

Despite its timeless elegance, The Manor House was built in the second half of the 19th century. Charles Hampton Weeks, a master at Charterhouse had it built for himself, his sisters and his own family – most probably in the 1890s.

It is not clear whether he used it to house the boys of his house before the school built its own accommodation. The estate then covered twenty-eight and a half acres and included another house, Kelstone, which can be seen from the front door as well as a number of cottages, a laundry and cattle shed towards Farncombe.

The house seems much older than it really is because of the skilful way in which the Victorians blended in fixtures and fittings obtained from properties, which had been demolished or renovated. Such renovation was a favourite pastime in these days.

Examples include:

- The ceiling, fireplace and panelling in the entrance hall, taken from a house in Yarmouth Road
- The Sussex marble mantle of the fireplace in the entrance hall from Arundel Castle
- The beautiful white marble fireplace in the Deming Room, also from Arundel Castle
- The panelling and book cases in the Deming Room, brought from Brussels
- The dark oak panelling in the old Dining Room from a house in Wetheringsett in Suffolk
- Some of the main staircase is taken from 'an ancient house' in Godalming – said to have been on the site of Boots the Chemist. The rest of the staircase was copied by local craftsmen. Some of the wood may have come from an old ship.

In fairness, the builders did not obtain everything in this way – the plastering in the dining room was fashioned by European craftsmen; specially made Wedgwood tiles once decorated one of the bathrooms, while some of the old fireplaces still bear fine Delft tiles – the slate trims and brick floor of the wine cellar speak of attention to detail seldom seen today.

The house eventually passed to the Crisp family, probably in 1906. It was now complete with the Clock House providing two garages (heated of course), stables, tack room and a chauffeur's flat. A range of greenhouses and a summerhouse had also been built. The family stayed in the house until the death of the head of the family – F A Crisp in 1922. These were, by all accounts, very happy years. The Crisp's had five daughters and they were well liked by the local community. It is said that the family made its fortune in banking and patent medicines – this was as well since as many as 15 gardeners were employed to manage the grounds. The family made regular trips 'abroad' travelling via Tilbury – one of the gardeners was required to transport the luggage to and from the docks at the beginning and the end of each trip. On Sundays, the Crisps would entertain a few boys from Charterhouse and girls from Priorsfield School to tea. Since the gardens were said to be stocked with exotic fruits, this must have been a rare treat for the pupils. It is said that the Prince of Wales came to the house on a number of occasions, much to the great delight of the servants who would peep over the staircase for a glimpse of the



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royal visitor. As a fellow of the Society of Antiquarians, Mr Crisp had a substantial museum, which was housed in a large room on the second floor.

The history of the house after the Crisp's executors had sold it is uncertain. Some say it was used as a school once more. Even the happenings of the early years of the war are uncertain – the Canadian Army may have used it as an Officers' Mess.

Later in the war, events are more certain. The pre-clinical students of St Thomas Hospital Medical School were evacuated to Godalming from London.

The medical students were taught chemistry, physics and biology in Charterhouse School, while anatomical dissections were done in a shed behind the Clock House, which housed the physiology laboratory and academic offices. The Warden was a gynaecologist with a flourishing practice in London. One of his students, now a consultant psychiatrist, claims that he caused a public outcry when he delivered a baby chimpanzee called 'Jubilee' – it was felt that his services could be better directed to the needs of the suffering womanhood.

At the end of the war St Thomas retained use of the house as a preliminary training school for student nurses. The games room was a classroom, the 'sports hall' near the main house was a mock ward complete with beds and dummy patients, while the veranda outside the Deming Room was enclosed for use as a chapel. It is said that during the winter of 1947, snow drifted to the level of the first floor of the Clock House on the East Side – nobody travelled very far for a few days.

In the early 70s it was agreed that the University of Surrey should take over The Manor House as a Hall of Residence. The annual beer festivals were legendary in the University and the local community. The last one was held in 1983, and it is commemorated in an oil painting commissioned by former residents for the University. The Manor House bar was also legendary – good ale, good conversation and, according to totally unfounded rumours, liberal opening times ...

The need to sell The Manor House caused a great deal of anguish. Like so many of the residents my wife and I stayed there for little more than a year. The sad year before closure we came to know the house and grounds and their abundant wildlife as old friends and we had our share of adventures. Enjoy your visit to The Manor House, if time allows look for the traces of former years; iron fences, sandstone walls and garden ornaments, ashes from countless coal fires, the foundations of the summerhouse, the fragments of glass from the greenhouse – said to have been broken in a spectacular act of vandalism by a disgruntled employee ...

Or from the garden slope look across to what William Cobbett called the most beautiful place in England. The sight and sounds change with the hour and the season. Ghosts? The story of the bomb disposal expert killed in the war is said to be a modern legend. A builder was killed in a fall while maintaining the roof – who can say. As one of the few people who have walked the empty house alone at the dead of night – I'm not saying.

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What happened next ...

Quest Worldwide Consulting Ltd bought The Manor House in April 1993. It had been empty for two years and was very run down. The previous owners had been a group of small businesses which went bankrupt. At one time they had 11 businesses running in the building and had divided the upper two floors into offices with aluminum dividers – it looked terrible.

Before that group, a company called Comsoft was here for ten years or so running IT training programmes (they also went bankrupt, so we hoped it wasn't a pattern). They had a big mainframe in the basement and training workstations in all the main rooms.

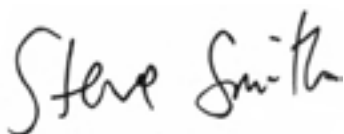
Quest Worldwide Colleges was formed when we bought The Manor House. We had several phases of refurbishment. First we made it habitable and just ran the consulting business from what is now Porter Room. Then we built the upstairs bedrooms, allowing us to bring clients for residential workshops and training. We invested in a range of open programmes and launched the service and the centre at a grand opening in April 1995. We gradually pulled back from open programmes and reverted to bringing our own clients in and selling the available space to external clients.

This evolved as we built the staff levels up to a full conference service which we then expanded further in 2000 with the new bedrooms and office wing. In January 2000, the new wing was finished comprising of 18 ensuite bedrooms, gymnasium and saunas. We were also the winner of Civic Design Awards 2000 and Highly Commended in Waverley Design Awards 2001.

Now – A dedicated conference and training centre where the traditions of hospitality, comfort and friendliness are blended with first class hotel facilities to produce a unique, professional business environment.

The latest phase that was completed at the end of 2008 was converting the previously unused basement area into a creative working space called the de Bono Room and moving the ground floor toilets to the basement.

August 2009 saw the completion of an enlarged bar, 'Smiths bar & lounge' giving our guests a stylish social area in which to relax and network with friends and colleagues.



Dr Steve Smith
Chairman of Quest Worldwide