



THE HISTORY OF OULTON HALL HOTEL

Oulton Hall, present day

PREFACE



Oulton Hall now stands as a luxury hotel on the outskirts of Leeds - a complex offering spa & leisure facilities, two golf courses and a venue fit for a lavish wedding.

The house and surrounding estate has a wealth of history - you may have already noticed the portraits and other references throughout the hotel, giving a glimpse of the memories within the walls.

The fascinating story of the hall starts with a farmhouse on what is now the Oulton Estate. It was then transformed over time into a mansion residence before being used as a hospital during the Great War through to the 1970's and later rescued from ruin in 1993.

The Hall now sees more of helicopter landings and exquisite cars than the typical 'horse and carriage' of the early farmhouse period however, the Butler service still offered within the hotel allows guests an insight into days gone by when the hall was once the grand home of the Calverley family.

2018 marked the 25th year of the hotel's opening and to honour this landmark we wanted to share with you, our guest - Oulton Hall's story so far.

Repton's drawing of the house from the Red Book of Oulton



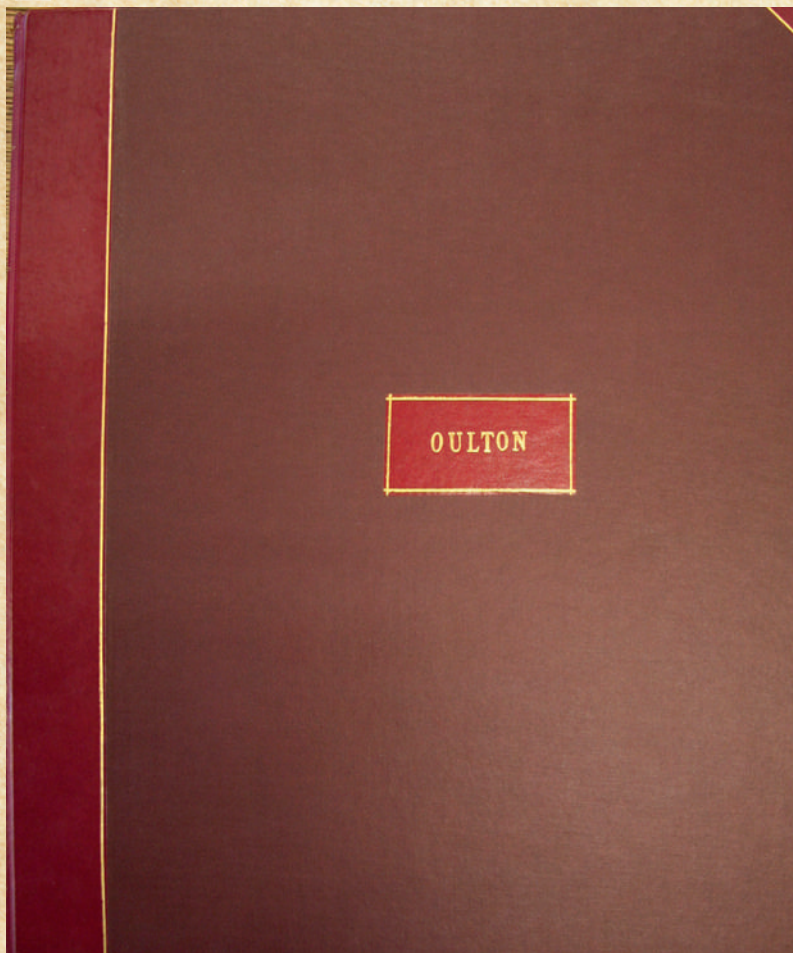
'The Red Book of Oulton' by Humphry Repton, depicting the farmhouse at the site of Oulton Hall

The original residence at the site of Oulton Hall was that of a simple farmhouse, built by Francis Blayds in the mid 1700's before being inherited by his son John.

John Blayds held the office of Lord Mayor of Leeds in both 1761 and 1774, then in 1776 he became one of the six partners in Beckett's Bank along with John Calverley. The Blayds and Calverley families already had links via marriage and previous financial affairs but their relationship strengthened from this point.

Blayds died in 1804 without any sons and the estate passed to Mary, the eldest of the siblings. Mary specified in her will that upon her death, her other sister Anne would become main beneficiary until such time as her passing - at which point the estate would then be inherited by John Calverley and his heirs thereafter. John subsequently inherited the estate in 1806 and later adopted the family name of 'Blayds'.

