



HOLDSWORTH HOUSE

HOTEL & RESTAURANT

A House of Distinction
Since 1633



Holdsworth House in Halifax has been home to families of wealth and distinction since 1633. In this book, we reveal the manor's intriguing history and the lives of those who have lived here since Medieval England, including the Pearson family's 60+ years of private ownership and hotel management.

Medieval England

Although the current stone house was completed in 1633, it was built on a site first mentioned in documents as far back as 1272. Then, it was just a small farm with a number of barns and it wasn't until 1435, when the land was leased to a William Greenwood, that plans were made for a stone house to replace the timber one that stood here originally.

Tudor Reign

It was a wealthy man named Abraham Brigg who completed the building of the current house, including the Stone Gazebo, in 1633. Brigg lived at Holdsworth House for over 20 years but in the end he wasted his fortunes, gave way to drink, sold the estate to the Wadsworth family in 1657 and went to set up an alehouse in Halifax.

As staunch Catholics, both Greenwood and Brigg had paid deposits and rents to the Order of St John (also known as Knights Hospitaller),

a Catholic military order that provided care for sick, poor or injured pilgrims. Indeed, Brigg's house design incorporated the Maltese Cross – a symbol of the Order, which can still be seen on the gables.

Catholic Persecution

The Stone Gazebo is the four-square-metres, four-gabled building at the southwest corner of the hotel's Parterre garden. It also bears the Maltese cross and its purpose may have been a gatehouse, a summerhouse or a dovecote. We know, from extensive diaries written by Elizabeth Wadsworth (who owned Holdsworth House in the 1800s), that pigeons were kept in the Gazebo, but it may also have served as a secret chapel in times of Catholic persecution. The Gazebo's ample loft space, once concealed by a ceiling, is a good-size and would have proved a useful hiding place for a priest looking to escape soldiers. And, whilst it has never been unearthed, it is rumoured there was a secret tunnel leading to the Gazebo from the main house.



20th Century Restoration

Fast forward 350 years to the late 1990s and, whilst the main house was well preserved, the Stone Gazebo was falling into disrepair. As a Grade II* Listed building of 'significant national historical importance', Holdsworth House earned funding from English Heritage to restore the Gazebo.

As many of the original features as possible were retained and restored, but the experts believed the fireplace inside the Gazebo to be Victorian rather than Jacobean, indicating that the Gazebo has been a well-used feature of the manor throughout history.

In 1998 a local decorative artist, Linda Brill, added the interior stencilling (pictured above) to the repaired Gazebo plaster. Other parts of the interior walls were purposely left bare to reveal the original stonework.

V&A Museum-inspired Designs

Linda Brill explained, "We wanted the stencil design to relate to the period of the house, and I found inspiration from Tudor and Elizabethan designs in the V&A Museum. The repeated heart-shaped motif took two months to complete and is filled with stylised flower designs. I chose this to echo the design of the newly planted knot garden." Linda was so enamoured with the Gazebo that she chose it as her wedding venue a year later.

A Very Modern Use

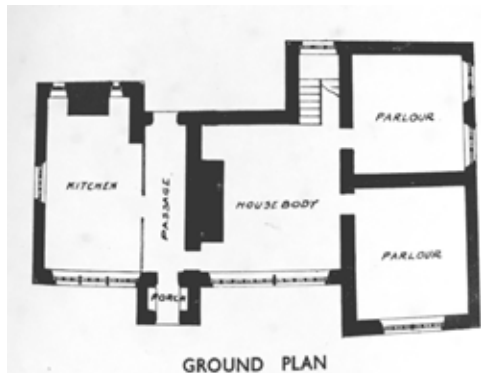
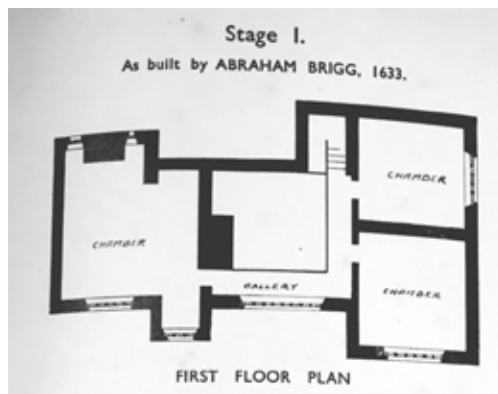
Today, the Stone Gazebo is a popular private dining space and wedding ceremony venue. The rafters are exposed to show the beautiful four-gabled structure and the fireplace houses a modern heater. Access to the Gazebo is via well-worn steps and a low doorway that requires visitors to duck to avoid a painful bump on the head!

