

MALDON DISTRICT



# CONSERVATION & DESIGN



AWARD SCHEME 2023



**Building Conservation Winner**  
4 Silver Street, Maldon



**Design Winner & Building Conservation Highly Commended**  
Old School House, Stow Maries



**Sustainability Winner** - Northey Island, Maldon



**Design Highly Commended**  
66 Victoria Road, Maldon



**Nature Conservation Winner**  
Ironworks Meadow, Maldon



An early 15<sup>th</sup>-century wall inside 4 Silver Street, Maldon, recently uncovered and conserved. Interventions were kept to a minimum to preserve the unique wall's patina of age. Photograph by Angela Westgarth.

## **BUILDING CONSERVATION WINNER**

### 4 Silver Street, Maldon

This award is for the major renovation of a grade II\* listed 15<sup>th</sup>-century house for its owner, Neil Bresler. The architect was Simon Plater of *Plater Claiborne Architecture + Design*. The main contractor was *Hytec Construction* and the project managers were brothers Steve and Tony Collins. The property had suffered from a period of neglect and roof leaks, necessitating comprehensive repair work. The medieval oak structure was skilfully restored using new oak. Compatible breathable materials were deployed throughout including lime plaster, limecrete flooring and sheep's wool insulation. Numerous important discoveries were made including a medieval open hearth, ancient timber framing, and 17<sup>th</sup>-century painted decoration. These historic features have been exposed, expertly conserved, and displayed where appropriate. Unsympathetic modern windows were replaced with new windows more in keeping with the character of the property. Minor alterations were made to create a more convenient internal layout, affecting only modern fabric. The property is now a holiday let managed by *Niche Serviced Apartments* who aim to promote and explain the building's rich history to visitors. The judges were extremely impressed by this project, which has breathed new life into an important historic building. They applauded the owner's commitment to investing in a complex and challenging renovation. They also admired how the scheme was led by in-depth research into the building's history and archaeology.



*A reconstruction drawing by Tim Howson showing the medieval open hall of 4 Silver Street with its front wall omitted. The hall was open to the roof and heated by an open hearth, akin to a bonfire burning on its floor. Remarkably, part of the hearth was discovered beneath modern flooring alongside sherds of medieval cooking vessels.*



*The rare surviving fragment of the medieval hearth, consisting of roof tiles bedded on edge into the earth floor, has been left on display behind glass.*



*A medieval wall in the hall with two original arched doorways (the left one blocked). The ceiling was introduced into the hall as part of a major refurbishment dated by tree-ring analysis to c. 1578.*