HUMPHRY REPTON AND THE OULTON ESTATE



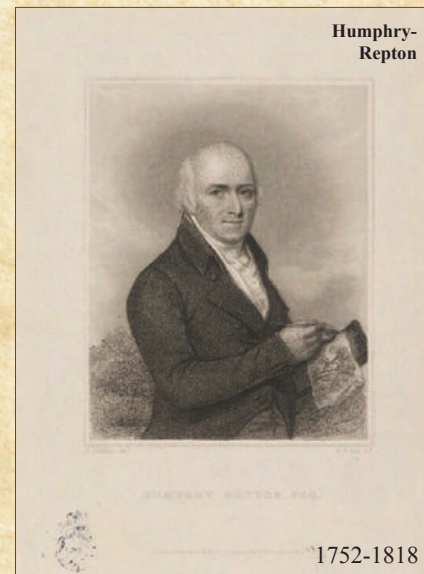
A few years after taking ownership of the house, John obtained permission by Royal Assent in 1809 to enclose Oulton Park (the land surrounding the house), and raise the banks to conceal the house from the main road. He appointed Humphry Repton to design and landscape the new gardens.

Repton, known as the successor to 'Capability' Brown and responsible

for the creation of over 200 gardens and parklands, presented his proposals in the form of 'Red Books' depicting watercolour illustrations. The Red Book of Oulton survives today and provides an insight to the former residence at Oulton Hall and the ideas behind the landscape still seen today.

The estate was redesigned incorporating a new entrance, lake and lodge house. He painted his visions of the improved areas and then added the original landscape as an overlay - a new concept allowing a 'live' comparison of the two views.

Repton also proposed alterations to the house but his plans were not realised as Blayd's decided to alter the house to the designs of Robert Smirke, enlarging the house significantly in around 1822.



THE GARDENS – HUMPHRY REPTON (1752-1818)



Landscape before - the Red Book of Oulton



Depicting the proposed new landscape - Red Book of Oulton

THE CALVERLEYS – HISTORY BEFORE THE HALL

The Calverley name originates with the village of Calverley situated between Leeds and Bradford - a village which is referred to within The Doomsday Book. It is around this time (early C12th) that a Lord in the area, John Scot, took the name of his land thus becoming the first of many 'John Calverleys'.

CALVERLEY'S BEFORE OULTON



Walter Claverley and Esholt



Julia Calverley wife of Walter



William Calverley
1557



Catherine Thornholm
(Wife of William Calverley) 1571

The Calverley family increased in stature as generations married into other families of wealth. The first records relating to family in and around Rothwell are of Christopher Calverley, a landowner during the 1500's and then in Oulton with Robert Calverley who owned property here and neighbouring Rothwell village. Robert left his estate to son William who proceeded to live a successful life, becoming the Lord Mayor of Leeds in 1692 - the first of many Calverleys to hold the office.