Top: The Stone Gazebo

Left: The Maltese Cross on the main house indicating the house was once 'Under the Cross'

Centre: Inside the Stone Gazebo

Right: Local school children celebrating the newly designed knot garden in 1998.



Jacobean England

The layout of Holdsworth House has undergone radical transformations over the centuries.

In 1633, Abraham Brigg completed the replacement of the original timber-framed house with the current stone manor. In fact, the footprint of the new design was much smaller than the one experienced today. Over time, the manor has been added to and its layout remodelled to serve the needs of its inhabitants. Now, being Grade II* Listed, its architecture is protected.

A Grand, Open Hallway

Abraham Brigg was a wealthy landowner and in 1633 he finally finished his long-planned stone house in a rather grand Jacobean style. With mullioned windows, multiple gables and a large central hall, it was a typical of grand houses of the era.

On the ground floor were two parlour rooms plus the house kitchen and 'house body'. Upstairs were three bedrooms.

The architectural plans, found in the Halifax Antiquarian Society of 1942, show Brigg's house had a single staircase off a central hallway, which was open to the roof and featured a gallery on the upper level to service the bedrooms.

The large stone fireplace in today's Mullioned Room restaurant, would have heated this large, open, central area.



The Wadsworth Era 1657 - 1837

Abraham Brigg sold Holdsworth House to Henry Wadsworth in 1657, who bought it for his son John. It was John and his wife Deborah who first made major changes to the house from 1660 onward.

First, a new kitchen (with another bedroom above it) was built off the back of the house body. Then, in 1680, they built a cottage adjacent to the new kitchen and added the barn (not shown on the plan below). Today the barn is our Stuart Room – the main function room of the hotel. The inscription I.W.D. 1680 is carved into the stone in the barn entrance.

One of John Wadsworth's descendants added the wood panelling to the parlour in the 1700s, which can still be seen today in our Hall and Panelled Restaurant.

Miss Elizabeth Wadsworth

In 1750, clergyman John Wadsworth III married the wealthy daughter of moneylenders and solicitors from Bradford, which established the family's affluent social standing. The couple went on to have three sons then a daughter.

Ground floor layout 1660



The Hall staircase today

A Philanthropist and Diarist

Miss Elizabeth Wadsworth was born on 15th November 1760 and lived at Holdsworth House until 1837. Elizabeth inherited the house and other properties from her second brother Samuel, around 1800. Like her contemporary and distant relative, Anne Lister of nearby Shibden Hall, Elizabeth was schooled at The Manor in York and wrote comprehensive diaries that noted her financial accounts and daily social interactions.

A wealthy spinster, Elizabeth divided her time between Holdsworth House and Boldshay in Bradford. She donated much of her income from the letting of her properties and farmland to charitable causes. She was responsible for building local almshouses as well as Popples School – the beginnings of today's Bradshaw Primary.

Famous Connections

Elizabeth Wadsworth detailed her life across 19 volumes of diary jottings, using school journals and notebooks. Most have survived intact to this day and are held on deposit at Halifax library, alongside Anne Lister's famous five-million-word diaries. It is noted that Anne Lister wrote in her diaries that 'Miss Wadsworth of Holdsworth had [an income of] £700 per year'* (around £75,000 per year today).

Elizabeth's diaries reveal close connections to the Walkers of Crownest (Anne Lister went on to marry Ann Walker) and Dorothy Wordsworth – sister of poet William.

Wadsworth's diaries give us a fascinating insight into her life and the times. On February 6th 1820, she writes about King George III and Reverend Patrick Bronte (Brunty) – father to the famous Bronte sisters.

Elizabeth Wadsworth is depicted in the painting

(opposite, figure right), which hangs on the hotel reception wall.

