

# Restoration of the Old Grammar School Bampton

Built in the mid 1650s with a legacy from an extremely enlightened man called Robert Vesey, as a school to educate the children of Bampton and surrounding villages, the Old Grammar School has been in some kind of trust for the village for 370 years. The current trust is called the Bampton Exhibition Foundation (“BEF”), set up in 1906 after the school had officially passed into the hands of the Government Education Department. As a school it no longer met local needs so the purpose of the BEF was to maintain this historic building and to use any excess money to offer exhibitions, or bursaries, to local people who had educational opportunities offered to them that they couldn’t afford.



Our organisation, also a charity, felt that this worthwhile aim, to secure the future of the building for another 300 years, would give us a formal home for the foreseeable future and allow us to continue our job of creating and maintaining an historical record of Bampton and our surrounding villages. The BEF embraced the idea and have been working with us to try and bring it about.

The national threat to the library services, brought about by the necessity to restore financial stability to the council following the 2008 crash, meant that our first requirement was to find a way of saving our valued local library service. This was achieved by the village raising enough money to part pay the library salary costs.



After a magnificent fundraising effort, Phase One of the restoration - to replace the roof of this historic building was completed in the Summer of 2017.



In 1910 the trust restored the roof to early 20th century standards. Successive trustees have maintained the building without being able to address the inevitable requirement to restore the whole of the building with a view to the next 100 years.

The situation was exacerbated by the local government decision in the 1960’s that the upper floor was unsafe for public use, and the subsequent removal of the staircase to stop people going up there (an action hard to understand now, but less surprising at the time). It has been increasingly difficult for the BEF to maintain the building, and their efforts have consumed almost all their income for several years.

For the last 15 years BCA has had a small exhibition space and shop in the Vesey Room on the ground floor courtesy of the tenant, Oxfordshire County Council Library Service, and several years ago, before the advent of the Downton Abbey phenomenon, we approached the BEF to see if we might be of help to them in the process of raising funds to carry out the restoration.

# Phase two of the restoration

Thanks to lots of hard work and generous support from the landlords (Bampton Exhibition Foundation), WODC, OCC, all our visitors and the benefit of the 'Downton Abbey' connection helped to raise sufficient funds to undertake the long-planned improvements to the interior of the Old Grammar School.

Phase two included building a new staircase, strengthening of the upper floor to modern requirements for public use, and the fitting out of the upper floor to accommodate local exhibitions as well as our digital archive of the village, giving full public access to the valuable historical information gathered by BCA over the last fifteen years.



*The upstairs space before the restoration started*

The whole project has been managed in such a way as to include involvement from all the organisations charged with the protection of our ancient buildings as well as all the relevant local government departments who control what can be done to buildings such as ours. On completion there is practically no external evidence of our activities, and the building still looks exactly as it has for the 370 years it has existed.



*The new staircase under construction*

The restoration work at Bampton's Old Grammar School is now complete.

This wonderful building reopened in May 2022. Downstairs you will find the beautifully restored Library and Vesey Room with its exhibition space and shop and upstairs you can see for yourself the work that has gone in to restoring this spectacular space which has not been accessible since 1961.



Our aims are to support culture and creativity in the village and surrounding area and we are launching a fantastic community facility, the Bampton Community Hub.

We are planning an ambitious programme of talks, workshops, events and exhibitions which will be low cost or no cost to make sure we can engage the whole community. We are also creating storage space for some of our physical archive material and, because of our limited space, investing in the further development of our comprehensive digital archive and a state of the art audio visual/sound system to allow people touch screen access to films, audio content and information from Bampton Community Archive.

We want as many people in the community as possible, from babies to centenarians to get involved in Bampton Community Hub. If you would like to support us check out our 'Inspire' Appeal. If you would like to get involved let us know.