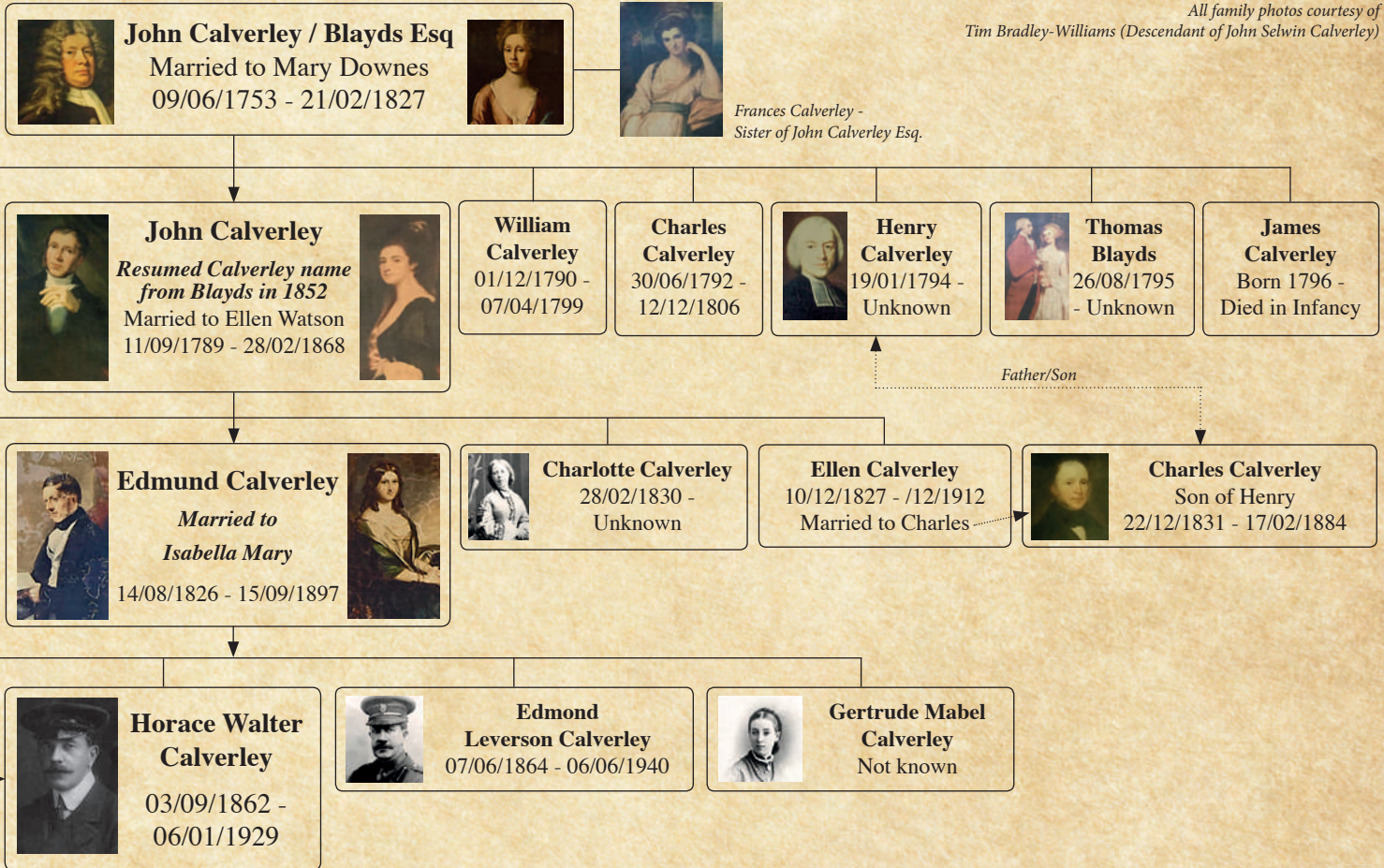
William and his wife, Frances Calverley had only one son, John, born in 1718. John inherited the estate from his father and went on to have two children – John and Frances.

John led a successful life also becoming Lord Mayor of Leeds in 1772 at the age of 54. He joined John Blayds in partnership at Beckett's Bank before inheriting from him, the land where Oulton Hall now sits, subsequently adopting the Blayds name himself in 1807.



THE CALVERLEYS OF OULTON

All family photos courtesy of
Tim Bradley-Williams (Descendant of John Selwin Calverley)

