



Apley Estate director Graeme Manton at Ewdness Manor House ahead of its restoration; below, Shropshire architect Hannah Beaman.

A RETURN TO FORMER GLORY

HEATHER LARGE CHATS TO THE EXPERTS IN CHARGE OF AN AMBITIOUS RESTORATION PROJECT

It has been home to seven generations of the same family and Apley Estate as it's currently known can trace its roots back to 1585.

Covering 8,500 acres of land, it consists of approximately 300 residential, commercial and agricultural properties including many of historical importance.

Among them is Grade II* listed Ewdness Manor House, which the team has recently started restoring as part of an ongoing preservation programme on the estate between Shifnal and Bridgnorth.

Shropshire-based architect Hannah Beaman, who has been involved in a wide range of projects involving historic buildings at Apley, has written an award-winning conservation management plan for Ewdness.

Her vision for the property, along with

that of estate director Graeme Manton, is being used to guide the team.

"It's going to be sympathetically renovated as a five-bedroom house with four bathrooms to emphasise all of the important conservation features such as the wooden panelling which we need to preserve and protect," explains Graeme.

The house, which is one of around 100 to have been restored over the past 15 years, is expected to take between six and nine months to complete.

The project has been in the pipeline for many years and Graeme says he delighted to see work finally start a few weeks ago with the removal of overgrown vegetation surrounding the property

"The house has been empty for 10 years which is too long. The only way to preserve these houses long-term is to





FROM TOP:
The landing at Ewdness Manor House;
the main bathroom; the master bedroom.

use them. If you leave them empty, they continue to deteriorate.”

The estate team has plans to sympathetically and sustainably restore all of its historical buildings and put them into use.

Hannah, whose vision for Ewdness was awarded first place in the Donald Insall Associates Living Buildings Prize 2022 for ‘Best Conservation Management Plan’, has been working alongside the team since 2018.

“I have been privileged to work with Apley, as an architect, on a wide range of projects involving historic buildings on the estate.

“Although each project brings its unique challenges, I am always motivated by finding a design solution which is derived from a thorough understanding and appreciation of a building’s significance.

“This has led me to develop my interest in historical research and architectural investigation, and ultimately to undertake further postgraduate training in Conservation of the Historic Environment at Birmingham City University.

“As part of this, I have authored a Conservation Management Plan for Ewdness Manor House, a Grade II* listed Tudor farmhouse within the estate, which I first became involved with in 2018,” she explains.

“We are delighted to be working with Hannah on this exciting project and the extensive research she has done will help inform the restoration work we plan to carry out,” says Graeme.

Although there is evidence of there having been a settlement on the site from the time of Domesday, it is believed the present manor house is believed to have Tudor origins.

Graeme says the middle section of the house dates back to the late 1500s and the property was extended in the late 1600s/early 1700s.

Minor alterations have been made over the years including the most recent addition, a “very unattractive” 1950s extension.

“We are removing the 1950s extension and replacing it with an open glass porch which will reveal the original shape of the house,” explains Graeme.



FROM TOP:
The entrance room; this will be part of the kitchen; Hannah outside Ewdness House.



“Ewdness is a particularly fascinating building,” says Hannah, who collected her award for her plan for Ewdness at the Birmingham School of Architecture and Design Graduate Show earlier this year.

“The building is visually striking, with its strong symmetrical form, use of local sandstone, decorative diaper brickwork and ornate chimney stacks all contributing towards its attractive aesthetic.

“Through analysis and interpretation of how this complex building has evolved over time, we can trace not only changing trends in architecture and fashion, but further our understanding of the contextual development and evolution of the wider Apley Estate through to the present day.

“The size, age, condition and complexity of Ewdness present Apley with multiple challenges in caring for this historic asset and safeguarding its future.

“Conservation management plans are intended as a tool to help pull together an understanding of what is important about a building, why this is the case, and how to best conserve and manage it.

“It is therefore hoped that the production of this report will prove a useful tool in informing future programmes of repair, restoration or change for Ewdness.”

As well as preserving the estate’s heritage, the Apley team is also committed to making changes that will benefit the environment such as reducing its carbon footprint, biodiversity improvement and trialling new crops that reduce soil erosion and require fewer fertilisers.

Earlier this year, 10,000 new hedge plants, which will eventually grow to create an additional 2.5km of hedgerow, were planted. They featured native species including hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, holly, hazel and field maple, and it formed part of a wider Mad Brook project that is being delivered in partnership with Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

Mad Brook is a tributary of the River Worfe that runs through the Apley Estate and into the River Severn to the north of Bridgnorth.

In addition, oaks were planted every 10m to 15m and will be allowed to grow into hedgerow trees.

As well as the hedging, the project has involved the removal of some diseased

or non-native trees, creating leaky dams which slow the flow of the river and wet the surrounding land, and planting some new native tree species including alder and oak.

Speaking about the project Graeme said: “Hedgerows make excellent corridors for wildlife, especially birds, bats, butterflies and many other pollinators. The expertise that the Wildlife Trust brings is invaluable and is helping us to achieve our goals of more sustainable and environmentally beneficial farming and land management.”