# The technical stuff ...



*Library before work began*



*Vesey Room before work began*



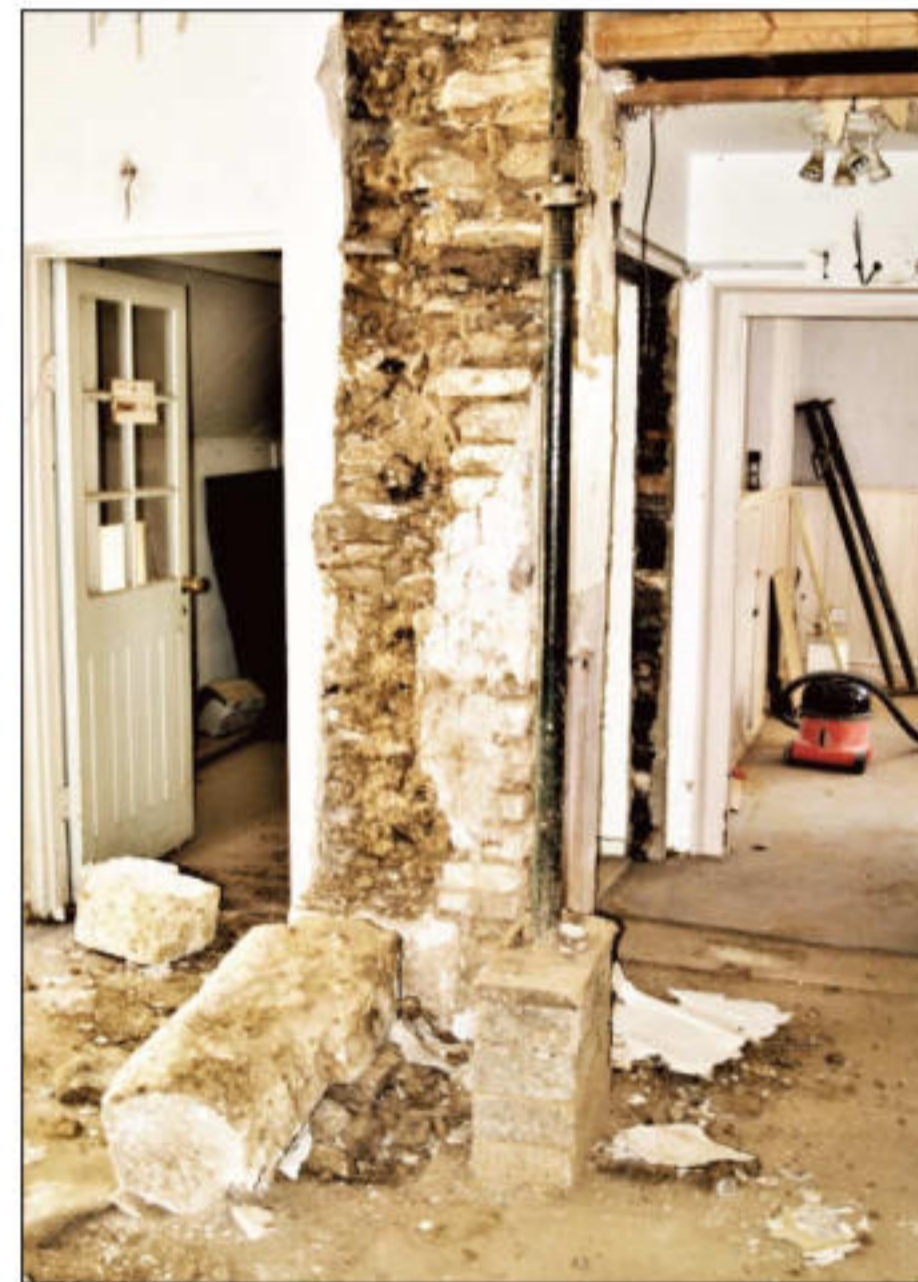
*Vesey Room before work began*



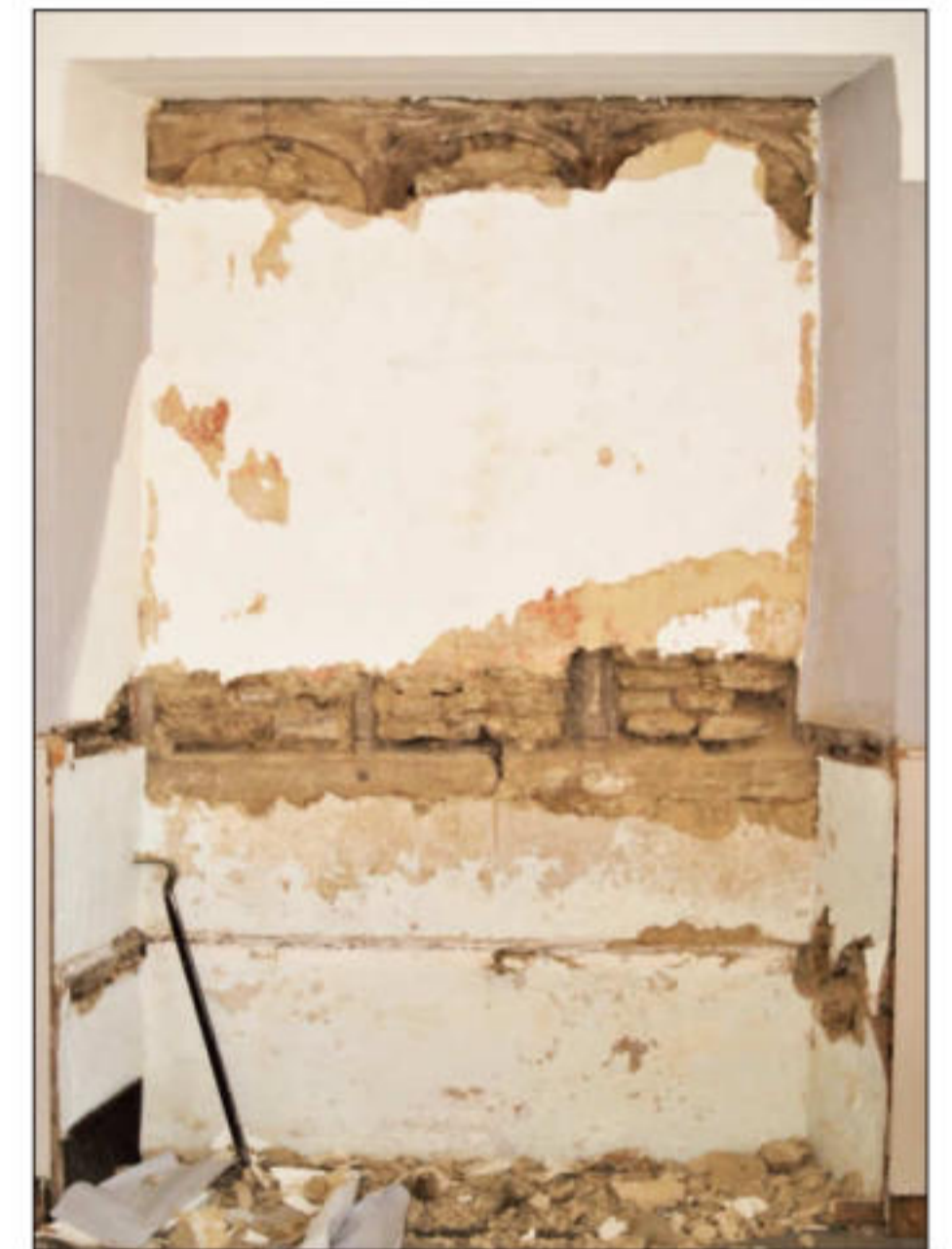
*Back of entrance hall*



*Roof structure after ceiling removed*



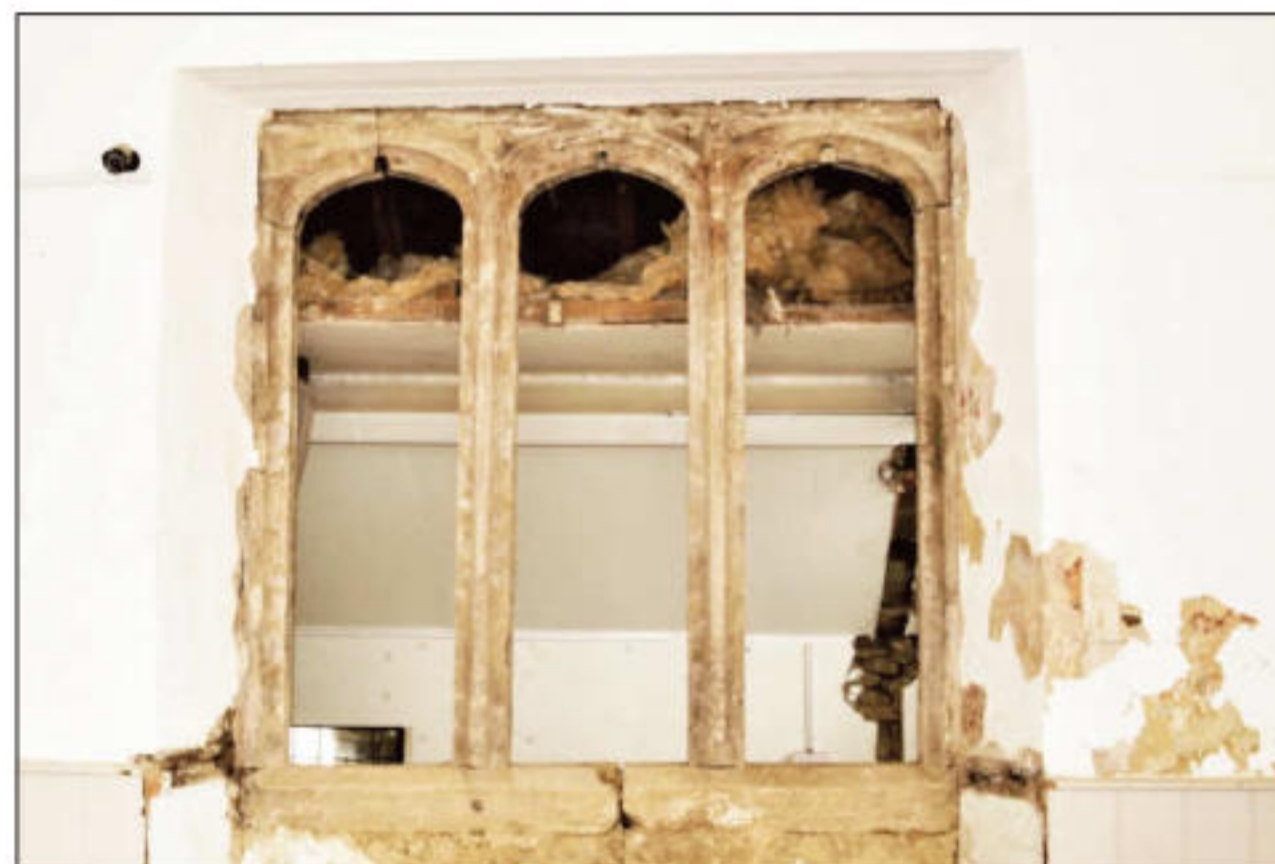
*Demolition of stone wall*



*Old window first revealed*



*Demolition of the old stairs*



