

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SEEN....*if we had been able to visit Almshoe Bury on 31st May.*

Almshoe Bury has a claim to be one of the oldest continuously occupied houses in the county; its manor certainly predates the Norman Conquest and likely even the parish of St Ippolyts itself. The ‘Bury’ name can be linked to its probable original function as a ‘stronghold’ and reflects a prominent hill top location. Traditionally it has also been the largest farm in the parish.

The recently revised Hertfordshire volume in the Pevsner The Buildings of England series describes how the core of the present house dates to the mid 13th century when a timber framed aisled hall was built on the site. Two jettied and gabled cross wings were subsequently added, the first (the eastern) in the mid to late



The frontage of the house today (Adrian Brockett)

14th century and the second (the western) in the early 16th century. The original hall was divided by a floor during the 17th century and the rafters still preserve soot-blackening showing that it originally functioned, in classic early medieval style, as one large domestic space. Interesting internal detailing also survives such as the remains of an arch brace with dogtooth moulding. Overall, the house well justifies its exceptional Grade I Listing, a view endorsed by a number of timber building specialists - including John Smith, Cecil Hewitt and Adrian Gibson - who have visited over the years.

The house would have originally stood amidst a huddle of service buildings providing functions such as a kitchen, workshops, barns and byres. There are still 17th and 18th century barns on the site today. The house has witnessed many ups and downs over the years, including two major yard fires in the late 19th century but, significantly, it has survived with much original structure intact.

Almshoe has been connected with both lesser and greater families, the latter including the Brokets of Wheathampstead, later connected to Brocket Hall. Important visitors included, in 1358, Isabella the Queen

Mother and her daughter Joan, Queen of Scots. Towards the end of the 19th century the house and land were bought by St Bartholomew’s Hospital and then Jeremiah Inns of Stevenage; in 1898 the farm was let to Herbert Titmuss. The Titmuss family were able to buy Almshoe in 1947 and own it today as the centre of a working estate which is still almost identical in extent to the original medieval demesne lands.

It is hoped that we might arrange a replacement visit during 2021.

HHS
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Dogtooth detailing found on an interior timber brace (Adrian Brockett)



Head of Isabella, the Queen Mother,
in a north country church
(HHS Collection)