



MIDDLETON HALL

RETIREMENT VILLAGE

AN EMPLOYEE OWNED COMPANY

THE HISTORY OF MIDDLETON HALL

FROM FARMHOUSE TO
AWARD-WINNING EMPLOYEE
OWNED BUSINESS



MIDDLETON HALL

A ROUGH HISTORY

The original property of Middleton Hall is believed to have been constructed in the very early 19th Century as a farmhouse and was known as Home Farm. In 1836 it was acquired by the Rev. William Addison who, as well as being Rector of Middleton St. George, was also a farmer, a common practice in those days. He appears to have soon handed over the house, including 114 acres of woodland and pasture, to a tenant farmer, Frances Wright, who was the occupier until 1851 when the farm was sold to Mr Michael Darling. Mr Darling was a schoolmaster and farmer; he had 24 scholars living in the house and, apart from teaching, employed two labourers to work 105 acres of land. He also changed the name from Home Farm to Middleton Hall in 1851.

During the redevelopment of the Georgian part of the building in 2000, the age of the original building came into question. Beneath the Georgian floor are foundations that imply an earlier construction during the 18th Century, from evidence of brick size and style. In addition a well and underground culvert are placed beneath the original Georgian walls. Middleton Hall's architects believe that parts of the building date to before 1800.

An archaeology student conducted some research in the history of the buildings in 2012. This backed up the uncertainty about its earliest history – there is evidence that the building was extended in Georgian times as there is a one metre thick internal wall in Middleton Grove outside Suite 1, which appears to have originally been an external wall. This might help explain the location of the well.

It is also speculated that the larger window in the middle of the south facing Georgian aspect may have been an entrance, probably the main entrance, at some stage in its history.

In 1865 Mr Darling sold the property to Mr William Vaughan who in turn passed it on to Mr Charles Mudden in 1879. Mr Mudden held it until 1890 when he sold it to Miss Mary Barningham but there is no record as to whether at this stage it was either a school or a farm, probably the latter as the land was still part of the property. On 7th October 1895 Dr William Garbutt and Dr Robert Smith of Newcastle- Upon- Tyne bought the property with the intention of building a private asylum to house patients certified as insane who would otherwise be sent to the local authority public asylums.

No doubt this enterprise was occasioned by the appalling conditions in average local authority asylum where treatment for all types of mental patients was virtually non-existent simply because mental illness was not understood in those days. Basically patients were locked up, sedated and kept out of the way. It was something which very much disturbed all thinking medical practitioners at this time, and Dr. Garbutt was anxious to improve the lot of the few who could afford a little privacy, improved comfort and personal attention.

J.W. Dyson, an architect from Newcastle drew up the plans in 1897. The plan necessitated the demolition of one part of the Georgian house and outbuildings and the building of two wings with rooms all facing in a southerly direction to maximise sunlight and views of the Cleveland Hills. The remaining part of the house was kept as a Doctor's residence.

Dr William Garbutt died before the scheme was implemented and his son, Dr or Mr Richard Garbutt (it is unclear if he was a doctor of medicine) took over his interest. Richard Garbutt, then in his 30s, transferred the assets of Dunston Lodge (probably a mental institution of some sort) in Gateshead and along with Dr James Callcott and Dr Smith became a joint owner of Middleton Hall. The combined assets were transferred on 1st April 1898 and the company, Middleton Hall Ltd, was incorporated on 23rd April 1900 with 6 shareholders, including the three doctors. From an insurance policy taken out on 2nd December 1899, the Reverend Arthur Shafto of The Rectory, Brancepeth, Co Durham, was the mortgagee (later transferring to Julia Rogers and Reverend William Fawcett of Mainsford Hall, Ferryhill in 1904). At that stage Middleton Hall's assets were listed as the Hall, boiler house, water tower, barn, straw shed, cow byre, cake house, horse threshing machine shed, cart shed, a range of small outbuildings, a greenhouse, the lodge and the Oaktree cottages. (Total insurance value was £15,300, with an insurance premium of £13.8/6, payable Christmas Day each year!).

During 1900 - 1901 the two main wings were partially constructed, but it was not until 1906 that the wings were complete and the building was described now as "a residence for mental invalids".

Dr Robert Smith remained in charge until 1910 when he was succeeded by Dr Harris Liston who took over until 1925. From then until 1937 Dr Astley Cooper was in residence and was later joined for several years by Dr Thomas Barkas who had retired from his practice in Newcastle upon Tyne. At about this period both doctors felt that some patients would benefit by being separated from the more severely ill patients and so a large house, Almora Hall, in the village of Middleton St. George was rented. This coincided with the retirement of Dr Mervyn Archdale the medical superintendent of Cherry Knowle (Sunderland Mental Hospital) at Ryhope. Dr Archdale therefore became resident physician at Almora Hall where he remained until it was closed down just after the war. He then succeeded Dr Cooper at Middleton Hall and was assisted by Dr Francis Guppy (who had been appointed after the death of Dr Barkas about two years previously) until 1950.