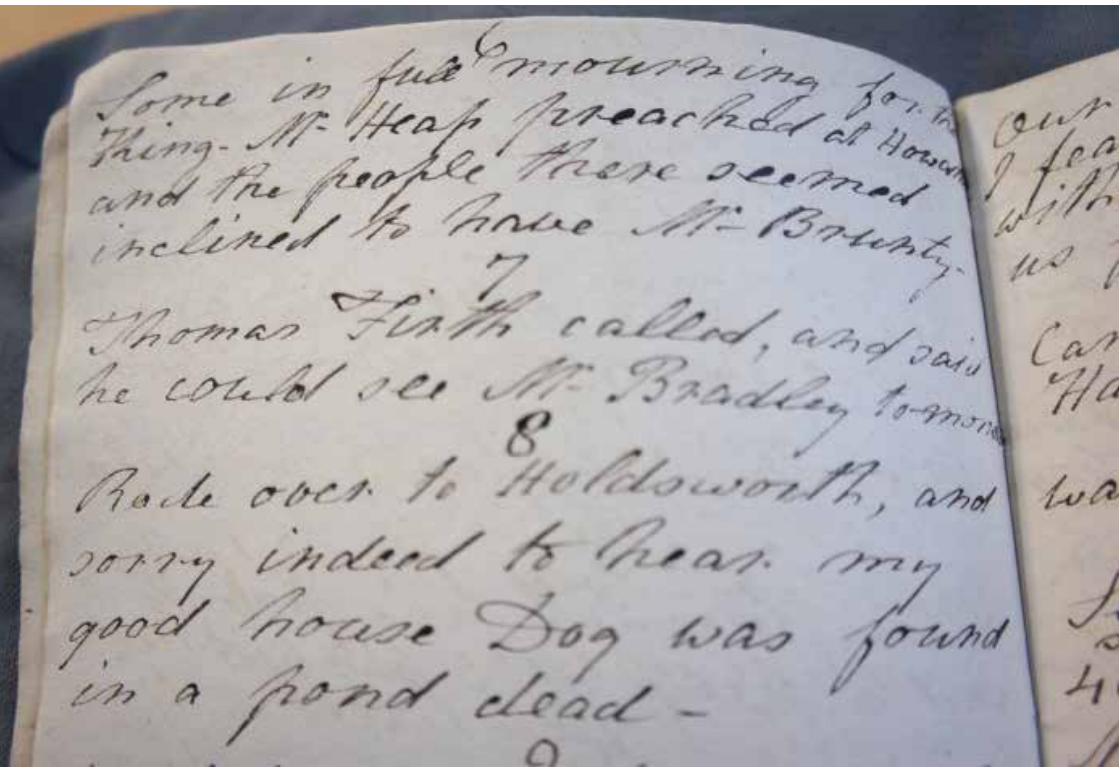
February 6, 1820
"Some in full mourning for the King. Mr Heap preached at Haworth and the people there seemed inclined to have Mr Brunty"

February 7, 1820
"Thomas Firth called and said he could see Mr Bradley tomorrow."

February 8, 1820
"Rode over to Holdsworth and sorry indeed to hear my good house Dog was found in a pond dead"

* W.B. Trigg Halifax Antiquarian Society 1943, The Diaries of Miss Wadsworth. West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale

Below: Photo of the Diaries of Miss Wadsworth, courtesy of The Ramsden Family of Ovenden and Norfolk



1877 Major Changes

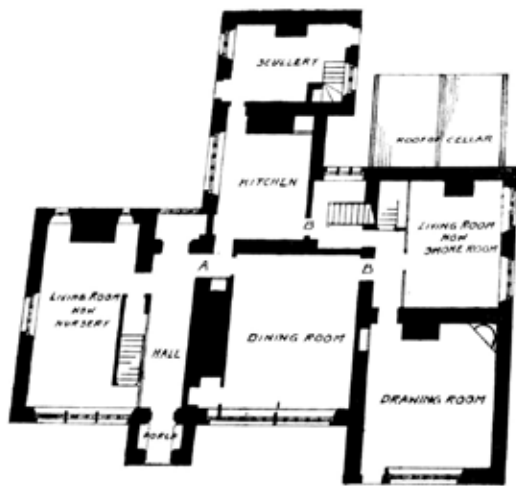
Following Elizabeth Wadsworth's death in 1837, the house passed to Matthew Ayrton whom Elizabeth had 'adopted', having never married nor having children of her own. Her will states that Matthew Ayrton should change his name to Matthew Henry Wadsworth, to continue the family name.

In 1877 Holdsworth House was sold, divided into two separate dwellings and let to tenants. The original kitchen in the 'west wing' became a lounge and a new, grand staircase was added to reach the upper floor, now the main staircase of the house today.

A floor to divide the open house body was added, creating a bedroom space in the upper section. Existing bedrooms were partitioned to further increase their number.