*The hall chamber during refurbishment.*

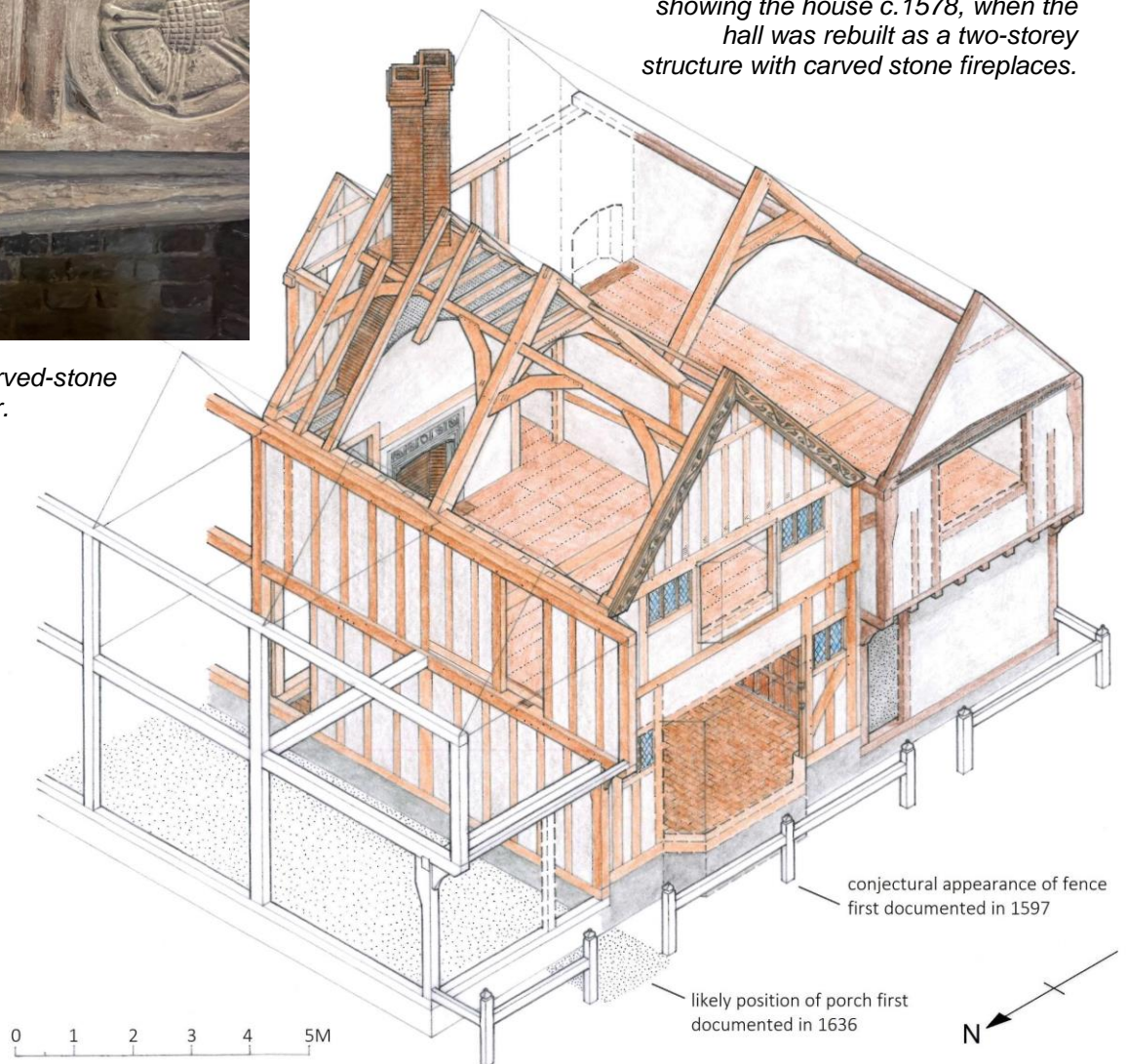


*The hall chamber in 2023. A later ceiling was removed to re-expose the roof truss of c.1578.*



*Detail of the Elizabethan carved-stone fireplace in the hall chamber.*

*An isometric drawing by Tim Howson showing the house c.1578, when the hall was rebuilt as a two-storey structure with carved stone fireplaces.*





**Above:** The rear elevation prior to renovation.



**Right:** The rear elevation following renovation, including the removal of a modern conservatory, replacement windows, re-rendering, and landscaping



*The new kitchen introduced to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century rear range*



*Project manager Steve Collins on the left and architect Simon Plater on the right during re-roofing.*



*Jason Root, of Gower Brothers, lime plastering on oak laths in the hall chamber.*



*Conservator Emma Teale, of the Skillington Workshop, carrying out mortar repairs to the Elizabethan fireplace.*



*Tommy Scott, of Gower Brothers, lime plastering on softwood laths externally.*



*Ron and Lee of Dock and Cottee Carpentry carrying out timber-frame repairs in the hall*



*From left to right: **Dan Gower**, Gower Bros Ltd., **Simon Plater**, Architect, Plater Claiborne Architecture + Design, **Kevin Lagan**, Chairman of Maldon District Council; **Mark Durham**, Chair of the judging panel; **Tony Collins**, Project Manager, Hytec Construction; **Steve Collins**, Project Manager, Hytec Construction*