The arrival of Dr Archdale at Middleton Hall brought about many improvements in the understanding, treatment, and care of the aged and mentally ill patients, but his biggest problem, as in all public and private institutions of this time, was the sparse uncomfortable living conditions. There was no central heating so the only winter warmth came from coal fires and dirty sooty stoves. Before World War I there was no electricity anywhere. Lighting was by oil lamps so between the wars the directors installed a steam engine, which drove a dynamo producing 110 volts of direct current.

This provided better and safer illumination. It was not until the 1950's that the national electricity grid became available and when it did the whole building had

to be rewired in stages to take 240 volts power. This was so expensive that it was done in stages and until it was complete various sections remained on the 110 volt circuit but were supplied from the grid through transformers.

All cooking was originally on giant black leaded stoves. When Dr Archdale arrived he organised the conversion to Aga's, which of course have now been superseded by the modern gas fired equipment. Initially there were no means of laundering soiled clothes and bed linen other than the accepted Victorian poss tubs. In the late 1940's electric washers appeared and these in time have given way to a modern equipped laundry.

In 1950 Dr Robin Stevenson, a general practitioner in Middleton St George, was appointed on the retirement of Dr Guppy, to assist Dr Archdale in the general care of patients as part of his practice. Dr Stevenson had previously worked for a period in 1939 with Dr Archdale at Cherry Knowle and therefore was familiar with some of the problems of mental illness. Unfortunately over the next few years Dr Archdale gradually became incapacitated until he was unable to cope with the administration. His younger daughter, Ruby, the bursar at a large girls boarding school in Gloucestershire, resigned from her job and took over the administration of Middleton Hall for the next few years. Miss Archdale was responsible for much more pleasant furnishings and decorations. She was also an excellent caterer and much improved the variety and presentation of food.

Sadly Dr Archdale's health deteriorated and he died. He was succeeded for two years by Dr Charles Bamford, who had previously been the Medical Superintendent of Stannington Mental Hospital near Morpeth. Prior to Dr Archdale's death it had been planned to sell as timber a number of valuable trees along the drive and invest the proceeds in a modern small bore central heating system. Dr Bamford supervised this work which entailed installing new enlarged boilers as well as the pumps, piping and radiators. Initially solid fuel was cheapest but over the next 20 years as each boiler came to the end of its days it was replaced with oil firing and then gas.

After two years Dr Bamford decided to retire and it was left to Dr Stevenson to supervise the day-to-day running of the home. He was assisted however by Dr John Hawkings, a consultant psychiatrist who made frequent visits and advised on long-term therapy. Around this period the treatment of mental illness went through vast changes. It became much more the work of a district general hospital, and, together with the specialist nursing required, more and more outside the scope of a nursing home. For this reason the directors of Middleton Hall were advised and later decided that the nursing home with its extensive gardens and spacious interior was more suitable for the care and nursing of the elderly.

Over the remaining half of the twentieth century, Middleton Hall continued as a successful nursing home for the elderly. The home was run by a non-executive board of directors, with the day-to-day input of Dr Stevenson. Dr Adrian Marshall became senior partner in the doctors' practice in Middleton St George on Dr Stevenson's retirement and has remained Middleton Hall's GP since 1983. During this time the board was chaired by Edmund Luxmoore, who succeeded his father in 1959.

As the nursing home sector expanded and became increasingly competitive, Middleton Hall's occupancy dropped from over 100 residents in the late 1980's, to under 40 in the mid 1990's. One of the existing shareholders, Jeremy Walford, was approached for advice in January 1996. His grandfather had been a shareholder since the 1920's and subsequently his father, who also served as a director up to this time. Jeremy was running a business consultancy practice in London, and although a shareholder had never visited Middleton Hall or ever been to a care home before. After a brief review of the rather uncomfortable financial situation, he advised that substantial investment was required and a new strategy developed. Jeremy Walford took over the running of the Company, with Michael Luxmore (Edmund Luxmore's son and non-executive director since 1984), and appointed Adrian Walker as non-executive finance director. Convinced of Middleton Hall's potential and impressed by the loyalty of staff and quality of care provided, Jeremy gave up his London business and moved back to his roots in the north east, to put his full commitment and energy into Middleton Hall.

We carried out some market research. The people interviewed told us that they did not want to live in an institution and feared losing all sense of independence, choice and control over their lives. What they did want was somewhere that allowed them to live their own lives under their terms – choice – and independence in a secure and caring environment. Thus Middleton Hall was reborn – a place where our clients would *want* to live. We initially undertook a £1m refurbishment and redevelopment programme between 1999 and 2004. This included the development of Middleton Grove (Independent Living apartments with support) opened in 2000 and 2001 and refurbishment of what is now Middleton Gardens (Residential Care) in 2003/04

Middleton Grove was the first service of its kind in the north. BBC TV featured the apartments in May 2000 and Middleton Hall received the prestigious Tees Valley Business Award for "Best New Product / Service" in March 2001 for the success of the apartments.

Middleton Hall was accredited as an "Investor in People" in 2002 and won a National Training Award in 2004.