*Window fully revealed*



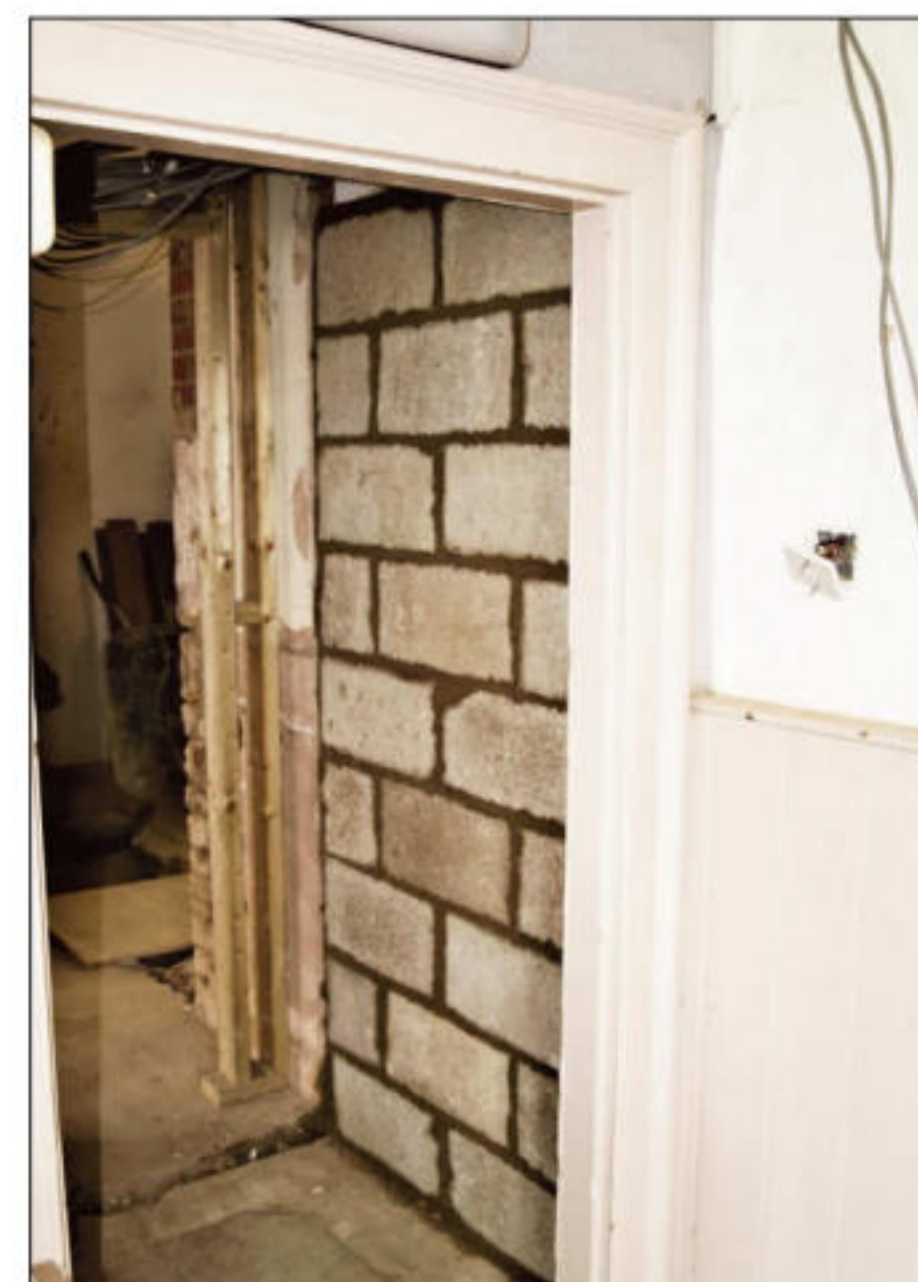
*Steel beam installation*



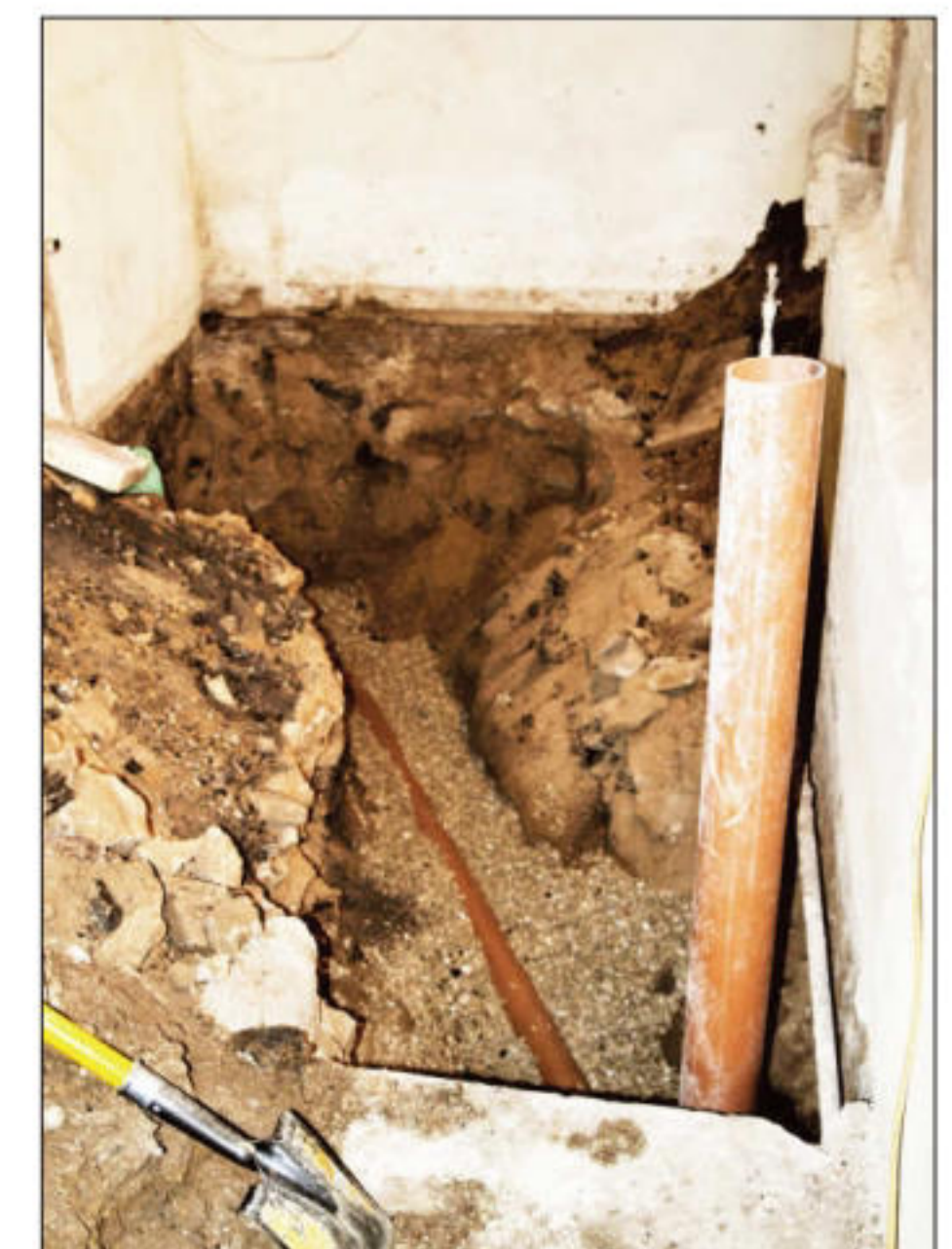
*Pinning before cutting out new library doorway*



