

A brief history of Leigh Court at Abbots Leigh

The original Leigh Court was a Tudor mansion built by Sir George Norton of Bristol in 1558. It was demolished around 1812 after the estate, comprising of some 250 acres, was sold to Sir Philip John Miles in 1811.

Philip Miles was a Bristol ship owner, sugar baron and banker. He was immensely rich and was Bristol's first recorded millionaire. Following various take-overs and mergers, Mile's Bank is now part of the Nat West Group.

Miles commissioned the architect, Thomas Hopper, to build the present Leigh Court in 1814, with Humphrey Repton originally landscaping the grounds.

Externally the architectural style of Leigh Court is Palladian and built of Bath stone. The interior style is Greek Revival and decorated in impressive 19th century décor, with many of the original features still intact.

The Great Hall with its magnificent double staircase still houses the original unique pipe organ built by Flight and Robson of London. As well as being played manually, it could originally be set to play the overture and a duet (Ah Perdona) from Mozart's Clemenza di Tito. The pipe organ has been restored over the last few years and is still played today.

Originally the mansion housed an impressive collection of over forty paintings including many classic old masters -Titian, Poussin, Michelangelo, Raphael, Rubens and Vandyke. The public could obtain a ticket from Mile's Bank in Queens Square in the centre of Bristol, to view the paintings here on a Thursday afternoon. The collection of paintings was sold between 1884 and 1898.

Philip Miles died in 1845 leaving Leigh Court to his eldest son. The house remained in the Miles family until 1915 when it was sold to Rev. Burden of Clevedon Hall. It was to become an institution for "Persons Requiring Care and Protection". The NHS accepted management of Leigh Court hospital from 1957 until 1985.

In 1988 Leigh Court was sold to a private company and with successive owners the house has been sympathetically converted for use as office accommodation, conference and meeting rooms. Retaining many of its original features, the house is now restored to its former splendour, with an ongoing programme of repair & maintenance

In 2004 Business West assumed ownership of the Estate, operating their many business activities from their new head office. Conference and Banqueting facilities, together with fully serviced off ice accommodation ensures the estate remains a vibrant business hub within tranquil surrounding.

The two acre walled garden on the estate is home to a local food growing project of organic fruit and vegetables, some of which is sold at the Bristol's Farmers' Market. The remainder provides fresh, local produce as a box scheme for customers in the greater Bristol Area.

Leigh Court Events

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