*The front elevation of Old School House, Stow Maries*

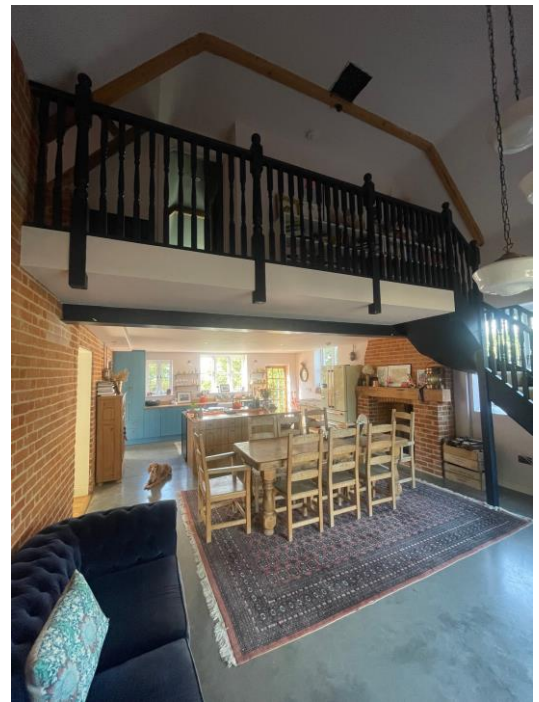
## **DESIGN WINNER & BUILDING CONSERVATION HIGHLY COMMENDED**

### Old School House, Stow Maries

These awards are for the renovation and remodelling of a locally listed former teacher's house and schoolroom dating from 1871. Formerly home to the late historian Beryl Board, the house occupies a picturesque position, beside the parish church, atop a hill with long views across the countryside to the rear. With architectural support from Robert Ware, most of the work was carried out by Matthew and Georgia Cooper, who acquired the property in 2017 to create a comfortable home for their young family. A mezzanine floor was introduced to the former school room, creating a master bedroom above a spacious kitchen / dining room. Other subtle changes of layout have created a more convenient planform without compromising the building's architectural interest. New timber windows and doors were made and installed by *Trustwood Joinery* which respect the age and character of the house. The external walls were expertly repointed using lime mortar by *M. A. Jones Repointing*. External ground levels were lowered to resolve problems with penetrating damp. On the front of the house is a wrought iron arch with a lantern, made in 1898 by a local blacksmith, Ernest Cooper, who is incidentally an ancestor of the current owner, Matthew Cooper. This special feature has been carefully repaired. The grounds to the house were sensitively landscaped, with pathways paved in red brick complementing the walls of the house. The judges were full of praise for the quality of this project, the thoughtfulness behind the alterations, and the fact so much work had been executed by the owners themselves to such a high standard.



*The rear elevation of Old School House*



*Inside the former school room which has been adapted to provide a master bedroom and kitchen / dining area*



*The rear corner of Old School House*



*From left to right: **Kevin Lagan**, Chairman of Maldon District Council; **Georgia Cooper**, owner of Old School House; **Mark Durham**, Chair of the judging panel*



*The front elevation of 66 Victoria Road, Maldon*

## **DESIGN HIGHLY COMMENDED**

### 66 Victoria Road, Maldon

This award is for the alteration and enlargement of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century bungalow in the Maldon Conservation Area. The scheme was designed by Annabel Brown Architects for Frank Howard. The roof pitch was raised to gain first-floor accommodation with a large gable-end window and balcony, affording long views across the River Chelmer. The judges agreed this was an intelligent design, responding well to the constraints and opportunities of the sloping site, and deploying good quality materials and detailing.



