

Foxhill House

Fox Hill (as it was then called) was built in 1868 by Alfred Waterhouse for his own occupation. It is the only one of the three houses that he built for himself to survive. The house, with grounds of twenty acres, was built on a portion of the Whiteknights estate belonging to Waterhouse's father. It was one of six houses on the estate and covenants precluded further development. As a result the houses on Whiteknights were maintained for many years as country residences.

Alfred Waterhouse and his family did not live in Fox Hill for long. [In 1878, he purchased the manor of Yattendon and built his final house for himself.] Subsequent owners included the then Liberal MP for Reading, Sir Rufus Isaacs KC, who subsequently became the 1st Marquess of Reading, Lord Chief Justice (1913-20) and Viceroy of India (1921-26). He sold the house to Hugo Hirst founder, managing director and chairman of GEC who later became Lord Hirst of Witton. In the mid fifties Lord Hirst's daughter, Mrs Leslie Gamage, sold the house to the University of Reading. The house continued to be let as a private dwelling until 1969 when it became an annex to Windsor Hall. Foxhill (as it had become) was refurbished to accommodate about 25 students, with up to four students sharing the spacious rooms. A further refurbishment in 1986 included converting the stable block into accommodation. However, by 1999 it became clear the building was not suitable as a hall of residence and it was closed. The University decided to convert Foxhill once again, this time into office and teaching accommodation for the School of Law. The School moved into a refurbished Foxhill in December 2004. Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, officially opened Foxhill in 2005. In 2009 a further five room ground floor extension was built. This was opened by Mr Saul Lehrfreund after a degree ceremony where he was awarded an honorary LLD by the University.

Foxhill was described in an auctioneer's advertisement in 1890 as a "Moderately Sized Gothic Mansion" with "first class stabling, a coachman's and gardener's cottages and a small farmery". (It also stated that London could be reached in less than an hour). The exterior of Foxhill has been altered very little over the years. In the 2003 refurbishment three new offices were added linking the main house to the stable block and the conservatory was replaced to provide two large teaching rooms with picture windows. These, and the 2009 extension, are the only external alterations since 1868. Internally alterations were made in the early part of the last century and when it was converted into a hall of residence. Some of the later internal alterations were reversed in the 2003 refurbishment.

Although, sadly, the Turkish baths in the basement no longer exist, many of the original features remain: the traceried windows to the main staircase, the window set into the mantelpiece in G02, the staircase with carved panels and moulded handrails and two large ornate fireplaces. The views over the lake are similar to those enjoyed when the house was first built. The Friends of the University and the accountancy firm PricewaterhouseCoopers generously contributed to the furnishing and planting of the old stable yard, now known as the Waterhouse Courtyard.

In 1983 Foxhill was listed as a building of 'special architectural or historic interest Grade II. In 2000 it was reclassified as a Grade II* building. In 2007 Wokingham District Council gave the University a conservation award for its work in restoring Foxhill

The [Waterhouse Collection](#) consisting of manuscripts and books written by or related to the Waterhouse family is part of the University's special collection.

Bibliography: Pevsner Nikolaus, *The Buildings of England, Berkshire* (1966)