*Old Library doorway filled in*



*Old Vesey Room entrance filled in*

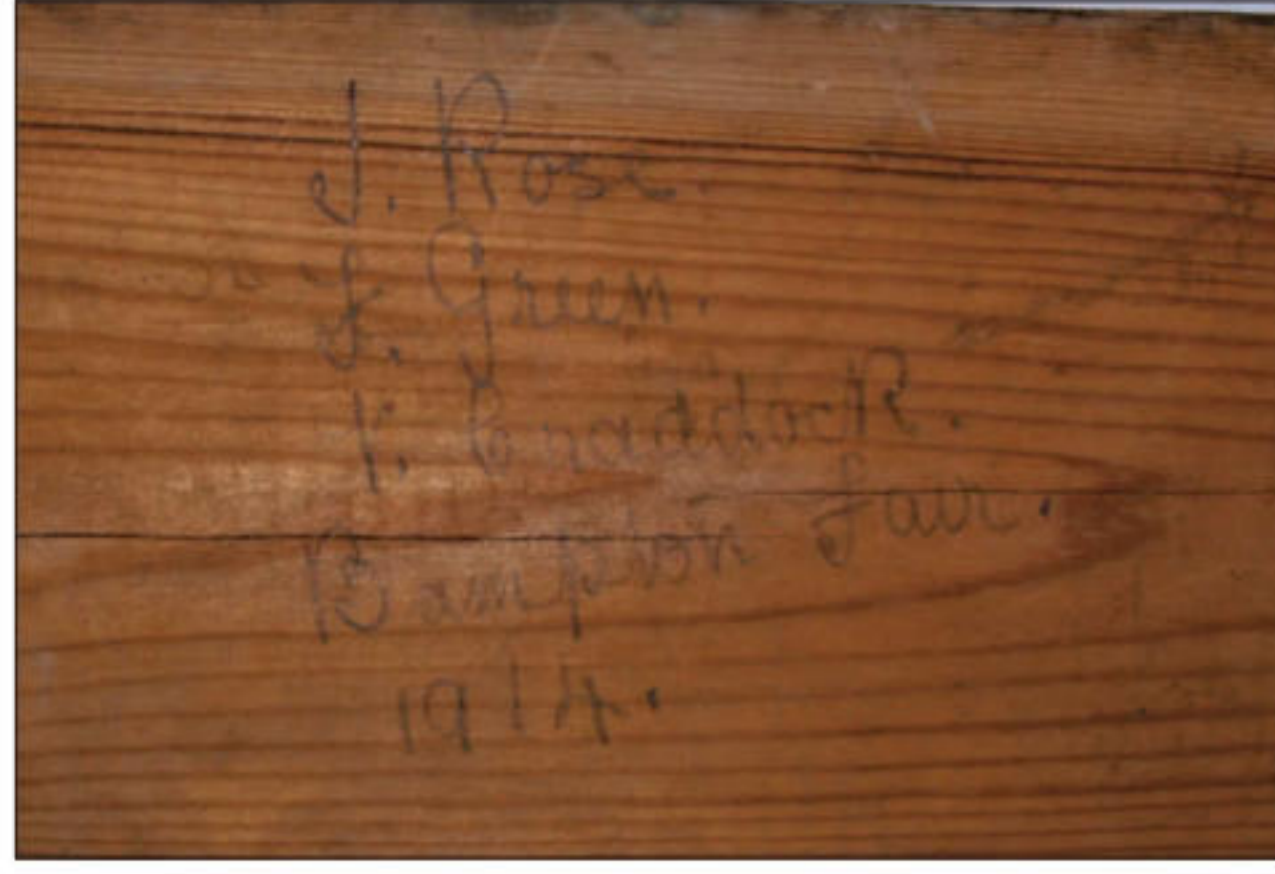


*New drainage*

# The technical stuff ...



*First floor boards removed*



*Piece of the old floorboard*



*Mesh support for floor insulation*



*Sound Insulation to floor*



*New floorboarding*