In 1933, more modernisation work took place with the addition of internal bathrooms.

It is believed that this is when the house reverted to being one property and was subsequently occupied by several owners, until the Pearson family bought it in 1962.



Ground floor layout 1900

20th Century Design

Some time after 1933, the space now known as the ‘Long Bar’ was converted from a garage, which had housed a car and a turntable! In the 1970s, the Pearson family built a covered walkway between the Long Bar and the Stuart Room (across the Courtyard), which is no longer there.

In the 1980s, the bedrooms to the rear (north) of the hotel were built. These replaced prefabricated bedrooms that had been added temporarily when the popularity of the hotel (then called the Cavalier Country Club) rocketed. The architect won an award for the new build, which took the hotel from just a few rooms to 40 in total. Since then, the decor has certainly changed and, in recent years, the hotel has reduced the number of bedrooms to 33 by merging smaller rooms into larger Suites.

The Pearson family continue to own and manage the hotel. Gail, Kim and now Gail’s son Nick are very careful to furnish the public areas sympathetically. Heavy oak furniture, historic tapestries and ornamental designs are commonplace around the property. There is little doubt that this style truly lends itself to the fabric of the building. Antiques, such as the alchemist’s cupboard, the original servant bells and the wig cupboard adorn the walls to add the sense of history and curiosity that makes Holdsworth House so intriguing.

Restoration Work

In 2020, when the hotel was closed for the coronavirus pandemic, the 60-tonnes, stone slate roof of the Stuart Room was replaced. Working in the traditional way, each slate was painstakingly removed by hand, cleaned and re-laid.

In addition, a number of bedrooms and public areas were redecorated, using William Morris-inspired wallpapers and heritage colours.

In any given year, Holdsworth House Hotel has a continual programme of restoration, repair

and upkeep to ensure it runs efficiently and effectively, whilst balancing on trend-designs with historical integrity.



The Gardens

The one thing many visitors love about Holdsworth House is its formal garden. The south-facing lawn and sunken Parterre garden make up a quarter of the estate land, most of which is actually meadow or sheep-grazing paddock.

We know some of the garden’s history from the 19th century diaries of former owner Miss Elizabeth Wadsworth. But most of the garden today is a result of the creativity and hard work of the Pearson family.

Elizabeth Wadsworth’s Designs 1760 - 1837

Elizabeth Wadsworth’s precious diaries reveal her good control of finances. Wadsworth managed and invested in farmland and cottages locally from which she drew rent from tenants. Her income allowed her to be live well at

Holdsworth House, with a team of servants to maintain the house and its grounds. She kept beehives in the gardens and pigeons in the Stone Gazebo. We find reference in Elizabeth’s diaries of the autumn of 1822:

“November 11.—Samuel fetched potatoes and 3 little ash trees from Hipperholme.

“November 13.—Set the 3 ash trees.”

Weeping Ash

Sadly, one of Elizabeth’s trees did not survive. So in 2000, the Pearson family set about restoring her original design by importing a replacement from Italy. Today, the stunning, twisted canopies provide shade and character to the wooden gazebo that is set beneath its boughs and which hosts outdoor weddings in the summer months. At 200+ years old, the ash trees are under close observation because, sadly, the disease ‘Ash Dieback’ is threatening the species’ survival in the UK.



The Sunken Parterre Garden

From the early 20th century to the 1960s the garden changed little. At some point the wooden gates that hung on the enormous gateposts were removed, a large evergreen near the entrance porch was felled and the ivy that swarmed the south facade was replaced by a beautiful clematis.

In the 1960s when the Pearson family bought Holdsworth House, the garden was a rich variety of cottage garden plants, shrubs and trees, and it adopted a less formal approach to design than today.

