

= Little Moreton Hall =

Little Moreton Hall , also known as Old Moreton Hall , is a moated half @-@ timbered manor house 4 miles (6 @. @ 4 km) southwest of Congleton in Cheshire , England . The earliest parts of the house were built for the prosperous Cheshire landowner William Moreton in about 1504 ? 08 , and the remainder was constructed in stages by successive generations of the family until about 1610 . The building is highly irregular , with three asymmetrical ranges forming a small , rectangular cobbled courtyard . A National Trust guidebook describes Little Moreton Hall as being " lifted straight from a fairy story , a gingerbread house " . The house 's top @-@ heavy appearance , " like a stranded Noah 's Ark " , is due to the Long Gallery that runs the length of the south range 's upper floor .

The house remained in the possession of the Moreton family for almost 450 years , until ownership was transferred to the National Trust in 1938 . Little Moreton Hall and its sandstone bridge across the moat are recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade I listed building , and the ground on which Little Moreton Hall stands is protected as a Scheduled Monument . The house has been fully restored and is open to the public from April to December each year .

At its greatest extent , in the mid @-@ 16th century , the Little Moreton Hall estate occupied an area of 1 @, @ 360 acres (550 ha) and contained a cornmill , orchards , gardens , and an iron bloomery with water @-@ powered hammers . The gardens lay abandoned until their 20th @-@ century re @-@ creation . As there were no surviving records of the layout of the original knot garden it was replanted according to a pattern published in the 17th century .

= = History = =

The name Moreton probably derives from the Old English *mor* meaning " marshland " and *tune* , meaning " farm " , thus literally " a farm at a marsh " . The area where Little Moreton Hall stands today was named Little Moreton to distinguish it from the nearby township of Moreton @-@ cum @-@ Alcumlow , or Greater Moreton . The Moreton family 's roots in Little Moreton can be traced to the marriage in 1216 of Lettice de Moreton to Sir Gramam de Lostock , who inherited land there ; succeeding generations of the de Lostocks adopted the name of de Moreton . Gramam de Lostock 's grandson , Gramam de Moreton , acquired valuable land from his marriages to Alice de Lymme and then Margery de Kingsley . Another grandson , John de Moreton , married heiress Margaret de Macclesfield in 1329 , adding further to the estate . The family also purchased land cheaply after the Black Death epidemic of 1348 . Four generations after John de Moreton , the family owned sixteen messuages , a mill and 700 acres (280 ha) of land , comprising 560 acres of ploughland , 80 acres of pasture , 20 acres of meadow , 20 acres of wood and 20 acres of moss . The Dissolution of the Monasteries in the mid @-@ 16th century provided further opportunities for the Moretons to add to their estate , and by the early years of Elizabeth I 's reign , William Moreton II owned two water mills and 1 @, @ 360 acres (550 ha) of land valued at £ 24 7s 4d , including 500 acres of ploughland , 500 acres of pasture and 100 acres of turbary .

Little Moreton Hall first appears in the historical record in 1271 , but the present building dates from the early 16th century . The north range is the earliest part of the house . Built between 1504 and 1508 for William Moreton (died 1526) , it comprises the Great Hall and the northern part of the east wing . A service wing to the west , built at the same time but subsequently replaced , gave the early house an H @-@ shaped floor plan . The east range was extended to the south in about 1508 to provide additional living quarters , as well as housing the Chapel and the Withdrawing Room . In 1546 William Moreton 's son , also called William (c . 1510 ? 63) , replaced the original west wing with a new range housing service rooms on the ground floor as well as a porch , gallery , and three interconnected rooms on the first floor , one of which had access to a garderobe . In 1559 William had a new floor inserted at gallery level in the Great Hall , and added the two large bay windows looking onto the courtyard , built so close to each other that their roofs abut one another . The south wing was added in about 1560 ? 62 by William Moreton II 's son John (1541 ? 98) . It includes the

Gatehouse and a third storey containing a 68 @-@ foot (21 m) Long Gallery , which appears to have been an afterthought added on after construction work had begun . A small kitchen and Brew @-@ house block was added to the south wing in about 1610 , the last major extension to the house .

The fortunes of the Moreton family declined during the English Civil War . As supporters of the Royalist cause , they found themselves isolated in a community of Parliamentarians . Little Moreton Hall was requisitioned by the Parliamentarians in 1643 and used to billet Parliamentary soldiers . The family successfully petitioned for its restitution , and survived the Civil War with their ownership of Little Moreton Hall intact , but financially they were crippled . They tried to sell the entire estate , but could only dispose of several parcels of land . William Moreton died in 1654 leaving debts of £ 3 @, @ 000 ? £ 4 @, @ 000 (equivalent to about £ 12 ? 16 million as of 2010) , which forced his heirs to remortgage what remained of the estate . The family 's fortunes never fully recovered , and by the late 1670s they no longer lived in Little Moreton Hall , renting it out instead to a series of tenant farmers . The Dale family took over the tenancy in 1841 , and were still in residence more than 100 years later . By 1847 most of the house was unoccupied , and the deconsecrated Chapel was being used as a coal cellar and storeroom . Little Moreton Hall was in a ruinous condition ; its windows were boarded up and its roof was rotten .