*New doorway to kitchen*



*Grit blasted roof truss joint*



*Altering beam for headroom*



*Roof Insulation - two Layers*



*Upstairs window repaired*



*Vesey Room walls after stripping paper*



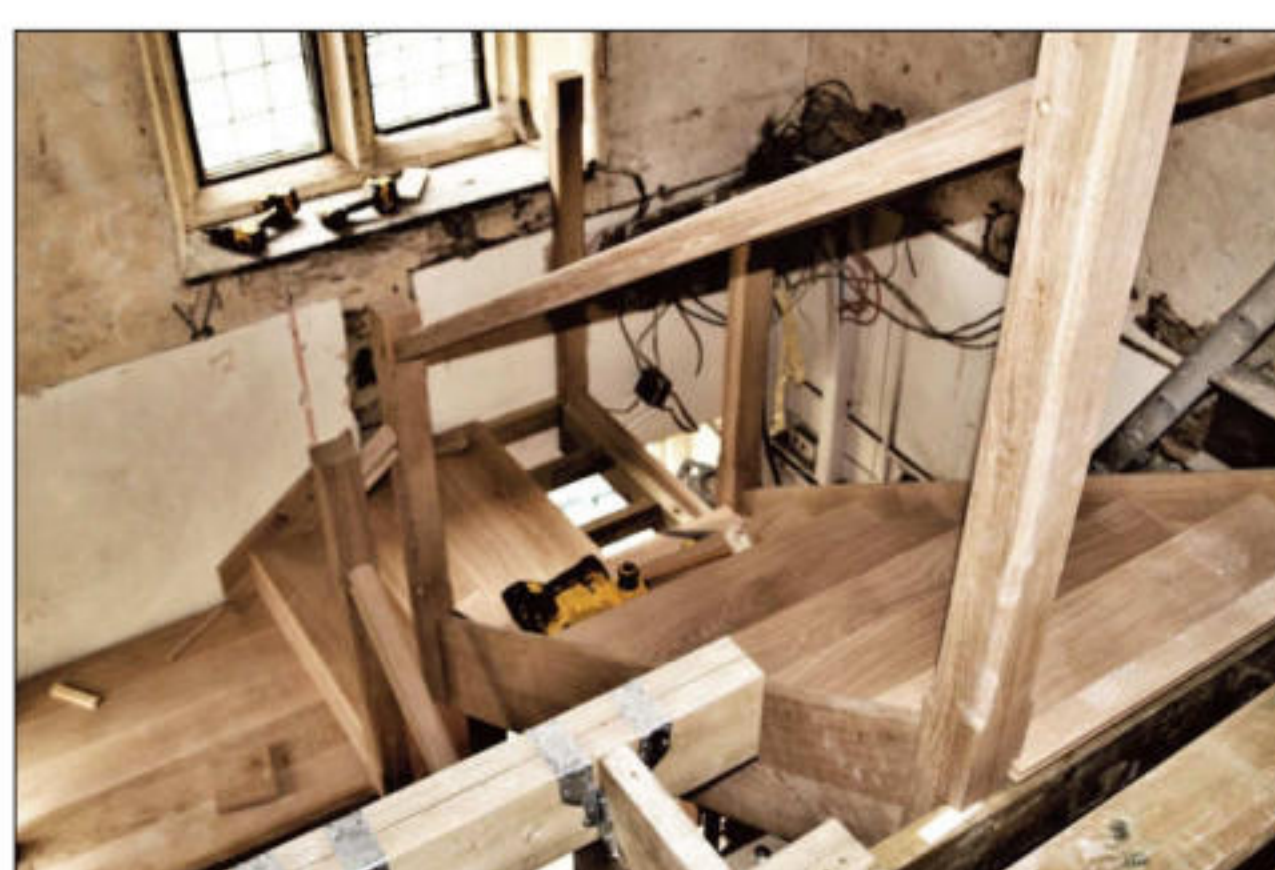
*Steel beam with stairs*



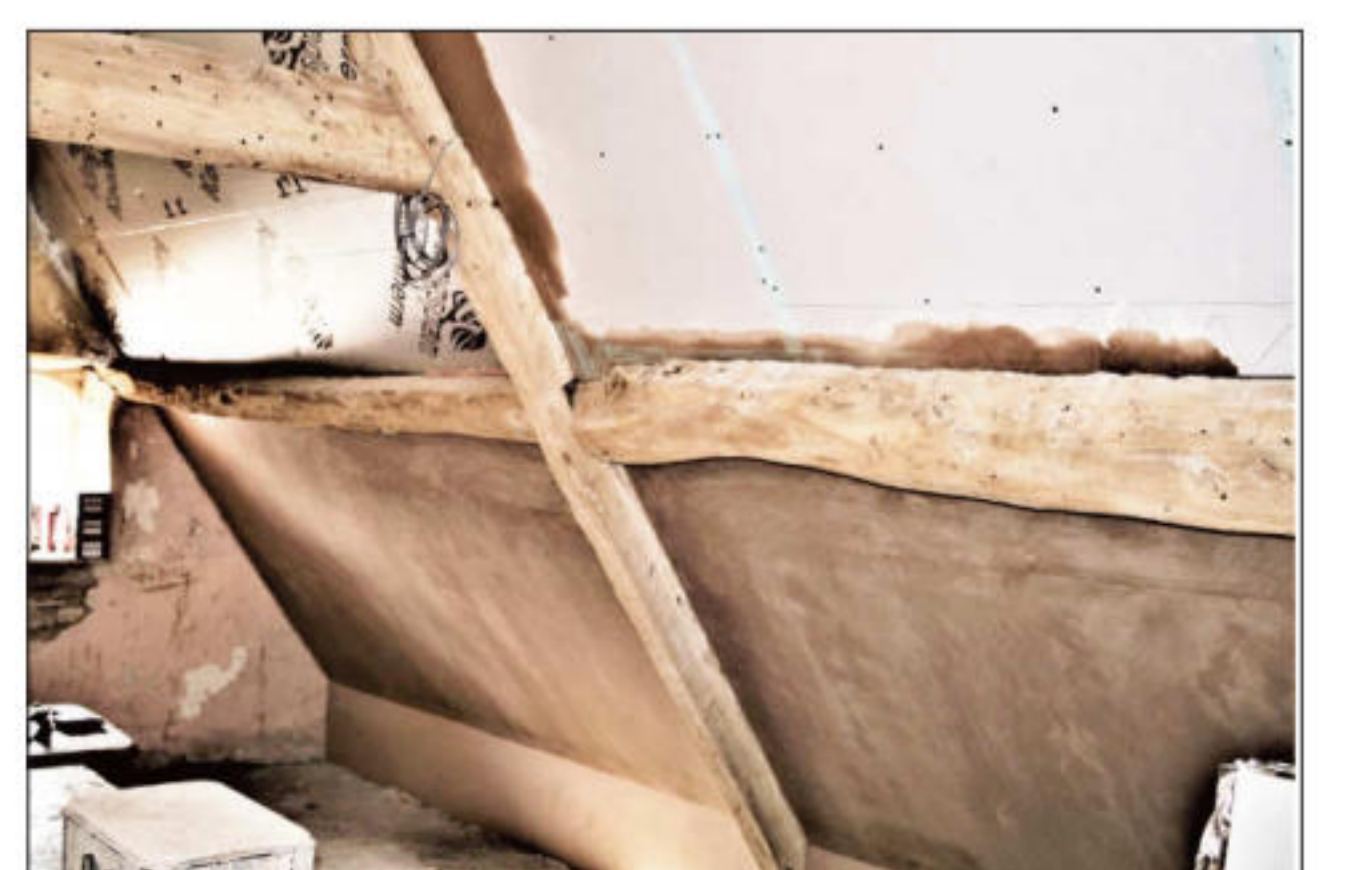
*New doors fitted*