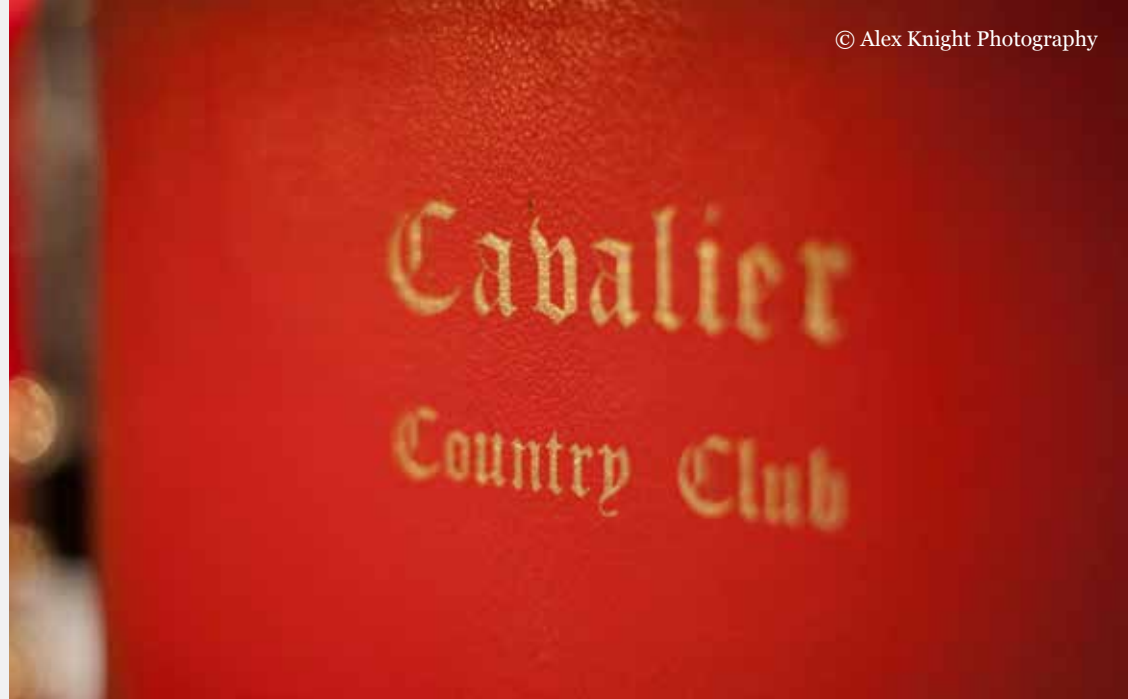


In 1997, the 35th anniversary year of the hotel, work began to restore the Parterre garden to commemorate the new Millennium. North of England landscaper David Redmore Garden Design drew up plans for the entire garden including the elaborate, sunken knot garden (a copy of the design can be seen in the hotel lobby).

The Box hedge and planting ideas were inspired by Royal Botanist John Parkinson's book *A Garden of Pleasant Flowers* published in 1629. Today, each spring, a sea of tulips bursts through the Box and you might spot floral herbs such as Valerian in the borders, in a nod to the house's history.

The sundial overlooking the Parterre garden was added for the Millennium and children from the local Bradshaw Junior School put together a time capsule, which is buried beneath its base. The capsule includes a class timetable, children's magazines of the time, and an old tape of music.

Top: The sunken Parterre Garden
Centre: One of the original weeping ash trees
Bottom: The gateposts circa 1900



The Cavalier Country Club

After 330 years as a private residence, closed off to the world, Holdsworth House opened its doors to the public for the first time in spring 1963. It was the vision of one family, to build a successful business that kicked off the most recent chapter in the house's history.

The Swinging Sixties

The modern history begins in 1962, one of the coldest winters on record, when the Pearson family, headed by Freddie and Rita, really arrived on the Halifax scene.

A local couple with two young children (Gail and Kim) the Pearsons embarked on their ambitious plans to convert this beautiful 17th century house into a stylish country club, revamping it whilst retaining the integrity of the architecture. The house lent itself to the conversion remarkably well and, apart from a few oak doors that warped due to the introduction of much needed central heating, the main rooms in the original house remain very much as they have for centuries.

Halifax-London-Halifax

Freddie Pearson was the youngest of seven children. As a boy he helped his father (a local fruit and vegetable trader) with deliveries on the family's horse drawn wagon. A photo of the Walter Pearson cart at the Halifax Piece Hall can be seen in the hotel's bar.

As a young man, Freddie saw his fortune in the bright lights of London. It was here that he became known for his canny ability to close a deal, his friendly personality, his charm and his snappy dressing! He was a great raconteur and, in years to come, Freddie's stories of wartime London, Maharajahs and the colourful characters he encountered would enthrall many a guest.



Above: Original auction advert for Holdsworth House



Above: Glamorous Rita Pearson
Below: Snappy dresser Freddie Pearson



Below: Freddie Pearson inspecting the Stone Room fireplace

direct from Europe. They chose well and the brigade worked brilliantly, giving the restaurant a touch of Continental pizzazz... although it's not hard to imagine what the team thought about the Yorkshire weather, especially as that winter had been one of the worst since 1948.