During the 19th century Little Moreton Hall became " an object of romantic interest " among artists ; Amelia Edwards used the house as a setting for her 1880 novel Lord Brackenbury . Elizabeth Moreton , an Anglican nun , inherited the almost derelict house following the death of her sister Annabella in 1892 . She restored and refurnished the Chapel , and may have been responsible for the insertion of steel rods to stabilise the structure of the Long Gallery . In 1912 she bequeathed the house to a cousin , Charles Abraham , Bishop of Derby , stipulating that it must never be sold . Abraham opened up Little Moreton Hall to visitors , charging an entrance fee of 6d (equivalent to about £ 8 as of 2010) collected by the Dales , who conducted guided tours of the house in return .

Abraham carried on the preservation effort begun by Elizabeth Moreton until he and his son transferred ownership to the National Trust in 1938 . The Dale family continued to farm the estate until 1945 , and acted as caretakers for the National Trust until 1955 . The Trust has carried out extensive repair and restoration work , including re @-@ roofing ; restoration of elements of the hall 's original appearance , and removal of some painted patterning added during earlier restoration work . The familiar black @-@ and @-@ white colour scheme is a fashion introduced by the Victorians ; originally the oak beams would have been untreated and left to age naturally to a silver colour , and the rendered infill painted ochre . In 1977 it was discovered that the stone slabs on the roof of the south range had become insecure , and work began on a six @-@ phase programme of structural repairs , the final phase of which was completed in 1992 . Replacement timbers have been left in their natural state .

= = House = =

The 100 @-@ year construction of Little Moreton Hall coincided with the English Renaissance , but the house is resolutely medieval in design , apart from some Renaissance decoration such as the motifs on the Gatehouse , Elizabethan fireplaces , and its " extravagant " use of glass . It is timber @-@ framed throughout except for three brick chimneybreasts and some brick buttressing added at a later date .

Simon Jenkins has described Little Moreton Hall as " a feast of medieval carpentry " , but the building technique is unremarkable for Cheshire houses of the period ? an oak framework set on stone footings . Diagonal oak braces that create chevron and lozenge patterns adorn the façades . The herringbone pattern with quatrefoils present at the rear , which can also be seen at Haslington and Gawsworth Halls , is a typical feature of 15th @-@ century work , while the lozenge patterns , continuous middle rail and lack of quatrefoils in the front façade are typical of 16th @-@ century early Elizabethan work . The south range containing the gatehouse , the last to be completed , has lighter timbers with a greater variety of patterns . The timber frame is completed by rendered infill and Flemish bond brick , or windows . The windows contain 30 @, @ 000 leaded panes known as

quarries , set in patterns of squares , rectangles , lozenges , circles and triangles , complementing the decoration on the timber framing . Much of the original 16th @-@ century glazing has survived and shows the colour variations typical of old glass . Old scratched graffiti is visible in places . The older parts of the roof frame are decorated , and the brickwork of some of the chimneys has diapering in blue brick .

The house stands on an island surrounded by a 33 @-@ foot (10 m) wide moat , which was probably dug in the 13th or 14th century to enclose an earlier building on the site . There is no evidence that the moat served any defensive purpose , and as with many other moated sites it was probably intended as a status symbol . A sandstone bridge leads to a gatehouse in the three @-@ storey south range , which has each of its two upper floors jettied out over the floor beneath . As is typical of Cheshire 's timber @-@ framed buildings the overhanging jetties are hidden by coving , which has a recurring quatrefoil decoration . The Gatehouse leads to a rectangular courtyard , with the Great Hall at the northern end . The two @-@ storey tower to the left of the Gatehouse contains garderobes , which empty directly into the moat . Architectural historian Lydia Greeves has described the interior of Little Moreton Hall as a " corridor @-@ less warren , with one room leading into another , and four staircases linking different levels " . Some of the grander rooms have fine chimneypieces and wood panelling , but others are " little more than cupboards " . The original purpose of some of the rooms in the house is unknown .