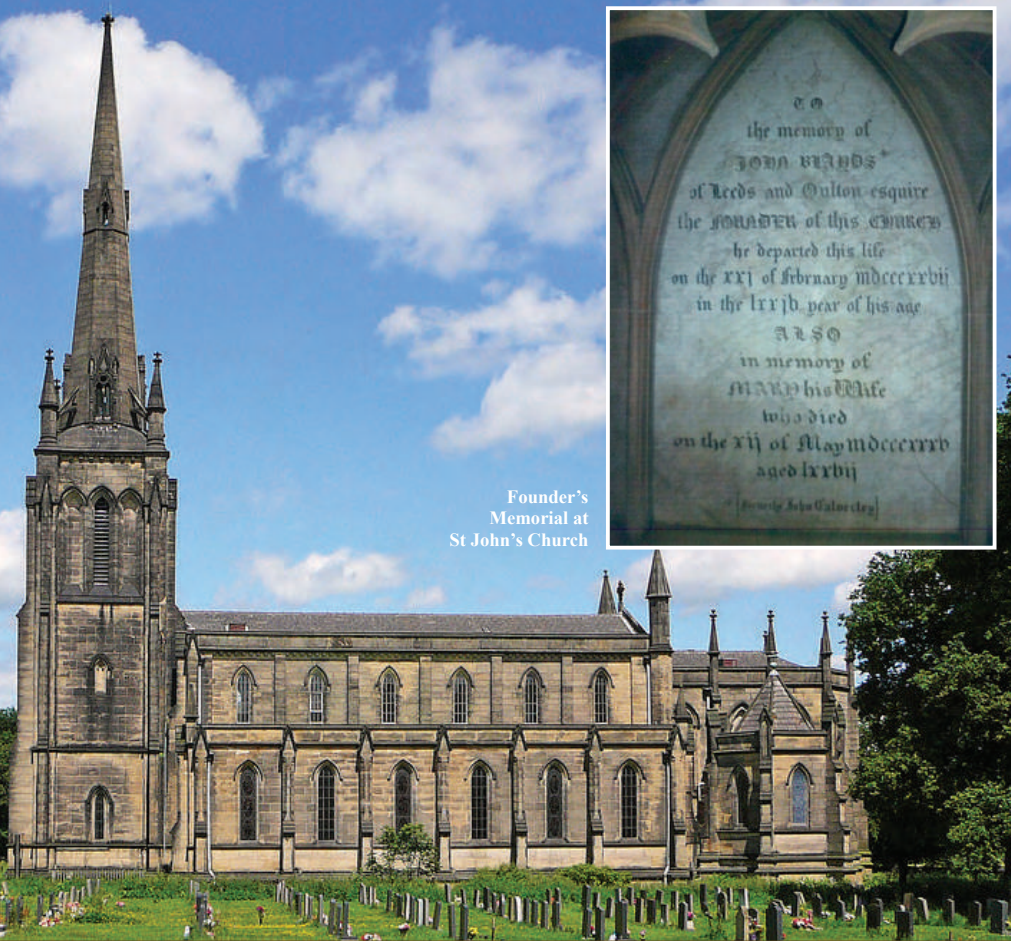


End of residency at Oulton Hall

ST JOHN'S CHURCH

John Blayd's (previously Calverley) was a religious man who had planned to build a church on the accompanying land surrounding the farmhouse he had inherited. Unfortunately John's death in 1827 preceded the building works but his son (also called John) continued his father's intentions, laying the first stone of St John's Church on December 7th 1827.

The Church, located at the end of Oulton Hall's current drive, commemorated Blayds with a founder's memorial and continued to be an attached member of the church throughout his life.



Founder's
Memorial at
St John's Church

IN
the memory of
JOHN BLAYDS
of Leeds and Oulton esquire
the FOUNDER of this church
he departed this life
on the XXI of February MDCCCXXVII
in the LXXV year of his age
ANNO
in memory of
MARY his Wife
who died
on the XII of May MDCCCXXV
aged LXVII
(Sculpsit John Calverley)

FIRE

John continued the alterations to the house until a fire broke out in the summer of 1850 whilst the family were away on vacation. Reports state that the fire started when plumbers were melting lead to carry out repairs to the roof of an extended area of the house, resulting in damage to the value of £1,500.

It is said that a great deal of furniture and pictures were saved by moving them into the grounds where local police guarded the property from the locals who had gathered.



After the fire, Blayd's demolished the lodgehouse in 1851 to make way for the new Oulton bypass road. The original (now blocked) entrance can still be seen from the Grove roundabout (near Toby Carvery).

Illustration of the lodge from the Red Book of Oulton



THE HOUSE BECOMES THE HALL



Plans rear 2
Perkins and
Backhouse

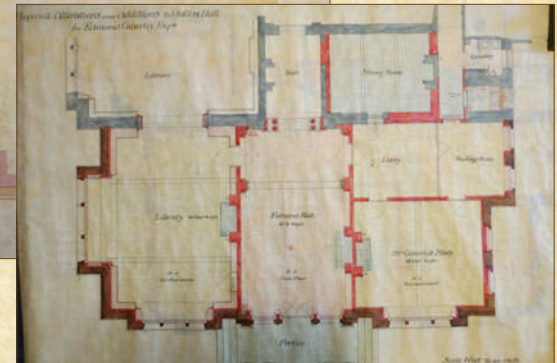
A few years later, Blayds appointed Leeds architects William Perkin & Elisa Backhouse to design a new, much grander residence and in 1855 the building of Oulton Hall was finished.

In the coming years, the house was extended with the addition of a large service wing for the benefit of John's son Edmund along with the creation of the new drive facing south west and additions to the grounds at the design of William Nesfield.