On the 11th April 1963, the Cavalier Country Club opened. The name was chosen to reflect the era of Charles I, who reigned when the house was built. The club was an instant hit and membership soon numbered over a thousand. Gents were called 'Cavaliers' and the ladies 'Milady and, with an annual fee of seven guineas, it was most definitely the place to be seen.

On many an evening the historic halls were filled to the rafters with people enjoying large banquets and fine dining. Rita and Freddie knew how to put on a good party and as the club's fame spread, a whole new social scene developed with regular dinner dances, charity events and a stream of celebrity guests.

Entrepreneurs

Freddie Pearson met his future wife Rita in 1949 on a trip back to Yorkshire. Rita was working as an accounts clerk at Harella, a Halifax clothing company that would become one of the biggest names in fashion during the Sixties. Rita was a colleague of Helena Whitbread, who became famous as a writer and for her work decoding and transcribing the diaries of Anne Lister of Shibden Hall. A friend of Holdsworth House, Helena remembers Rita well and told Rita's daughter, Gail, that as a junior at Harella she was a little in awe of Rita who was part of the 'Halifax fast set'.

The Making of The Cavalier

Freddie and Rita soon married and settled in Halifax. Freddie had always wanted to replicate the sort of nightlife he had enjoyed in London. Halifax was a wealthy town and he saw his opportunity when Holdsworth House came up for sale at auction.

They purchased the five-bedroom, three-bathroom house set in three acres of land (plus the barn) for £12,000 from Tommy Hoyle, a local mill owner. They quickly threw themselves into converting the house, using local craftsmen and suppliers. They scoured the antique dealers and reclamation yards for oak furniture that would blend in with the historic building. Luckily, oak was not in fashion at the time and they managed to buy beautiful chairs, tables and settles (many of which are still in use) for next to nothing.

Rita chose to decorate the house with antiques, oil paintings and tapestries, always sympathetic to the age and charm of the building. A number of the original bills for curtains, carpets and cutlery are retained in the hotel archives; Rita and Freddie certainly didn't hold back on creating a luxurious setting!

Astonishingly, Freddie and Rita had absolutely no experience of employing catering staff. They used a London agency to hire a young Spanish chef, Pepe Palomar, and a restaurant team





Above and below left: The Beatles outside Holdsworth House 10th October 1964
Below right: Kim Pearson with Paul McCartney



Not 'What You Know' but rather 'Whom'...

It wasn't long before Freddie's biggest stroke of genius ensued. He had a contact behind the scenes with The Beatles and managed to persuade the band's manager, Brian Epstein, to bring his group to Holdsworth House after their performance in Bradford (the opening night of their Autumn 1964 tour). The Beatles' visit was a fine example of Freddie's brilliant foresight: who'd have guessed that so many guests would still be keen to know about the Fab Four's stay today?

On 9th October 1964 (John Lennon's 24th birthday), The Beatles arrived after playing a sell-out concert at the Gaumont Theatre. On the journey to the Cavalier Country Club, the police set up a diversion, fooling fans as to the true destination of the band's overnight quarters. Rita was terrified that her prized gardens would be trampled by thousands of adoring fans, but the police diversion worked and The Beatles' driver pulled the car into the gravelled turning circle unnoticed.

That evening, Freddie and Rita and their two daughters had to vacate their bedrooms in the manor to accommodate the band. Brian Epstein slept on a camp bed in what is now the De Aldworth Room. They ate in a private room before drinking in the bar with the few club members who were 'in the know'. The Italian head waiter, Luigi, wrote The Beatles' food order – including turtle soup and steak Diane – misspelling them as 'the Beetles'. A copy of this original ticket is on display near reception.

As a typical teenage fan, Gail Pearson had been sworn to secrecy. It was far from easy facing school friends the following Monday and telling them she hadn't been able to share the news that the biggest band in the world had stayed overnight at her house!

Gail recalls, "I wasn't allowed to go to the concert and didn't even catch a glimpse of the band the night they arrived. The next

morning, they slept in and had breakfast in their rooms. When my mother caught me loitering on the corridor, visibly upset, she decided to take the initiative. She rapped sharply on Paul and George's bedroom door and said, 'Are you decent? My daughter has been waiting all morning to see you'. Then she opened the door and pushed me in, much to my embarrassment!"

