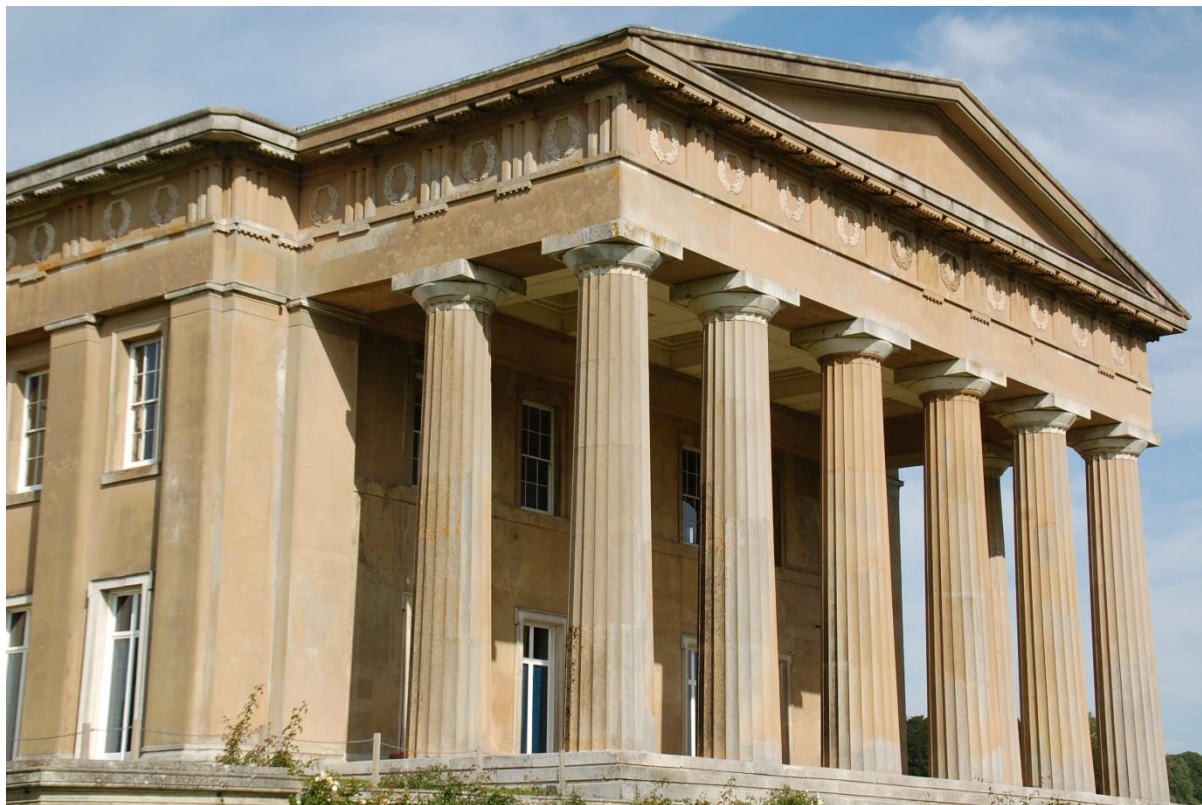


Northington Grange Tours – September 2015

The tour of Northington Grange organised for the evening of Thursday 10th September proved so popular Derek had to organise a second one on the Friday morning! Luckily David Brock, Principal Building Inspector for English Heritage, was happy to oblige and delivered two detailed tours covering both the social history as well as the physical history of this fascinating building.



Initially The Grange was a red brick mansion which was designed by William Samwell for Sir Robert Henley in 1665. Evidence of this original exterior can be seen today on the exposed west wall. In 1808 the house was owned by Henry Drummond, a banker, politician and writer. He wanted the house remodelled in the neo-classical style which was very popular at the time and in 1808 he commissioned William Wilkins to undertake the work. Sadly he was not happy with the end result and therefore sold the house to Alexander Baring. Under Baring ownership Northington Grange was extended to the west with an extra wing and orangery. In the twentieth century the house fell into disrepair and was almost demolished. Luckily it was taken into the care of English Heritage in 1975 and has been used as an opera venue since 1998.

Once David Brock had outlined the history of the building from the outside he took the group inside via the basement entrance on the west wall. First stop was the entrance hall which today is double height and features a fireplace halfway up the wall showing where there used to be a floor. From there the group toured around the ground floor rooms, used by Grange Park Opera as a bar and dining space and then the grand staircase to the first floor. The staircase is of particular interest as it was dismantled prior to the planned demolition of the house and sold in 1972. The buyer never managed to use it and it was purchased back and restored back to its original position in 2009.



The upstairs space is limited to the main hallways and a few rooms but it provides superb views of the ground floor and grounds. The final stop on the tour was the former orangery which is the site of the magnificent stage used by Grange Park Opera for their performances.



<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/northington-grange/history/>