

History



The site on which the house now stands was first mentioned in documents as far back as 1272, when the De Aldworth family paid 6 old pence for 2½ acres of land. The present stone house was probably built in 1598 although the date stone above the front porch bears the initials and a date A.B. 1633. Abraham Brigg certainly owned the house about this time. We know he sold it to Henry Wadsworth of Luddenden in 1657 and the Wadsworth family retained possession for more than two hundred years until 1877.

John and Deborah Wadsworth built a new barn in 1689 and their date stone I.W.D 1680 can be seen on the west porch of the courtyard. In the late 19th century the house was divided into two dwellings and let to tenants. There were only three or four further owners until Rita and Freddie Pearson and their young family bought the house in 1963 and opened it to the public, for the first time in its history, as The Cavalier Country Club.

THE CAVALIER COUNTRY CLUB

The Cavalier Country Club was an exclusive members' club of the kind popular in the early 1960s and proved an immediate success. The membership numbered over a thousand with an annual fee of seven guineas. Businessmen used the restaurant to entertain visiting customers; they encouraged Rita and Freddie Pearson to build accommodation at the rear of the old house.

Celebrities flocked to stay at Holdsworth House: The Beatles stayed on 9th October 1964 (John Lennon's 24th birthday) and the Pearson family had to vacate their own rooms in the house to accommodate the Fab Four and their manager, Brian Epstein. The staff were sworn to secrecy, as Mrs. Pearson was afraid the gardens would be trampled by thousands of screaming fans.

John Lennon and Ringo Starr slept in what is now an office; Paul McCartney and George Harrison stayed in the present day Ayrton Room - now a private dining room. The band took room service in the Ayrton Room, dining on turtle soup and steak tartar. The French Maitre d' wrote their order, a copy of which can be found on the reception wall, acknowledging the band as 'The Beatles'.



HOLDSWORTH HOUSE
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NEW FOUND FAME

Rita Pearson died in 1981 and Freddie passed away in 1989 but the manor remains in the dedicated hands of their daughters Kim and Gail, both passionate about the estate's preservation and success.

In recent years the hotel and gardens have been used as a set on a variety of TV programs including Jamie Oliver's Great British Food, The One Show and BAFTA-winning drama Last Tango in Halifax. The hotel team continues to be the hotel of choice for well-known faces filming in the area or touring the North including Henry 'The Fonz' Winkler and the BBC's Happy Valley cast.

SPECIAL FEATURES

The cross on the east gable is of particular interest. This cross denotes that at some distant time the estate was in the hands of the ancient Order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. Such properties had to display the cross or be fined until it was replaced. Estates in the order contributed to the welfare of the Crusaders and houses bearing this ornament were said to be 'under the cross'.

There is a great deal of fine oak furniture in the house that was purchased by Freddie Pearson in the 1960s when it was not so fashionable. Freddie thought he had been robbed if he paid more than £5 for one of the fine carved chairs, which are still used in the restaurant today.

At the top of the stairs, to the right along the corridor, are three wig cupboards set into the wall that probably date from the early 18th century – their purpose is self-explanatory!

The Witches Cupboard doors in the Mullioned Room was bought from Maurice Goldstone of Bakewell, a well-known antique dealer, who supplied most of the oak furniture. Rita Pearson found one half of the Witches Cupboard doors in his storeroom and the half being used by a builder as a board for mixing cement! It dates from the 18th century and the symbols are Masonic.

Over the years there have been several sightings of 'ghosts' most frequently in the Ayrton Room which was originally the main bedchamber of the house and where blond bombshell Jayne Mansfield stayed just weeks before her tragic death. However, when TV psychic Derek Acorah stayed he did not pick up any signs that the house was haunted.

GARDENS

The delightful four gabled Gazebo at the corner of the sunken garden was probably built a little later than the house and there are several suggestions as to its original use. It was either built simply as a summerhouse or a gatekeeper's house but it could also have been a small private chapel.

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(...continued) There is a legend that a tunnel ran from the main house to the Gazebo and was used during times of religious persecution. There may well have been a 'priest hole' behind one of the fireplaces in the main house.

To commemorate the hotel's 35th anniversary and the Millennium it was decided to restore the period gardens at the front to the house. The design was taken from John Parkinson's book 'A garden of Pleasant Flowers', published in 1629, and the planting includes many contemporary flowers and shrubs. Miss Elizabeth Wadsworth planted two of the weeping ash trees in the front garden in 1821, the third tree was added by the Pearsons who had it specially imported from Italy because of its rarity.

A local junior school put together a time capsule, which is buried beneath the sundial.

ONE OF YORKSHIRE'S FINEST HOTELS

In 2013 the hotel celebrated its 50th anniversary as an independent, family-owned hotel - a rare achievement in this day and age! In 2016 Holdsworth House was shortlisted for Large Hotel of the Year at the prestigious White Rose Awards for the second consecutive year, won the 2016 I Do Best Wedding Venue award and the Luxury Travel Guide Global Awards, voted for by travelers.



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