Gail continues, "The Beatles couldn't have been nicer. They chatted very politely to me. Paul McCartney asked if I wanted a cigarette and I said that I didn't smoke. How I wish I had said yes and saved that cigarette for posterity!"

"My younger sister Kim also met the band and had her photo taken on Paul McCartney's knee. I had my photo taken too but my father forgot to put the flash on, so sadly the picture never came out!"

Below: Brian Epstein and friend at Holdsworth House





Rita Pearson died in 1981, aged just 52. Freddie passed away in 1989 and the estate was taken on by their daughters Gail and Kim, who reverted the name back to Holdsworth House Hotel & Restaurant to reflect the manor's historical significance.

Today, the sisters along with Gail's son Nick, continue the tradition of exemplary hospitality and fine dining, welcoming guests from all over the world. Among the famous faces through the doors more recently are prime ministers (Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Tony Blair, Rishi Sunak), musicians (Robert Plant, R.E.M., Dave Stuart, Florence and the Machine), stars of stage and screen (Ewan McGregor, Emelia Clarke, James Norton, Rudolf Nureyev, Victoria Wood, Sir Derek Jacobi, Anne Reid, James Corden, Jamie Oliver, Suranne Jones), plus many of the cast and crew from TV shows Riot Women, Gentleman Jack, Last Tango in Halifax, Happy Valley, Ackley Bridge, The Bidding Room, Marvel Studios' Secret Invasion, and The One Show... the list goes on!



© David Loftus



Showbiz Stars

After The Beatles' stay at Holdsworth House, many high-profile guests followed throughout the Sixties. World-famous entertainers were appearing on the Northern club circuit, particularly at the Batley Variety Club, and the Cavalier Country Club became the place for the stars to stay.

In 1967, blond bombshell Jayne Mansfield was a guest, just six weeks before her tragic death. Gail Pearson's late uncle Geoffrey Laycock, who lived locally and frequented the club, always recalled her "flirtatious manner" with a raised eyebrow!

The Pearsons were glad to welcome many famous faces including Cliff Richard and The Shadows, Cilla Black, The Bachelors, The Small Faces and even Indian royalty; the Maharajah of Baroda was a personal friend of Freddie Pearson.

As the success of the club grew, members encouraged the family to offer overnight accommodation. So, a number of prefabricated rooms were added to the rear of the house before a permanent, award-winning structure was added in the 1980s. Décor was typical of the '60s and '70s, if a little eye-watering by today's more muted tastes!

© Kyte Photography



A New Role on the Small Screen

Holdsworth House's architecture, historic halls and gardens have found new audiences through the camera lens.

In the last 15 years, this grand Jacobean manor has appeared in numerous primetime TV shows as well as featuring in over 2000 couples' wedding albums.

Jamie Oliver's Great Britain

The media whirlwind began in 2011 when TV's super-chef Jamie Oliver filmed at Holdsworth House. Jamie and his 22-strong crew spent almost a week filming for Channel 4's Jamie's Great Britain. Oliver described his series and accompanying cookbook as "a big celebration of brilliant British food."

True to his relaxed style, Oliver was filmed sitting on the pretty Stone Gazebo steps in the gardens, rustling up dishes using portable stoves. How anyone can pull together a magnificent lamb shank in that way is beyond comprehension!

The frenzy that followed Jamie Oliver's show helped kick-start a decade of small screen appearances. Working in tandem with companies like Screen Yorkshire, Creative England and Calderdale Council (who work to attract filming to the area), TV companies began taking a fresh look at West Yorkshire for their filming requirements. From rugged landscapes and breathtaking seascapes to quaint villages and modern cities, they saw there really is everything in Yorkshire that a TV company needs.

Top left: The Batley Variety Club

Left: Sir Derek Jacobi and Anne Reid at the hotel for filming Last Tango in Halifax

Bottom left: Jamie Oliver with Gail Pearson



Influential Screenwriter Sally Wainwright OBE

BAFTA-winning screenwriter and director Sally Wainwright is from Calderdale and has always championed the area. Wainwright rose to fame writing TV and radio scripts for high profile shows including *The Archers*, *Coronation Street*, *At Home with the Braithwaites*, *Unforgiven*, *Scott & Bailey*, *Last Tango in Halifax*, *Gentleman Jack* and *Happy Valley*. Many of her shows are based upon and filmed in Halifax and the surrounding areas.