Photos courtesy of West
Yorkshire Archive Services



John died in 1868,
leaving the estate
to son Edmund
and the house was
further developed
with an additional
wing by 1891 via
the appointment of
architects Chorley &
Cannon



Ground floor
proposed
plans

Edmund Calverley



Edmund joined the Yeomanry as a young man, serving 13 years before retiring as a captain. He was closely involved with St John's church and the activities of Oulton village throughout his life until becoming more reserved as his health deteriorated in later years.

His son John Selwin Calverley succeeded him upon his death in 1897.

John served in the 4th Battalion Essex Regiment - also rising through the ranks to become 'Captain'. He was well known in yachting circles, winning numerous prizes on his yacht 'brunhilde' until his passing in 1900 aged just 45.



John Selwin on his yacht



Edmund Calverley's children on the steps of Oulton Hall: Horace Walter, Gertrude Mabel, Edmond Leveson and John Selwin

MILITARY HOSPITAL/COMMUNITY CARE

OFFICERS' HOSPITAL, OULTON HALL.

Sir,—For some months past the Northern Command has been endeavouring to find a large country house suitable for a hospital for officers suffering from neurasthenia and shell shock, which would be entirely devoted to the treatment of such cases.

An ideal building has now been provided, through the generosity of Major H. Calverley, who has placed Oulton Hall at the disposal of the military authorities, rent free. Certain necessary alterations and repairs have been effected by the Government, at a cost of over £2,000, with the result that a splendid hospital is about to be opened, capable of accommodating 70 patients.

Captain Fazan, late of the Abram Peel Hospital, Bradford, has been appointed Commandant and Medical Officer-in-charge, and Miss Gwendolen Money, late of Field House Hospital, Bradford, has been selected for the post of matron.

Furniture and equipment have also been provided by the Government, but there are certain articles not appearing on their schedule which are very urgently needed. These include an ambulance for conveying patients and their baggage to and from Woodlesford Station, a piano, and a full-size billiard table. A modern car of about 20 h.p., not in use owing to the shortage of petrol, would be gratefully accepted. If the body were not found suitable, a new one would be provided out of Red Cross funds. It is not necessary to give details respecting the piano and billiard table; all knowledge concerning both has long since been in the possession of the West Riding; and its inhabitants have never yet been appealed to, during the war, for anything required at a military hospital, without the best results. It is believed that the provision of recreation for neurasthenic officers will readily commend itself to their generous sympathy.

All correspondence relating to the hospital or answers to this appeal should be addressed to the County Director, Colonel C. W. E. Duncombe, C.B.E., Territorial Headquarters, York.—Yours, etc.,

C. W. E. DUNCOMBE,
Territorial Headquarters, 9, St. Leonard's, York.

The estate then came under the ownership of John's brother - Horace Walter Calverley, (later a Major of the 5th Dragoon Guards).

Horace, owning other properties, choose to reside at Down Hall in Essex. He therefore rarely spent any time at Oulton Hall, leaving it in the charge of a caretaker.

It is from this point onward that the Calverley family no longer resided at Oulton Hall.



Horace Calverley



Leaving Oulton Hall

During the Great War, Horace made the house available as a convalescent home for Belgian refugees and wounded officers. By 1918, 70 beds were available within the hall, providing care to officers suffering mainly from shell shock. The Hall provided spacious rooms and opportunities for recreation including a grand piano in the entrance for the musically astute and a well-stocked library.

Horace and the remaining Calverley family emigrated to Canada in 1925 due to ill health. As numbers dwindled, The Ministry of Pensions removed the soldier patients elsewhere and the hospital subsequently closed. Horace, now living abroad, decided to sell the hall to the West Riding Council but retain some of the land.

A few years later, the hall was re-opened as a hospital to provide care for the 'mentally defective' containing in excess of 200 beds for male patients of all ages with a range of conditions.



During the 1960's attitudes to mental health changed and slowly the patients of Oulton Hall were placed into more 'residential' care. The remaining patients were transferred to Fieldhead Hospital in Wakefield which still has a dedicated unit to this day.



*All photos
courtesy of
Howard Benson*



*Period costume ball marked the
closure of the hospital in 1972.*

PLANS FOR POLICE HQ



By 1974 Oulton Hall became a grade 11 listed building and the property of the West Yorkshire City Council with the intention of developing it into a Police Head Quarters.

Although part of the grounds were used for Police training exercises, the development into a HQ did not materialise due a combination of factors including funding and restrictions on the land.



