



Welcome to Shaw House

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West Berkshire
COUNCIL

About Shaw House

Shaw House is a remarkably well preserved example of an Elizabethan mansion built in 1581 for Thomas Dolman, a wealthy Newbury cloth merchant. Throughout the Tudor and Stuart period Shaw House remained in the hands of the Dolman family being passed down through six generations between 1554 and 1728.

During this time visitors to Shaw included several kings and queens on their royal progresses around the country as well as courtiers travelling between London and Bath.

During the second battle of Newbury in 1644 it was at the centre of the battlefield.

It remained as a private home until the outbreak of World War Two when the house was requisitioned for use by the army and both British and American troops were billeted here.

Following the bombing of Newbury Senior Council School in 1943 Shaw House was adapted to provide alternative accommodation. The school use developed on the site over the years and Shaw House School used the house until 1985 when it was vacated. Ownership transferred to West Berkshire Council in 1998 and the Council sought external funding towards its restoration.

Having been carefully adapted for use in the 21st century, with grants from The Heritage Lottery Fund, Vodafone, English Heritage and Berkshire County Council, Shaw House is now a venue for conferences, seminars, meetings and training sessions and runs a year round programme of activities and events.



Shaw House, Frances Everett
1860's/1870's



Shaw House, Girls physical training lesson
1961

Restoration

West Berkshire Council aimed to restore the house and establish a venue that is used by the Council and community alike. The House was not restored to a particular period of time; neither is it furnished with fittings, fabrics and furniture from the past.

The restoration respects the history of the House, the various changes that have occurred over time but the re-opening began a new chapter in that history.

The scope of the restoration work was extensive, involving repair to the historic fabric of the House, installation of new services and improvements to access. It was managed by a design team led by architects, Purcell Miller Tritton.

The conservation focus was to preserve and reuse material where possible and to remove unsympathetic modern interventions. Many traditional building techniques were required to undertake the work, such as lime plastering, lead working, stone masonry and heavy carpentry.

New services and access solutions such as lifts have been expressed as overtly modern, yet in keeping with the style, materials and colours of the house.

Some of the many highly successful aspects of the project are the lift shaft extensions, the restoration of the interior wall panelling and the discovery of the Elizabethan bakehouse.



Shaw House, during restoration



The Bakehouse

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is there no furniture?

When the house changed hands over the years many of the contents were sold. For example auctions were held at Hamptons and Christies in 1905. As a result, no original collection from the House survives. There is one item in the exhibition, a late 16th century iron chest used to store the legal papers and other such documents which seems to have been transferred with the house from one owner to another.

Why are the panels painted?

The softwood bolection panelling which was installed as part of the modernisation of the House in the late 17th century was always painted. Unlike the oak panelling which has a beauty inherent in the timber, these panels are pine. Analysis of the historic paint schemes has revealed that the primary scheme on many of the softwood panels was a wood grain effect achieved using paint.

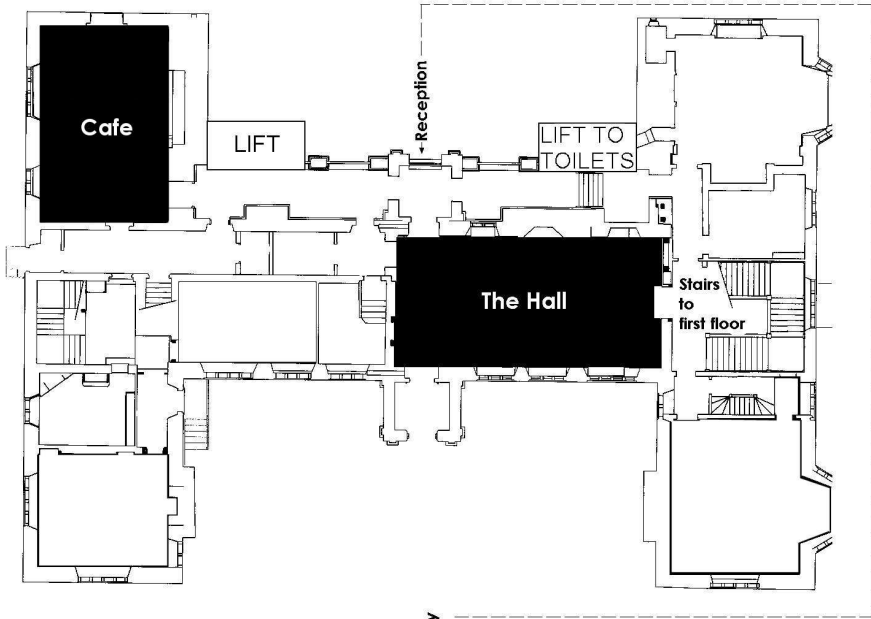
Will you be developing the grounds?

The Shaw House project is a two phase scheme. Phase I was the restoration of the House, phase II began with the completion of the car park to the east of the house and the return of the front gravel car park to grass. The final part of phase II is the development of the grounds in the area of the old Kitchen Garden, with grassed amphitheatre and raised beds for community use.

Why is the bakehouse not open to the public?

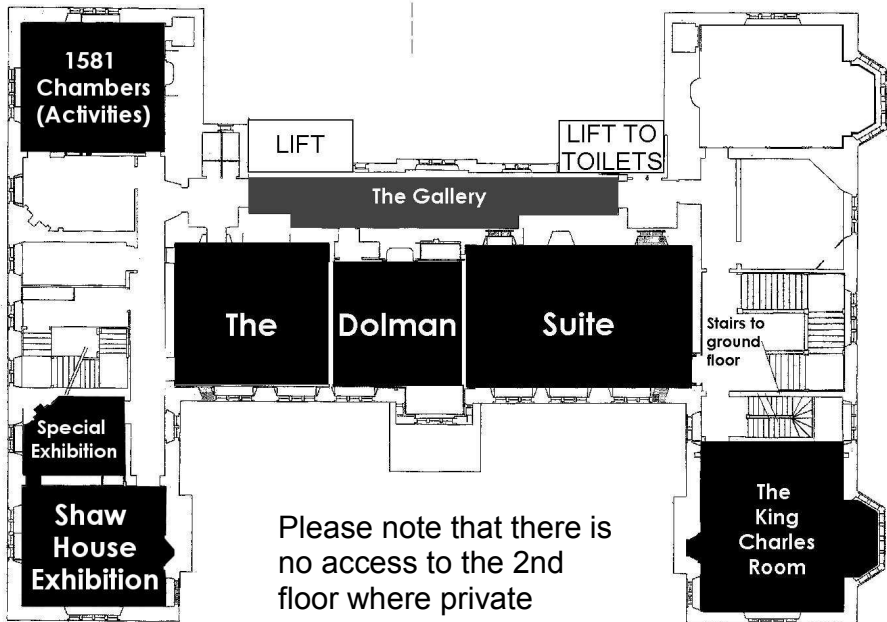
Although the Elizabethan bakehouse is one of the very special features of Shaw House, its location below the café makes it impossible to open to visitors. Its discovery during the restoration meant that it was too late for major alterations to the plans but the scheme for the kitchen floor was changed to preserve and protect the bakehouse. There are large graphic panels in the kitchen, which include a photograph of the bakehouse and a reconstruction of it being used.





Ground Floor

Driveway



Please note that there is no access to the 2nd floor where private offices are located.

First Floor

What is there to see?

The Great Hall - Traditionally the first point of entry for visitors, its size would have emphasised the status of the house. Until the late 17th century, it rose to the height of two floors.

Chandos Dining Room (only open on some days) – Used by the Duke as his dining room from 1730s. The reproduction Chinese wallpaper is a close match for the decorative scheme installed at this time.

East Stair - Part of the late 17th century work. The decorative cornice was added in the early 20th century, but the plasterwork motifs on the ceiling are thought to be a century earlier.

King Charles Room - The setting of Shaw House's most infamous story, it is said that a musket ball was fired through the window narrowly missing King Charles I. A plaque dating back to 1759 can be seen on the wall showing the area where the musket ball is said to have hit the panelling.

Dolman Suite - This suite was built in the late 17th century, within the space that was formerly the second storey of the Hall. It was the State Apartment for Queen Anne in 1703.

North Gallery - Built c.1850 to improve access. The paneling was originally used in the former Long Gallery on the second floor. Can you spot the graffiti?

Shaw House Exhibition - Here you can explore the history of Shaw House and its recent restoration, whilst finding out about the people who have lived here across four centuries. On display are some of the treasures from its past.

Special Exhibition - Shaw before the House. An exhibition exploring the archaeological past of the landscape around Shaw House. Focusing on how we know, thanks to archaeologists, who and what was once here.



Useful Information

See the floor plan inside this leaflet for locations.

Our **Café**, on the ground floor, serves hot and cold drinks, snacks and ice creams (in the Summer). Highchairs are available.

The **Gift Shop**, on the ground floor has a selection of souvenirs, toys and books.

Public toilets are located in the basement. You can use the east lift in the north corridor to access them. Baby changing facilities are located in the men's and women's accessible toilets in the basement.

Photography is permitted in the House and grounds, providing that it does not disrupt the enjoyment or safety of other visitors. If you wish to take photographs for commercial use or publication please speak to a member of staff.

Please do not leave valuables in your car. We cannot accept any liability for damage to or theft from your property on this site.

Please switch mobile phones off when you are inside the House.

Young Visitors Activities

Shaw House is very child friendly and young people are very welcome.

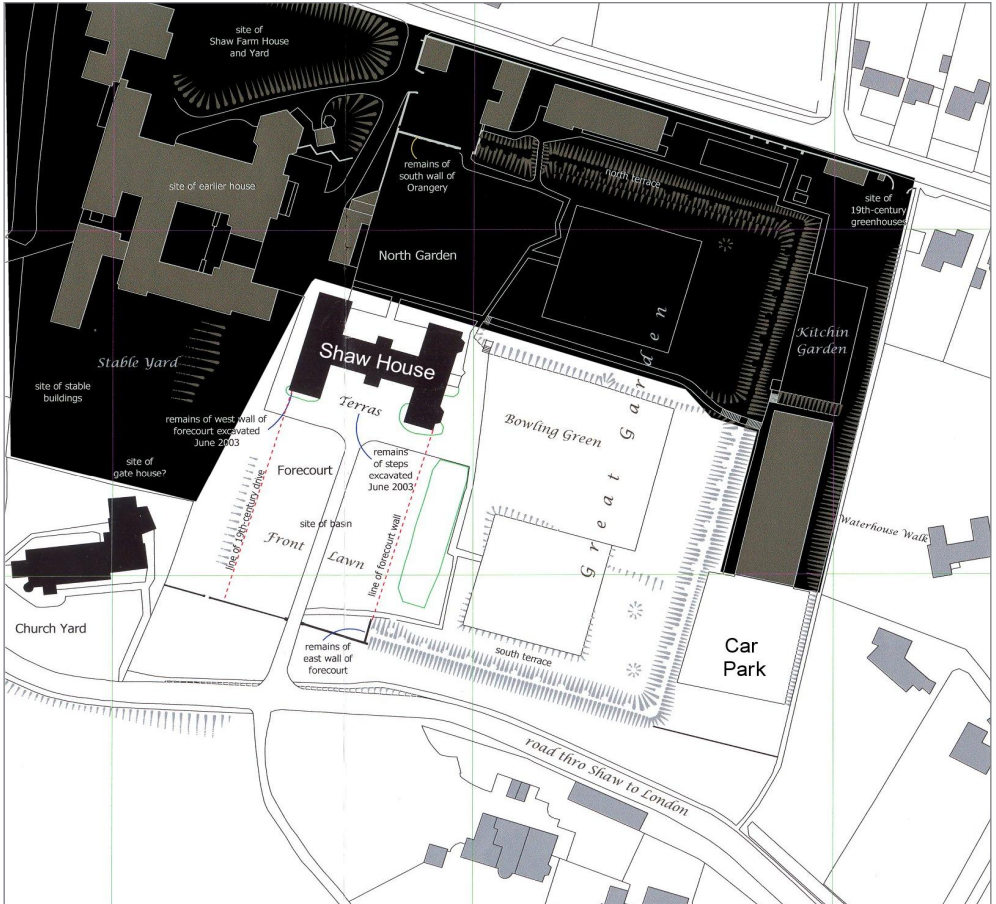
In the 1581 Chambers there are activities for you to do as a family along with Wheelie-Do activities around the House. Or pick up one of our family trail packs from reception.

We ask you not to bring prams/buggies into the house to protect the historic fabric. Please leave them in the buggy park outside. Hip seats are available from Reception.

Please supervise your children at all times and be aware of the possible risks, particularly staircases and lifts.



Grounds Map



Relax, explore or play

Beyond the walls of the House lay the beautiful Orangery and Great Lawns within 15 hectares of Grade II listed grounds.

The grounds have retained elements of the historic lost gardens with some of the trees dating back to 1583 and earthworks from the 1630's. Phase II of restoration has seen the front of the House returned to lawn and work has started in the area of the old Kitchen Garden, where we have a new grassed amphitheatre soon to be completed with raised beds for community use.

You are welcome to enjoy the grounds, picnic and have fun playing with our garden games.