelling that had seen better days. They have breathed new life into Hartridge House, it is now recreated as a beautiful and sustainable home, that can take its rightful place in the 21st century and beyond into the future.

**For more info go to: [atpalmer.co.uk](http://atpalmer.co.uk) and [stephenlanger.co.uk](http://stephenlanger.co.uk)**