In 1986, Leeds City Council bought the Hall and 95 acres of grounds.

Parts of the Oulton Estate were then developed into an 18 hole golf course complete with a clubhouse converted from the existing stable block. However the main building lay empty, becoming merely a shell.

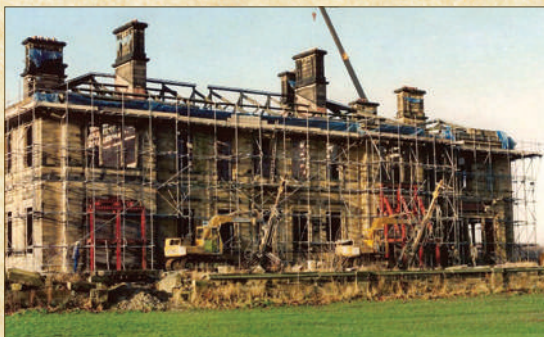
*Courtesy of John Thorpe
& The Oulton Society*



BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

De Vere Hotels purchased the building in 1991 and £20m was spent on restoring and repairing the hall back to its former glory.

Designer Anne Jordan worked with English Heritage (who listed the grounds and building as Grade 11) and spent many hours viewing photographs from national records to research the history of the hall. Temple Newsam staff had rescued fragments of the building's interior during its deterioration and this allowed Anne's designs to incorporate some of the previous décor. She also sourced negatives of the original family portraits so that the pictures could once again be part of the hall.



The luxury 'Oulton Hall Hotel' opened with a Victorian style celebration event on 7th June 1993. It was later awarded 5 star status – the only hotel to achieve this in the North of England, along with a red rosette for the then named 'Bronte Restaurant'.



The ultimate business and leisure hotel - we're working on it.

At last, a business and leisure hotel that meets all your requirements, perfectly located and only minutes from Junction 30 of the M62. Oulton Hall, Leeds, to be completed in Spring 1993 offers an impressive array of facilities including:

- 146 luxury bedrooms and suites
- Conference/meeting facilities for 5-1000
- Direct vehicle access into the conference centre area
- The latest in-tech slides, lighting and sound systems
- 15000 visitors from Junction 30 M62
- Conference management team
- Fully equipped business centre
- Luxurious Leisure Club
- Adjacent 18-hole golf course
- Extensive car parking for 2200

Oulton Hall will uphold the legendary tradition of elegance and impeccable service set by the De Vere's great hotels such as The Jersey, Mottram Hall and The Grand, Brighton. Its superb setting, luxurious specification and outstanding business facilities make it the ultimate venue for business and leisure. Its conference facilities will be the finest in the North.



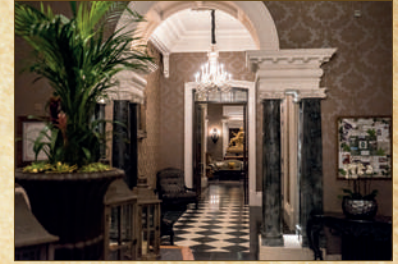
DE VERE  HOTELS

Some of the staff who work at the hotel today were part of the first team in 1993, including our Head Butler Peter McMahon, Executive Head Chef Stephen Collinson and Pastry Chef Jayne Percival.

QHotels purchased the Hotel in November 2014 and invested over £3m into refurbishment over the coming years. This transformed the interior of the main house and brought the décor and facilities up to date, whilst maintaining the hotel's luxury status and traditional touches.



The Champagne Bar



Reception Area



*The Richmond Castle Suite
(CHS Best Bedroom Winner 2018)*

In 2018 the QHotels brand was bought by Aprirose (the current owners of Oulton Hall) and it has continued to be a successful and iconic hotel, acquiring many awards and accolades in recent years.

OULTON HALL THROUGH THE YEARS



Peter McMahon (Head Butler) De Vere

Changes to the Hall will continue over time with further refurbishment and modernisation, yet the history within the walls of this fantastic property will remain honoured and respected.



Great hall and doors to Champagne Bar/ Repton Suite

OULTON HALL THROUGH THE YEARS



Great hall bottom and stairs



Gardens



OULTON HALL

Yorkshire

With thanks to:-

John Thorpe

Tim Bradley-Williams
(Calverley family)

Dr Patrick Eyres

Howard Benson

West Yorkshire Archives Service

The Oulton Society Archives

