

The Gothic Folly at Wimpole Hall



© Justin Minns

The 18th century Grade II* Gothic Folly at Wimpole Hall was designed by Sanderson Miller as a sham castle and ruin. It functioned as a Gothic eye-catcher within the landscape and a place for the family to entertain. Later converted into the Game Keeper's House and occupied until the late 1920s, the condition of the building had deteriorated by 2005 and become so fragile from constant weather erosion, vandalism and pigeon issues that the building was at significant risk and closed to the park's many visitors.

The one year project by The National Trust undertook urgent conservation and repairs to the walls of the folly and to the tower, conservation of external masonry and stonework, structural repairs and repairs to internal tower floors as well as reinstatement of lost elements to the main tower including crenellations, external doors, windows and rear staircase. As well as conserving the folly, the project offered a chance to enhance understanding of the building and the visitor experience through research of historic resources. Detailed surveys and recording helped develop conservation approaches. This research phase was a vital building block for the whole of the project.

A principal aim was to facilitate public access during the works to promote an understanding of the building, its conservation and the landscape. This was managed with site tours, scaffold tours and an extensive volunteer group leading walks in the park. Wimpole Estate is a key contributor to the local community and the public demonstrated great enthusiasm to engage with the conservation work in action. Local residents were involved with day to day activities in both the Park and the House either as volunteers or as employees.

The project has made a fundamental contribution to the significance of the Grade I Registered of Park and Garden. Without the project a vital conservation asset in the park would have been lost and public access would have been restricted. The folly has re-opened this year and it has become the focus for a number of educational, recreational and celebratory events. Casual visitor numbers, especially for those with families, appear to have also increased to the site area.

If you require an alternative accessible version of this document (for instance in audio, Braille or large print) please contact our Customer Services Department:
Telephone: 0370 333 0607
Fax: 01793 414926
Textphone: 0800 015 0516
E-mail: customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk