

Case Name: The Grove, 8 The Avenue, Malvern, WR14 3AG

Case Number: 480913

Background

English Heritage has been asked to assess this building for statutory listing on the grounds of its evident significance.

Asset(s) under Assessment

Facts about the asset(s) can be found in the Annex(es) to this report.

Annex	List Entry Number	Name	Heritage Category	EH Recommendation
1	1417165	The Grove	Listing	Add to List

Visits

Date	Visit Type
11 September 2013	Full inspection

Context

The Grange is currently on the market for sale. It is set within a conservation area.

Assessment

CONSULTATION

Our consultation report was issued on 19 September. We received two responses from the present owner and from a potential purchaser of the house. Both said that they had nothing to add to the facts contained in the report.

DISCUSSION

The Revised Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings (March 2010) state that buildings of pre-1700 date that contain a significant proportion of their original fabric are listed. Also, that most buildings of pre-1840 date are listed. After 1840, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have survived, progressively greater selection is necessary. This is amplified by the Listing Selection guide for Suburban and Country Houses (Domestic 3) published in April 2011. This points out that the homes of increasingly affluent professional people were often built of solid materials in preference to the stucco-covered houses of the previous generation. Internal arrangements often featured a staircase hall with a series of reception rooms which were interconnected to allow larger spaces for entertaining. Separate parlours, billiard and smoking rooms were matched below stairs by increasingly specialist spaces, including pantries, larders, kitchens and servants' quarters. The great number of good surviving examples of this type of house means that careful consideration must be given to the rarity, intactness, quality of design, materials, craftsmanship and historic associations of each candidate for designation. The work of locally based architects may be of interest and a degree of alteration is acceptable if the additions add to the interest of the house, or are of small scale.

The Grove is a sizeable, suburban house with five reception rooms and a billiard room on the ground floor. It was designed and partly built by EW Elmslie for himself and he apparently continued to work on the house after its subsequent sale, designing the billiard room for Dr Weir. Elmslie was one of the foremost architects working in Worcestershire in the mid C19. In addition to many of the villas put up on the Foley Estate in Malvern and the former Imperial Hotel (now Malvern Girls' College and listed at Grade II), he also designed

and built Whitbourne Hall, Herefordshire for Edward Bickerton Evans in 1860-2 (Grade II*) which relies for much of its effect on carefully-chosen materials and well-executed stone carving. Whereas that house is an exercise in classical design, based on the patron, Evans', enthusiasm for ancient Greek archaeology and the architecture of the Erechtheum, Elmslie's own house relies on his own, free interpretation of the Gothic Revival. Stone carving appears to have been the work of William Forsyth.

Elmslie and Forsyth worked together at Worcester City and County Bank of 1861-2 and at Great Malvern Station in 1860-62 (Grade II). Forsyth's other work included many churches across Worcestershire, decoration in the Priory Park Mansion, in Malvern (Grade II*), and (with his brother James) carving of the Perseus and Andromeda fountain at Witley Court (Grade I). His account books show that he was employed at the Grove to make the billiard room fireplace and decorate rooms for Dr Weir, and it seems likely that he was continuing where he had left off with Elmslie, as part of an established working partnership.

Externally, the two show fronts of the Grove are to the east, facing the street, and to the south, looking over the garden. Both sides are given an architectural treatment which balances the walling of rubble stone with ashlar dressings and elaborately carved timber brackets, which connect with the gable bargeboards. On the south front there is rich stone carving to the projecting, semi-circular bay and this can also be seen on the west front, where the porch wing has similarly rich carving to the principal entrance.

Inside the house there is further carving on a series of fire surrounds in the ground-floor reception rooms. Conversion of the building to use as a school caused some alterations, but the stud partition walls which subdivided bedrooms have now been almost entirely removed. The removal of the former back staircase is regrettable, but relatively minor within the overall context, and the addition to the eastern end of the billiard room to create a stage can be seen as a part of the evolving history of the house, which does not detract from its appearance.

The series of interconnecting rooms at ground floor level have good fixtures, including fire surrounds, window seats, a safe and doors and door furniture. A ceiling rose with a vent for gas lighting survives in the south eastern room. Below stairs there is an impressive array of service rooms which are largely in original condition, including a scullery with its range, pantries and stores.

The association with George Bernard Shaw and Edward Elgar has not been proved, although both men were heavily involved with the Malvern Festival which ran in the town in the years after 1929, and the large, former billiard room with its stage would have been a suitable venue for Festival activities needing a smaller location. However, the combination of Elmslie and Forsyth as designer, patron and artist-craftsman is certainly notable and their combined work raises the villa above the standard of many of the houses of the same period in the town.

The architectural treatment of both the exterior and interior and the survival, largely intact, of the plan and many of the fittings of this prosperous, Victorian villa give a strong impression of the functioning of the house. Its design and the quality of the carving give it evident special interest and it should be statutorily listed at Grade II.

In recommending the extent of designation, we have considered whether powers of exclusion under s.1 (5A) of the 1990 Act are appropriate, and consider that they are not, which is clear in the proposed List entry.

CONCLUSION

After examining all the records and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing are fulfilled. The Grove, The Avenue, Malvern should be statutorily designated at Grade II.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

The Grove, The Avenue, Malvern, a villa of 1862-66 designed by Edmund Elmslie for himself and including stone carving by William Forsyth, should be statutorily designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * Architectural: in its planning, massing and detailing The Grove is in advance of the majority of mid-C19 houses of its type;
- * Intact survival: the plan and many of the fittings for this prosperous, suburban villa remain in their original condition, despite the use of the building as a girls' school during the C20;
- * Context: The Grove forms one part of a cluster of prominent, buildings in this part of Great Malvern which were designed by Elmslie, with stone carving by Forsyth, including Great Malvern Station (Grade II) and the former Imperial Hotel (Grade II).

Countersigning comments:

Agreed. The Grove, The Avenue, Malvern, a villa of 1862-66 designed by Edmund Elmslie for himself and including stone carving by William Forsyth is to a design of considerable presence, with careful massing and attention to detail. Its largely intact survival is noteworthy as is the high quality stonework by Forsyth. The Grove clearly merits listing at Grade II.

Deborah Williams
7th November 2013

Annex 1**List Entry****List Entry Summary**

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: The Grove

List Entry Number: 1417165

Location

Price Property Services Ltd, 8 Avenue Road, Malvern, Malvern, WR14 3AG

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
Worcestershire	Malvern Hills	District Authority	Malvern

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed:

Date of most recent amendment:

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy Number: Not applicable to this List entry.

Asset Groupings

This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List Entry Description**Summary of Building**

A large, suburban villa of c.1862-66 with later-C19 and early-C20 additions, designed and built by Edmund Wallace Elmslie for himself and added to by Dr. Archibald Weir. The sculptor William Forsyth, who did much work for Elmslie, is believed to have worked on the building.

Reasons for Designation

The Grove, The Avenue, Malvern, a villa of 1862-66 designed by Edmund Elmslie for himself and including stone carving by William Forsyth, is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

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History

The Grove (Formerly St Mungho's), Avenue Road was designed and built by Edmund Wallace Elmslie for himself. Elmslie seems to have moved to Malvern in the early 1850s and was elected a town commissioner in 1855. A reference in the Hereford Times in June 1862 refers to Elmslie's house in the course of erection.

The house was sold, apparently in an incomplete state, in 1866 to Dr Archibald Weir, a hydropathic therapist. Elmslie signed a debtor's deed in late 1866, having dissolved his architectural partnership earlier that year. It was Weir who finished the building and his initials, together with the date '1867', are carved on a datestone on the north front. Architectural carving appears to have been undertaken by William Forsyth, with whom Elmslie had worked on Great Malvern Station, 1860-2 and the Worcester City and County bank in 1861-2. Forsyth's surviving account books do not start until December 1867, but in January 1868 he records that bills for carving a fireplace and for painting and decorating parts of the house including the drawing room, staircase and nursery had been settled.

It is believed that Weir added the single-storey billiard room on the north side of the house and Forsyth's account book records payments in 1884/5 for work carving a 'Chimney piece for Billiard Room ... bosses, spandrills [sic] etc.'. The Ordnance Survey maps reveal that the raised stage to the east of the billiard room, together with its basement undercroft, were added between 1904 and 1927. The house was sold in this latter year to become part of Lawnside girls' school, and the addition may have been an alteration to create an assembly or dining room for the school. The house was sold by the school in 1994 and it has reverted to domestic use.

A back staircase was removed at some time in the C20 and several rooms were subdivided by partition walls to provide smaller bedrooms for girls, which have now been largely removed. Other than this, the structure has been little altered since its completion and retains many of its original fixtures.

Details

A large, suburban villa of c.1864 with later-C19 and early-C20 additions, designed and built by Edmund Wallace Elmslie for himself and added to by Dr. Archibald Weir. The sculptor William Forsyth, who did much work for Elmslie, worked on the building.

The house has rock-faced walling, with ashlar dressings and a plain tile roof. There are two storeys with attic and basement.

EXTERIOR: the east face has three bays, of which the central one is wider and has a projecting square bay window to the basement and ground floors with ashlar walling. Columns with marble shafts and carved capitals are set between the ground floor lights and the pierced parapet has quatrefoils. The two first floor windows above this bay have alternating grey and cream voussoirs. First floor windows to either side of this central bay have paired lancets with a quatrefoil to the centre above. Arched and moulded timber posts rise from projecting brackets which form part of the string course between the ground and first floors. These, in turn, support timber arches which connect with the barge boards. All three bays have a gabled top, those at either side having half-hipped caps. The billiard room extension to the right is recessed and has an open loggia at basement level with a five-light mullioned window to the ground floor.

The basement level on the south front is partially buried. At right there is a broad, gabled bay and to its centre is a projecting bay with a semi-circular end. This is elaborately decorated with mullioned and transomed, cusped lights at either side, set in recessed panels which have nailhead decoration to their tops. Above is a running band of foliage decoration at eaves level. To the centre is a round arched doorway for a pair of curved French windows. The tiled roof is apsidal, with a cast iron finial. At either side are two-light windows at ground floor level, and there are two-light windows with striped voussoirs to the first floor. Projecting brackets indicate that this gable originally had carved wooden posts rising to connect with the bargeboards, but these have now been removed.

The drive front (west) has a projecting, gabled porch wing. At either side are buttresses with offsets and at the centre is a broad arch with heavy hood mould which has a porch door at left and a two-light window to the

right. Short marble columns are set to either side and at the centre, with deeply-carved capitals and foliage to the surround. At first floor level above this is a tri-partite window with an arched centre light flanked by flat-headed lights, with banded marble columns between. Moulded posts and bargeboards, as before, rise into the gable space. First floor gabled windows with similar posts and bargeboards flank the porch bay. Other fenestration on this front is randomly distributed, with a five-light transomed window with cusped lights to the ground floor at left. The billiard room projects to far left and has two porthole windows.

INTERIOR: the entrance hall is approached up a short flight of broad steps and has encaustic tiles to the floor and a stone fire surround. A wide corridor, with a further stone fire surround, leads north from here to the billiard room. The three rooms facing east interconnect. The central one is the present dining room and has fixed seating in the square bay. The room to its north has a stone window seat which forms part of the window surround. The majority of the ground floor rooms retain their original stone fire surrounds and that to the drawing room is elaborate, with carved spandrels and marble columns. The room to the west of the corridor has wainscot panelling to the lower wall and end-stopped ceiling beams. Panelled doors are original and the entrances to the billiard room and the present bar room include glazed screens with half-glazed doors.

The staircase to the first floor has stone treads and winds around three sides of an open well. The balusters take the form of a colonnade with cusped arches connecting them and quatrefoils below the moulded handrail. Fire surrounds are of stone at first floor level and wood to the attics.

The basement has clay tiles to the floors and cooking ranges in the original kitchen and scullery. Glass screens and semi-glazed doors allow light into the centre. Larders have metal racks for hanging meat and a pantry has slate shelves and a door which retains its panels of metal mesh.

Selected Sources

Pevsner, N and Brooks, A, *The Buildings of England: Worcestershire*, 2007, 476

Map**National Grid Reference:** SO7798745856

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The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - 1417165_1.pdf