= = = Ground floor = = =

The Great Hall at the centre of the north range is entered through a porch and screens passage , a feature common in houses of the period , designed to protect the occupants from draughts . As the screens are now missing , they may have been free @-@ standing like those at Rufford Old Hall . The porch is decorated with elaborate carvings . The Great Hall 's roof is supported by arch @-@ braced trusses , which are decorated with carved motifs including dragons . The floor , now flagged , would probably originally have been rush @-@ covered earth , with a central hearth . The gabled bay window overlooking the courtyard was added in 1559 . The original service wing to the west of the Great Hall , behind the screens passage , was rebuilt in 1546 , and housed a kitchen , buttery and pantry . A hidden shaft was discovered during a 19th @-@ century investigation of two secret rooms above the kitchen , connecting them to a tunnel leading to the moat , the entrance to which has since been filled in . The west range now houses the gift shop and restaurant .

A doorway behind where the family would have sat at the far end of the hall leads to the Parlour , known as the Little Parlour in surviving 17th @-@ century documents . Together with the adjoining Withdrawing Room and the Great Hall , the Parlour is structurally part of the original building . The wooden panelling is a Georgian addition , behind which the original painted panelling was discovered in 1976 . The decoration consists of painted imitations of marble and inlay , and Biblical scenes , some of which were painted directly onto the plaster and others on paper that was then pasted to the wall . " Crudely drawn " but nevertheless " elaborate " , the paintings tell the story of Susanna and the Elders from the Apocrypha , a " favourite Protestant theme " . The Moreton family 's wolf head crest and the initials " J.M. " suggest a date before John Moreton 's death in 1598 . Similar painted decoration is found in other Cheshire houses of the late 16th and early 17th centuries .

A private staircase between the Parlour and the Withdrawing Room leads to the first floor . The Withdrawing Room has 16th @-@ century carved wooden panelling , and a wooden ceiling with moulded coffering , which probably dates from 1559 when the Great Hall ceiling was added . The bay window in this room was also added in 1559 , at the same time as the one in the Great Hall . The pair of windows bear the following inscription underneath their gables :

God is Al in Al Thing : This windous whire made by William Moreton in the yeare of Oure Lorde MDLIX . Richard Dale Carpeder made thies windous by the grac of God .

The wolf head crest also appears in the late 16th @-@ century stained glass of the Withdrawing Room . The chimneypiece in this room is decorated with female caryatids and bears the arms of Elizabeth I ; its plaster would originally have been painted and gilded , and traces of this still remain .

William Moreton III used what is today known as the Exhibition Room as a bedroom in the mid 17th century ; it is entered through a doorway from the adjoining Withdrawing Room . Following William 's death in 1654 his children Ann , Jane and Philip divided the house into three separate living areas . Ann , whose accommodation was in the Prayer Room above , then used the Exhibition Room as a kitchen . The adjoining Chapel , begun in 1508 , is accessible by a doorway from the courtyard . The Chapel contains Renaissance style tempera painting , thought to date from the late 16th century . Subjects include passages from the Bible . The chancel was probably a later addition dating from the mid 16th century . It is separated from the nave by an oak screen and projects eastwards from the main plan of the house , with a much higher ceiling . The stained glass in the east wall of the chancel is a 20th century addition installed by Charles Abraham , the last private owner of Little Moreton Hall , as a parting gift on his transfer of ownership to the National Trust .

The Corn Store adjacent to the Chapel may originally have been used as accommodation for a gatekeeper or steward . By the late 17th century it had been converted into a grain store by raising the floor to protect its contents from damp . Five oak framed bins inside may have held barley for the Brew house , which is now used as a toilet block .

== First floor ==

The Guests ' Hall and its adjoining Porch Room occupy the space above the entrance to the courtyard and the Gatehouse . They can be accessed either through a doorway from the adjacent Prayer Room or via a staircase at the south end of the courtyard leading to the Long Gallery on the floor above . The first floor landing leads to a passageway between the Guests ' Hall and the Guests ' Parlour , and to the garderobe tower visible from the front of the house . A doorway near the entrance to the Guests ' Parlour allows access to the Brew house Chamber , which is above the Brew house . The Brew house Chamber was probably built as servants ' quarters , and originally accessed via a hatch in the ceiling of the Brew house below .

In the mid 17th century the Guests ' Hall was referred to as Mr Booth 's Chamber , after the genealogist Jack Booth of Tremlowe , a cousin and family friend of the Moreton 's and a regular occupant . Its substantial carved consoles , inserted not just for decorative effect but to support the weight of the Long Gallery above , have been dated to 1660 . What is today known as the Prayer Room , above the Chapel , was originally the chamber of the first William Moreton 's daughter Ann , whose maid occupied the adjoining room .

The floors of the rooms on this level are made from lime ash plaster pressed into a bedding of straw and oak laths , which would have offered some protection against the ever present risk of fire . All the first floor rooms in the east range and all except the Prayer Room in the west range are closed to the public , some having been converted into accommodation for the National Trust staff who live on site . The Education Room in the east range , above what is today the restaurant , was in the mid 16th century a solar , and is now reserved for use by school groups .