(Sally Wainwright pictured far left, at Holdsworth House for the 2023 Holdsworth House Diamond Anniversary Art Competition)



Wainwright as she planned for the characters to get married at Holdsworth House in season two.

Under Wainwright's direction, filming took place in the hotel gardens, restaurant, hall and bar in summer of 2013. Set designers turned warm summer days into a cosy winter setting, with the help of CGI snowfall on the outdoor shots.

The TV 'wedding of the year' aired on Christmas Eve 2013. The number of viewers searching the internet for 'where Alan and Celia got married' crashed the hotel website. To this day, many visitors want to retrace the steps of the actors.

Happy Valley

Wainwright's next big show, *Happy Valley*, was a three-season show spanning seven years. Many of the stars stayed at the hotel during filming including Sarah Lancashire, James Norton (pictured below), Siobhan Finneran, Derek Riddell, Rhys Connah and George Costigan.

In 2022, the production units rolled into Holdsworth House to film scenes in reception. Whilst actors were hired to play the part of hotel receptionists, the real front of house team were hiding just around the corner, ready to answer the phones between takes.



Last Tango in Halifax

Now a friend of Holdsworth House, the hotel's relationship with Sally Wainwright was formed back in 2012 and season one of her creation *Last Tango in Halifax*.

The popular TV comedy drama introduces us to characters Alan and Celia, a senior couple who were childhood sweethearts who met again in later life via internet dating.

At the end of the first series, it was clear that Alan and Celia had fallen in love and were to be married. A few weeks later a call from the TV location team meant a hastily arranged visit for

Ackley Bridge and Hank Zipzer

The Channel 4 show Ackley Bridge is a school-based, comedy-drama series filmed at the former St Catherine's school adjacent to Holdsworth House. Being so near to the film set, the crew used the hotel several times to film scenes that called for a bar or garden scene.

The former school was also used to film the children's CBBC show Hank Zipzer, written by and starring Henry 'The Fonz' Winkler. It was a pleasure to welcome Mr Winkler to the hotel throughout filming.

The Antiques Roadshow

In 2018, the BBC's Antiques Roadshow featured items from the hotel when it filmed at The Piece Hall in Halifax (pictured below right). Experts were interested in two large, wooden doors that decorate the walls of the hotel restaurant. It was thought that these old doors incorporated masonic symbols and, over the years, many guests have tried to decipher their meaning. But they turned out to have a far more fascinating history...

The doors were purchased by Freddie Pearson in 1962 when he bought Holdsworth House; they were found at an antique dealer's yard in Bakewell. The back of one door was being used as a builder's cement-mixing board.

Antiques Roadshow expert Lisa Lloyd thought they were 'one of the most interesting items she'd seen all year'. She certainly helped unravel the meaning of their symbols: the cloaked hand holding a staff, the flaming cauldrons and the magic square are all symbols of an alchemist's laboratory, indicating that the doors once hung on a 17th Century cupboard storing medicines or 'quack' remedies.

Lloyd believed the doors originated from Europe and at an auction would fetch £5000 – £8000. The doors were later borrowed by film producer Shane Meadows for inclusion in his TV series The Gallow's Pole, which was filmed around Calderdale and based on Benjamin Myers' book of the same name.

Gentleman Jack

Sally Wainwright's 2019 show Gentleman Jack (pictured below bottom), starring Suranne Jones, was filmed three miles away at Shibden Hall. Cast members and crew stayed at the hotel while filming took place.

Shibden Hall was the home of real-life 19th Century 'Gentleman Jack', Anne Lister. Today the hall is a museum worthy of a visit. The multi-season hit show sparked global interest in Anne Lister and each April visitors from many continents flock to Halifax for literary events, social walks, history tours, food and art events that make up the 'Anne Lister Birthday Week'.

The Next Chapter...

The role of Holdsworth House in the heart of the Halifax community continues to grow and strengthen. Each visitor that passes through its doors adds their name to the history books. The team would like to thank everyone for their custom and their interest in preserving this wonderful building.



Above: Freddie and Rita Pearson who bought Holdsworth House in 1962, pictured in the late '60s

Above right: Freddie and Rita's daughters, Gail and Kim, and their friends riding to school.

Right: Kim (left) and Gail © David Loftus 2013

Below right: Gail's son Nick Moss and his artist wife Caz Swanne, the third-generation of the Pearson family now managing the business.



A decorative border with a repeating floral and vine pattern in a dark teal color, framing the central text area.

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