*Lime plaster to gable*



*Stairs installation*



*Rafters, plasterboard & plaster*

# The technical stuff ...



*Glazed screen installation*



*Damp proof to library floor*



*Old Fireplace ready to repair*



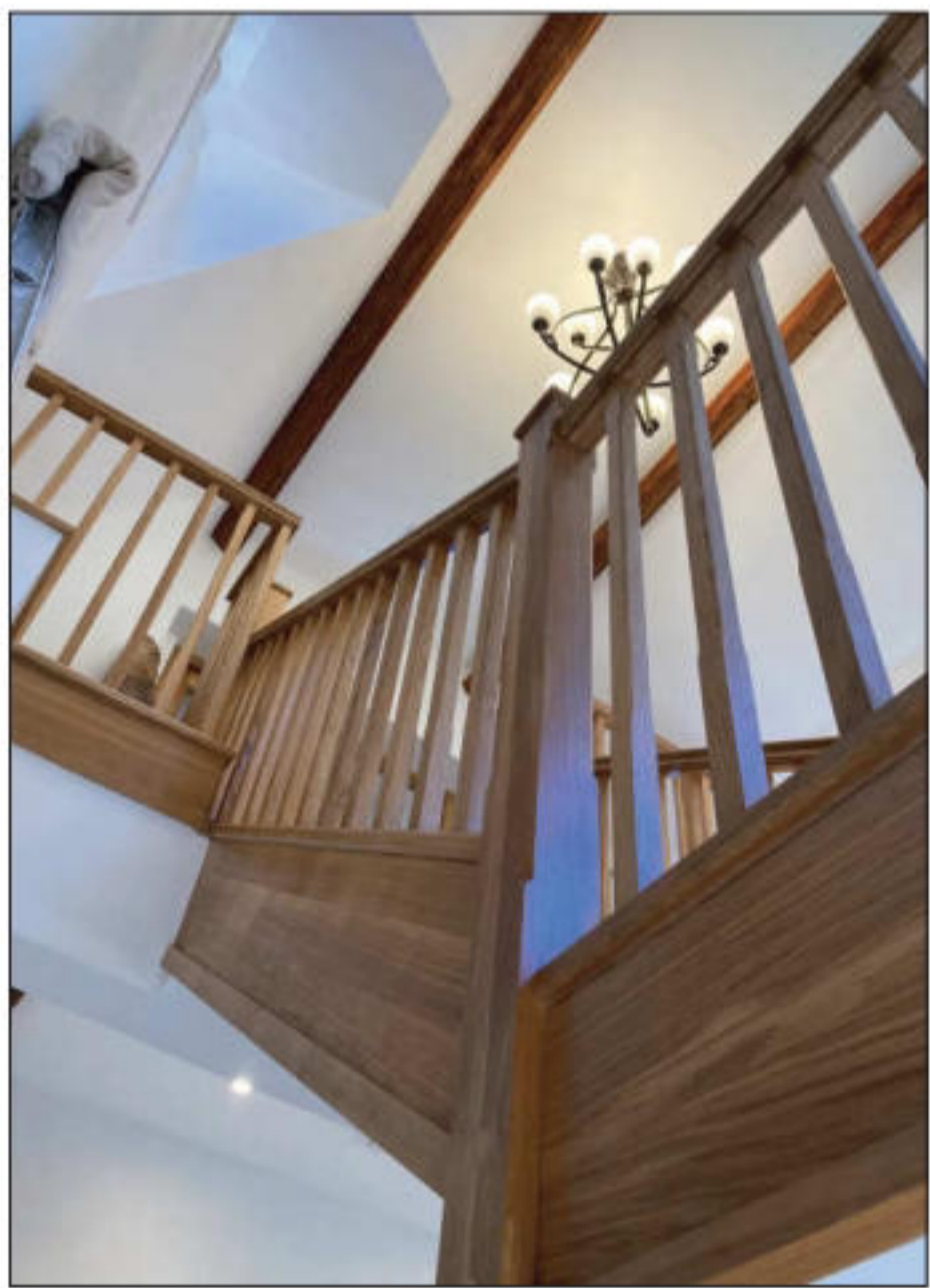
*Handrail and balusters*



*Shelf for computer monitors*



*New floor laid*