== Upper floor ==

Running the entire length of the south range the Long Gallery is roofed with heavy gritstone slabs , the weight of which has caused the supporting floors below to bow and buckle . Architectural historians Peter de Figueiredo and Julian Treuherz describe it as " a gloriously long and crooked space , the wide floorboards rising up and down like waves and the walls leaning outwards at different angles . " The crossbeams between the arch braced roof trusses were probably added in the 17th century to prevent the structure from " bursting apart " under the load .

The Long Gallery has almost continuous bands of windows along its longer sides to the north and south , and a window to the west ; a corresponding window at the east end of the gallery is now blocked . The end tympana have plaster depictions of Destiny and Fortune , copied from Robert

Recorded 's Castle of Knowledge of 1556 . The inscriptions read " The wheel of fortune , whose rule is ignorance " and " The speare of destiny , whose rule is knowledge " . The Long Gallery was always sparsely furnished , and would have been used for exercising when the weather was inclement and as a games room ? four early 17th @-@ century tennis balls have been discovered behind the wood panelling .

The Upper Porch Room leading off the Long Gallery , perhaps originally intended as a " sanctuary from the fun and games " , was furnished as a bedroom by the mid @-@ 17th century . The fireplace incorporates figures of Justice and Mercy , and its central panel contains the Moreton coat of arms quartered with that of the Macclesfield family , celebrating the marriage of John de Moreton to Margaret de Macclesfield in 1329 .

= = = Contents = = =

Only three pieces of the house 's original furniture have survived : a large refectory table , a large cupboard described as a " cubborde of boxes " in an inventory of 1599 , possibly used for storing spices , and a " great rounde table " listed in the same inventory . The refectory table and cupboard are on display in the Great Hall , and the round table in the Parlour , where its octagonal framework suggests that it was designed to sit in the bay window . Except for those pieces , and a collection of 17th @-@ century pewter tableware in a showcase in the west wall of the Great Hall , the house is displayed with bare rooms .

= = Gardens and estate = =

By the mid @-@ 16th century the Little Moreton Hall estate was at its greatest extent , occupying an area of 1 @, @ 360 acres (550 ha) and including three watermills , one of which was used to grind corn . The contours of the pool used to provide power for the cornmill are still visible , although the mill was demolished in the 19th century . The Moreton family had owned an iron bloomery in the east of the estate since the late 15th century , and the other two mills were used to drive its water @-@ powered hammers . The dam of the artificial pool that provided water for the bloomery 's mills , known as Smithy Pool , has survived , although the pool has not . The bloomery was closed in the early 18th century , and the pool and moat were subsequently used for breeding carp and tench . By the mid @-@ 18th century the estate 's main sources of income came from agriculture , timber production , fish farming , and property rentals .

The earliest reference to a garden at Little Moreton Hall comes from an early 17th @-@ century set of household accounts referring to a gardener and the purchase of some seeds . Philip Moreton , who ran the estate for his older brother Edward in the mid @-@ 17th century , left a considerable amount of information on the layout and planting of the area of garden within the moat , to the west of the house . He writes of a herb garden , vegetable garden , and a nursery for maturing fruit trees until they were ready to be transferred to the orchard at the south and east of the house , probably where the orchard is today .

During the 20th century the long @-@ abandoned gardens were replanted in a style sympathetic to the Tudor period . The knot garden was planted in 1972 , to a design taken from Leonard Meager 's Complete English Gardener , published in 1670 . The intricate design of the knot can be seen from one of the two original viewing mounds , common in 16th @-@ century formal gardening , one inside the moat and the other to the southwest .

Other features of the grounds include a yew tunnel and an orchard growing fruits that would have been familiar to the house 's Tudor occupants ? apples , pears , quinces and medlars .

= = Superstition and haunting = =

During the last major restoration work , 18 " assorted boots and shoes " were found hidden in the structure of the building , all dating from the 19th century . Concealed shoes were placed either to ward off demons , ghosts or witches , or to encourage the fertility of the female occupants . Like

many old buildings , Little Moreton Hall has stories of ghosts ; a grey lady is said to haunt the Long Gallery , and a child has reportedly been heard sobbing in and around the Chapel .

= = Present day = =

Little Moreton Hall is open to the public from April to December each year . The ground floor of the west range has been remodelled to include a restaurant , tearoom and a gift shop . Services are held in the Chapel every Sunday from April until October . The National Trust offers evening ghost tours around the house each Halloween . In common with many other National Trust properties , Little Moreton Hall is available for hire as a film location ; in 1996 it was one of the settings for Granada Television 's adaptation of Daniel Defoe 's Moll Flanders .