Rather than sit back on Middleton Hall's envied reputation and unique range of services, the directors (including Lesley Henderson, appointed as a director in 2005) decided to embark on an ambitious plan to turn Middleton Hall into the region's first retirement village.

This major multimillion development was started in 2006 and completed in 2009. With substantial new build this added:

- 29 Independent living apartments ("Middleton Woods").
- 20 new care home rooms for "complete care" ("Middleton Court").
- Middleton Spa (swimming pool gym and therapy rooms).
- Restaurant, coffee shop, bar, shop and hairdressing salon.

In addition, Middleton Hall extended the grounds into the surrounding farmland, to provide a bowling green, and wildlife area as well as planting a new woodland to

the east. This now includes a boules pitch, three hole pitch and putt course and putting green opened in 2012.

Since completing this stage of development, Middleton Hall has been received considerable recognition for its service:

- 2010 Care Employer of Year for the North East at the Great British Care Awards
- 2011 “Best Continuing Care Retirement Community in the UK” at the Seniors Housing Awards
- 2011 “Investor in People Gold” – one of only 200 companies in the UK to achieve Gold
- 2011/12/13/14/15/16 Northumbria in Bloom Gold Award
- 2011/12/13/14/16 Ron Grub Trophy for best grounds of a care facility in the north east
- 2012 Better Health at Work Gold Award
- 2013 Finalist – Best Independent Living
- 2014 Best of Darlington – “Contribution to the Environment” award winners
- 2014 “Investor in People Gold”
- 2014 Friends of the Earth CBE (Clean British Energy award)
- 2015 Finalist Best Care Community 2015
- 2015 Winners – The Bricks Award
- 2016 Silver Trophy National Green Apple Awards
- 2016 Short listed – Living Wage Champion Award
- 2017 Finalist Skills for Care Accolades
- 2017 Awarded Outstanding in all five categories inspected by the CQC
- 2018 Skills for Care Accolade Awards – Winner, Best Employer 51 – 249 Staff
- 2018 Investors in People “Platinum”
- 2019 Best Sporting, Social, Leisure Activities – Care Home UK Awards

In 2012, Middleton Hall embarked on the next chapter of its development with the start of a building programme for a new Independent Living Service – The Waterside.

The Waterside consists of 36, carbon neutral properties set in a spectacular new setting adjoining the main retirement village. These properties are very well insulated but traditionally built, with very simple, low maintenance heating and hot water with electricity generated on site, in a parkland setting with sustainable landscaping. They are understood to be the first zero carbon retirement properties in the UK and a showcase for sustainable building and community.

Our independent residents now represent half of the population within the retirement village.

2011 saw the implementation of a new service based on the Dutch Small Group Living model particularly suited to people living with dementia.

The success of this project has led to the building and opening of a new service, Middleton Oaks, in early 2017. Two households of eight residents linked by a winter garden share a communal family environment and participate in lifestyle activities they would have carried out at home including helping to prepare meals, washing up, housework and gardening if they choose. The style of service is all

about promoting well-being and purpose ensuring that residents remain in control and are at the centre of any decisions. Run by a team of well-qualified and dedicated staff, this service is committed to making a positive impact on the physical and social life of its residents.

The new “Orangery” style cafe, shop and bar opened in early 2013 as well as changes to the reception area. A new, purpose built kitchen opened in July 2017 replacing the converted stables that had been in operation as a kitchen since 1900. Specifically designed and equipped with the newest equipment a much wider range of dining options can now be offered and larger parties catered for.

The original Georgian stable block was re-opened in 2018, using the original domed stable door openings for the first time since 1900, to create a new library, art studio and shop. The Stables are linked to the Orangery so that the shop is accessed inside. The shop now sells essentials and a range of products grown at Middleton Hall and/or made in the kitchen.

Meanwhile, Felix House surgery in Middleton St George had been seeking a new site for the practice for several years. Following lengthy discussions with the partners at the Middleton St George practice and the NHS, Middleton Hall offered to provide a site for the GP surgery to ensure that the practice remained in Middleton St George. The surgery opened in temporary buildings in September 2017 on the new site off Yarm Road along side of the trade entrance. The relationship with the NHS will provide an opportunity to develop an innovative medical centre to meet the future needs of the local community as well as our own residents.

In 2018, Middleton Gardens was split into two distinct services – Supported Living with care (for 12 residents) and Hotel Living with Care (16 residents) following the refurbishment of the rooms previously occupied by Family Living. This has provided more focussed and person centred care with improved communal facilities for both areas.

In September 2018 the shareholders of Middleton Hall announced the plan for the company Hall to become a John Lewis style Employee Ownership Trust. Middleton Hall has become a very special place that is a home to our residents and part of the local community. The directors felt that Employee Ownership will best preserve the ethos and values of Middleton Hall for the long term rather selling the company to a larger company. The transfer of ownership to Middleton Hall Retirement Village’s employees was finalised in 2019.

In 2021 Jeremy Walford stepped aside to become Middleton Hall Retirement Village’s Executive Chair and Suzanne Graham was appointed as the business’s new Managing Director to lead Middleton Hall into its next chapter.

Middleton Hall’s journey is far from over....

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