*No. 66 Victoria Road, Maldon prior to remodelling*



*No. 66 Victoria Road in August 2023*



*Oak staircase with glass balustrade*



*The rear first-floor window and balcony*



*From left to right: **Kevin Lagan**, Chairman of Maldon District Council; **Gytis Bickus**, Annabel Brown Architects; **Mark Durham**, Chair of the judging panel*



*An aerial view of Ironworks Meadow, Maldon, taken Summer 2023*

## **NATURE CONSERVATION WINNER**

### The Chelmer Blackwater Nature Reserve (Ironworks Meadow), Maldon

Ironworks Meadow was a piece of wasteland, to the west of Tesco's car park, which had been neglected for thirty years. Local residents were alarmed when in 2020 it was advertised for sale for industrial use. Following a period of negotiation, the Chelmer Blackwater Reserve Community Interest Company took over the site in 2022 and has begun to manage it as a nature reserve. A long-lost watercourse on the site has been re-opened and a scenic walkway with bridge and viewing platform created to facilitate public access, while discouraging people from entering the more sensitive wildlife areas. The bridge is dedicated to the late Veronica Smith, a major donor to the project, who incidentally sat on the Conservation and Design Awards judging panel from 2011 to 2018. The result has been to convert a scrubby site which people passed on the surrounding footpaths into a pleasant detour and centre of interest, befitting its location between the tidal River Chelmer and the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation canal, and an increasingly active wildlife reserve.

The judges agreed this project was an outstanding example of a grass-roots initiative to establish a nature reserve. They were full of admiration for the mobilisation and enthusiasm of so many volunteers.



*Left: the bridge under construction. Right: the bridge and viewing platform completed.*



*Photograph taken during the official opening of the Reserve*



*From left to right: Colin Pryke; Anastasia Fuller; Ian Harden; Simon Wood; Kevin Lagan; Chairman of Maldon District Council; Mark Durham, Chair of the judging panel; Sarah Henson-Webb; Patrick Ellum*



*Brent geese landing at Northey Island following undergrounding of electrical cables. Cut-down telegraph poles are visible on the right of the picture © National Trust*

## **SUSTAINABILITY WINNER**

### Northey Island, Maldon

This award is for habitat creation at Northey Island, a nature reserve owned and managed by The National Trust. The island is surrounded by the largest single block of saltmarsh in the Blackwater Estuary. The saltmarsh has shrunk over the years and, with projected sea-level rises, was at risk of disappearing within 100 years without intervention. Saltmarsh is an important habitat for carbon sequestration, natural flood management, water quality, fish and wildlife. As part of the Northey Island Habitat Creation project, completed in July 2023, four hectares of new saltmarsh were created by strategically removing parts of flood embankments. This saltmarsh will remain over the next century not only as a habitat but also continually storing carbon and greenhouse gasses, helping to combat the effects of climate change. The work was carried out by contractor Miles Water Engineering with technical support from Consultants Royal Haskoning DHV. The project also involved planting 276 native hedge plants, forming over 165 metres of new hedgerow providing cover for small nesting birds and carbon storage too. New freshwater ponds and ditch systems have been dug to diversify the island habitat for voles, birds and both freshwater and brackish invertebrates. Over 750 metres of overhead electricity cables have been undergrounded, opening up the landscape and flight-lines for birds. Sixteen water voles were translocated to a purpose-built pond habitat with access to ponds and ditches well above the tidal flood plain. The judges agreed this project should win the Sustainability Award as an impressive example of practical and sustainable coastal adaptation to climate change and rising sea levels.



*A new freshwater pond created through the project © National Trust*



*Water vole translocation © National Trust/Joseph Salkeld/Felicity Andrusko*



*High tide on the newly created habitat at Northey Island © National Trust*



*From left to right: **Kevin Lagan**, Chairman of Maldon District Council; **Katy Gilchrist**, National Trust; **Mark Durham**, Chair of the judging panel*



All this year's winners



**This year's judging panel**

*From left to right:* **Kevin Bruce**, local historian; **Mark Durham**, Chair of the Judging Panel; **Joe Bispham**, conservation carpenter representing the Essex Regional Group of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB); **Alan Coday**, historic buildings consultant; **Rebecca Griffiths**, Dengie Parish Council; **Louise Staplehurst**, Planning Policy Officer, Maldon District Council; **David Smye**, Maldon Society; **David Taylor**, architect.