

The Tower House, Main Street, Gumley

Ref: Gum/001



Construction Date: 1870

Architect: Unknown

Original Use: Stable block and kennels to Gumley Hall

Current Use: Residential

Condition: Good

Occupancy: Occupied

Parish: Gumley

Ward: Lubbenham

Reason for Inclusion

Historic Interest

The Tower House was originally the stables and kennels to Gumley Hall. The hall was a significant local employer and was part of the Leicestershire hunting scene.

Gumley Hall was built in 1764 for Joseph Craddock (d.1826). Unlike most of the owners and tenants, Craddock was not interested in hunting. He moved in the literary society of Goldsmith, Johnson, and Burke, and built a theatre at Gumley which was used for amateur productions.

Craddock laid out the gardens and plantations of Gumley Hall in imitation of the Parc de St. Cloud. In the summer months they became a fashionable resort for the gentry of Leicester, particularly those who came to take the mineral waters of its 'spa', a chalybeate spring found in 1789.

In 1869-70, the new owner, Capt. Whitmore, built the stable block which is now the Tower House.

The 1892 sales particulars for the Hall state that 'The Tower, which is surmounted by a handsome Weather Vane, forms and attractive feature in the general appearance of the Residence and its surroundings'.

Gumley Hall was demolished in 1964 but the stables and tower have been converted to residential use.

Architectural Interest

South of the Hall and opening upon the village street the red-brick stables were built round a courtyard. The clock-tower in the style of an Italian campanile bears the inscription *Incorrupta Fides* (Incorruptable Faith) and a weathercock dated 1870. The tower held a water tank to supply water for the horses. The tower still contains the original bell which was rung to alert workers to their various activities during the day.

Rare local example of the use of Italianate style.

Associative Interest

In the 1860s the Craddock-Hartopp family rented the hall to Lt.-Col Dottin Maycock before he moved to Foxton Lodge. He was born in the West Indies where his grandfather had been Solicitor General of Barbados. Dottin Maycock was the beneficiary of a compensation claim of £64 1s 8d made by his father for 5 enslaved people in Barbados.

In the 1890s other tenants included Thomas Keay Tapling, MP for South Leicestershire and James Coates of J & P Coates Ltd the world's largest manufacturer of sewing thread.

During the Second World War Gumley Hall was used to train resistance fighters and members of the Special Operations Executive. It was known as SOE Training School 41. From 1946 to 1948 it was rented to Group Capt. Leonard Cheshire who converted it into flats as an experiment in community living for ex-servicemen and their families.

The water tower and stable block have a strong association with the Fernie Hunt, an important part of Leicestershire's hunting history.

Located in an elevated position, the Tower House is a local landmark.