Abbey House

Malmesbury • Wiltshire
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M4 (J17) 6 miles • Tetbury 6 miles • Kemble Mainline Rail Station 8 miles
Chippenham 10 miles • Cirencester 12 miles • Bath 26 miles • Bristol town centre 30 miles
Bristol Airport 37 miles • Heathrow Airport 82 miles
(All mileages are approximate)

Set in England’s Oldest Borough,
a Historic House with World Famous Gardens

ACCOMMODATION

Ground Floor: Reception hall • Drawing room • Library • Kitchen/breakfast room
Secondary kitchen • Studio • Utility • Belvedere

Lower Ground Floor: Abbots hall • Games room with wine store • Pantry • Cloakroom with 2 WC’s

First Floor: Master bedroom • 4 guest bedrooms • Living room/kitchenette • Family bathroom
Cloakroom • Second bathroom (not completed)

Second Floor: 9 bedrooms • Shower room • Kitchenette • WC

Outside: Exceptional gardens and grounds including formal gardens, river gardens, herb garden,
plentiful herbaceous borders and fish ponds

In all about 1.8 hectares (4.5 acres)
SITUATION

Abbey House is located in the ancient town of Malmesbury, reputed to be England’s oldest borough, and set adjacent to Medieval Malmesbury Abbey. The town offers an excellent range of everyday facilities, including a new Waitrose store, as well as a number of pubs and restaurants. Other local centres include Tetbury, Cirencester and Chippenham whilst more specialist shops and cultural activities can be found in Bath and Bristol. The area is reputed for its choice of highly regarded schools which includes established private schools such as Westonbirt, Beaudesert Park, Rosehill, St Marys Calne, Marlborough College and those in Bath and Cheltenham.

Recreational and sporting facilities in the area include racing at Cheltenham, Bath and Chepstow, polo at Cirencester Park and Westonbirt, eventing at Badminton and Gatcombe, golf at Castle Coombe, Chippenham, Bowood, Westonbirt and Cirencester and water sports at The Cotswold Water Park. In addition nearby places of interest include Westonbirt Arboretum, the National Trust properties at Lacock and Dyrham Park, Bowood House and the historic village of Castle Coombe. The property is also well placed for the commuter being accessible to both Junctions 16 and 17 of the M4 which provides fast access to the East and West. There are regular main line train services from Kemble, Chippenham and Swindon to London Paddington taking just over 60 minutes.

Abbey House was once part of the Benedictine Monastery founded around the end of the 7th Century. Abbey House itself is Grade I listed and dates from the mid 16th Century, built on 13th Century foundations, with some evidence of a substantial house on the site as early as the 11th Century. The house has been extensively renovated and extended over time, particularly in Tudor times.

Athelstan, the first king of all England and Alfred the Great’s grandson (reigned between AD925 and AD939), died in AD939 at the height of his powers, and was buried in Malmesbury Abbey. His bones were lost but he is commemorated by an empty fifteenth-century tomb. William of Malmesbury, however, writes 200 years later that Athelstan’s body was removed from the Abbey and placed in the Abbot’s garden (Abbey House garden) to avoid desecration but this is unproven.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539, William Stumpe acquired the remains of the Monastery from Henry VIII and by about 1542 had set about building Abbey House on the existing 13th Century foundations of one of the former Monastery buildings (possibly the Abbot’s House). The house was handed down through the Stumpe family and by the time of the English Civil War had passed to the Ivy family through marriage.

The house remained in private hands and was eventually bought, at the beginning of the 20th Century, by Captain Elliott Scott McKirdy who enlarged the house, adding a nursery wing and servants’ quarters whilst retaining the same exterior style.

The house was bought in 1968 by The Deaconness Community of St Andrew, who ran the property as a base for parish ministry and as a home for elderly Sisters and Guests until 1990. In 1994 the house was acquired by the present owners, who set about transforming the grounds and opened the gardens to the public in 1998.

**DESCRIPTION**

Abbey House is a late Tudor house situated in the heart of Malmesbury, tucked away behind the Market Cross and adjacent to the Abbey. It overlooks the River Avon to the north and surrounding the house are the wonderful gardens and grounds which create a remarkable and private setting.

The house is Grade I listed and predominantly built of stone under render with a stone slate cross-gable roof. The principle elevation has gables with roll top coping and ball finials to the outer wings. The house is roughly a horseshoe shape with a more modern extension extending to the eastern side.

Internally the house provides intriguing accommodation together with features one would expect of a property of such age. These include stone mullion windows, exposed stonework, impressive fireplaces, fine solid wood doors and a wonderful oak main staircase with feature carved newels. There is also a 16th Century solid oak winder staircase.
 ACCOMMODATION

The house is steeped in history offering complete individuality, character and charm as well as generous accommodation. All of the principle rooms enjoy the spectacle of the gardens.

Ground Floor

The rooms are laid out to include a splendid grand reception hall off which rises the principle staircase. Adjacent is the library (at one time two rooms), a splendid entertaining room with an array of finely carved bookshelves. From here a door leads into a side porch which at one time was used as the main entrance.

On the opposite side of the reception hall is the drawing room and of particular historical note is the over mantel with strapwork and caryatids above which is the coat of arms of the Ivy family. Close by is the generous kitchen/breakfast room which includes a large feature stone fireplace (currently not in use), believed to date back to pre 1260 and part re-built.

Doorways from the kitchen lead to the studio which includes a study and domestic office space. Onwards from the studio and extending off the eastern side of the house is the Belvedere, which is used in connection with garden visitors where refreshments are served from a second kitchen. This wonderful light and airy space enjoys bi-folding doors opening up to a large raised decked terrace with a glass balustrade. It is also used for wedding receptions, being a short stroll from the Abbey, and indeed the whole property can be used in connection with wedding parties.

Lower Ground Floor

On the lower ground floor of Abbey House is the oldest room in the house known as the Abbots Hall, which is believed to have been built by Abbott William Colerne between 1260-1296 and is half the size of what would have been the original ‘Great Hall’. It features springs of an early English rib vault and octagonal columns.

The lower ground floor also includes a cloakroom area with two WC’s, a games room, wine store and pantry with cold slabs.

First Floor

The first floor provides five bedrooms, all of which are a good size, in fact the bedroom in the west wing was in fact three rooms which have been opened up to form one large room. There is a family bathroom and further bathroom which has not been completed. A living room/kitchen creates the opportunity of a self contained suite. An independent staircase leads to a private roof terrace.

Second Floor

On the second floor is what the current owners refer to as the ‘bridal suite’ for wedding parties. It includes two bedrooms, one of which is known as the ‘bridal’ bedroom, kitchenette and shower room.

The winder staircase leads to four further double bedrooms with a connecting door from one to the ‘bridal suite’, and three additional attic rooms are accessed from a further independent staircase.
Abbey House

Gross internal area (approx): -
12,637 sq ft / 1,174 sq m

For identification only. Not to scale.
Complimenting the house is a magnificent, Michelin star English garden, extending to about 3.8 acres (excluding the Cloister Garden), which is the work of the present owners, who with much flair have created a garden which has achieved international acclaim. Styling themselves as 'The Naked Gardeners', the house owners have brought life and colour back to the property, and the business element enables the public to enjoy the fruits of their labour which in turn has boosted the economy of the town.

To the front of the house is a level garden incorporating an upper lawn surrounded by herbaceous borders, a knot garden in the shape of a Celtic cross (influenced by St Martin's Cross on Iona) and the Lady Chapel walk. Yew hedges compartmentalise the upper lawns, adding privacy to the gardens and achieving a dramatic sense of scale. Further yew hedges 'replace' other historic walls and continue the division of the garden.

The eastern garden is dominated by the circular herb garden, extending to about 100 feet in diameter with a uniform pattern of paths. Raised oak beds contain a collection of herbs, centred around a fish pond with a fountain. A circular colonnade of fruit cordons separate the area from the herbaceous borders, serpentine bed, a laburnum tunnel which is under planted with a succession of seasonal bulbs, and stew pond.

Terraced wooded paths, including many specimen trees, lead down to the more natural river gardens with monastic fish ponds, waterfalls, mill races and a bridge over the River Avon.

Other features include a two hundred year old Mulberry tree, a Monks Head of yew, yew sentinels leading up to a Saxon archway, stepping stones across the river to the fernery and over 2,000 roses.

As one would expect, the garden has been designed for all seasons. The borders are densely planted to ensure dramatic impact with a kaleidoscope of seasonal colours.

Abbey House grounds also include The Cloister Garden (0.7 acres), located to the west of the main drive which is let to Malmesbury Town Council for use of the land as a 'town garden' only under a 100 lease, dated 30 July 1979.
Abbey House Gardens
In the heart of Malmesbury
King Athelstan (grandson of Alfred the Great and first King of All England) was buried in Malmesbury Abbey to be close to his saintly kinsman St Aldhelm but was exhumed by the monks for fear of relic hunters and secretly reburied in the Abbots Garden.

Deed of sale between Henry VIII & William Stumpe builder of Late Tudor Abbey House
The 'Birds Eye View' of Malmesbury painted in 1667 at the end of the Civil War. Abbey House was used as the Governors Residence by both Roundheads & Cavaliers during the war.
View of Abbey House and the Abbey Church sketched by JW Turner
AGENT’S NOTE

Abby House has the benefit of a premises license for a range of activities. Planning permission was granted in November 1995 for alterations and refurbishment of the house. The current owners have implemented some of the consented changes but yet to be completed is a spiral staircase from the ground floor inner entrance hall down to the lower ground floor games room and a further bathroom to the second floor by utilising some of the floor space in bedroom 8.

The current owners have planning permission to open the gardens to the general public but this permission is personal to them. Planning permission would therefore be required should the new owners wish to open the gardens to the general public.

SERVICES

Mains water, mains electricity, mains drainage. Oil fired central heating. The vendor informs us that a gas main extends along the drive to a meter but it has not been connected to the house.

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FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Only those mentioned in these sales particulars are included in the sale. All others such as curtains, carpets, light fittings, garden ornaments etc are specifically excluded but may be available by separate negotiation.

DIRECTIONS (SN16 9AS)

From the M4, exit at J17 and head north following signs towards Cirencester on the A429. Continue on the A429 for approximately 5 miles, passing through Corston and continuing on to Malmesbury. At the first roundabout (if you reach the roundabout at the water tower and the BP Garage you have gone too far), take the first exit (High Street) in to Malmesbury, proceed for just under ½ mile and on reaching the Market Cross go straight ahead, past The Whole Hog on the left, and the double gates to Abbey House will be found ahead of you.

VIEWINGS

Strictly by appointment with the agents Strutt & Parker on 01285 653101 or Country Department 020 7629 7282.