*Stair balusters fitted*



*Old Fireplace restored*



*Replacement window*



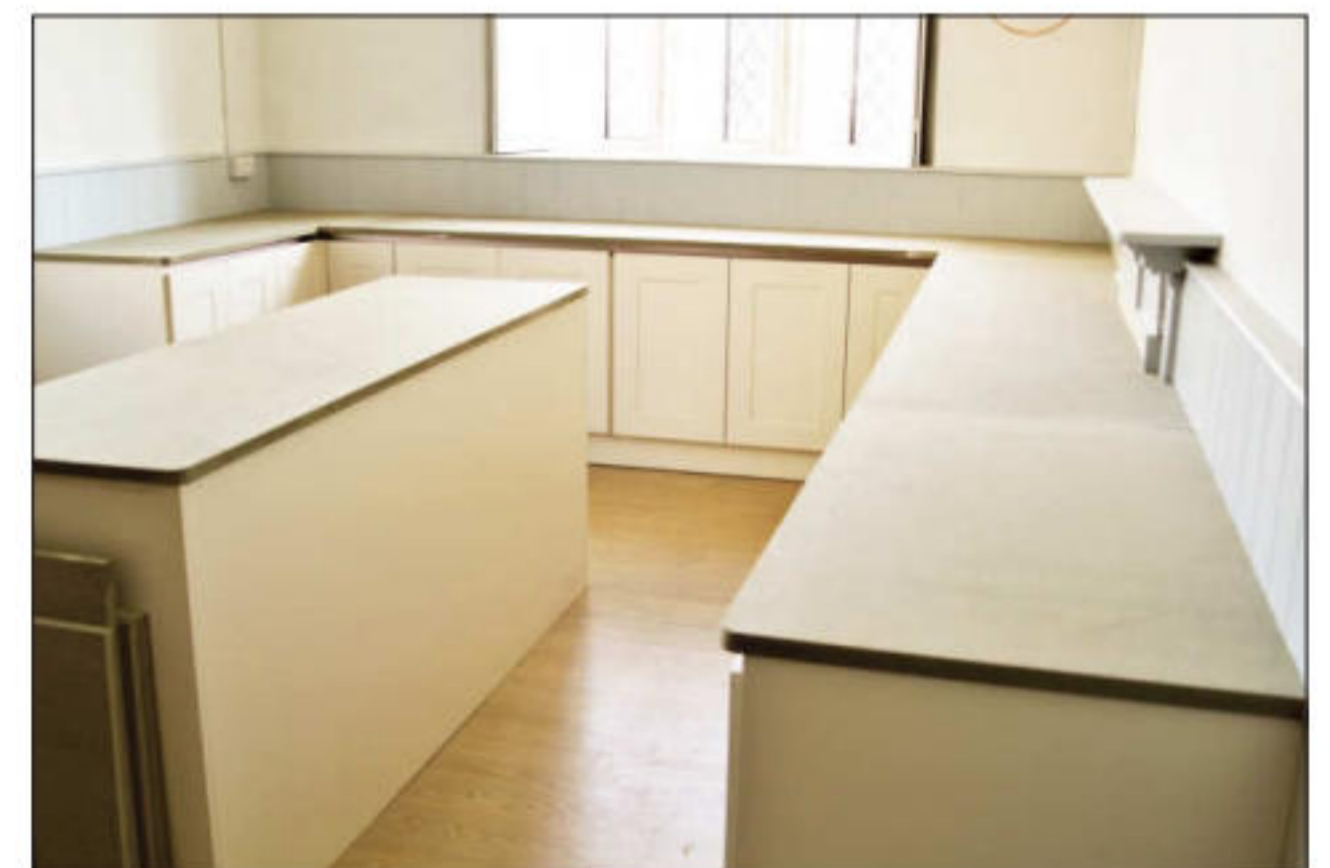
*New floor Vesey Room*



*Kitchen refitted from Library*



*New light above the stairs*



*New Cupboards Vesey Room*



*New Plan/Map chests fitted*



*New window seat Vesey Room*



*Courtyard all cleaned*