

Aston Martin Owners' Club, Oxfordshire
Completion Date 2001
Contract Value £0.5m
Client Aston Martin Owners' Club /
Aston Martin Heritage Trust

This 14th century, Grade II* Listed barn restoration accommodates the Aston Martin Owners' Club new headquarters, as well as a museum and archive for the Aston Martin Heritage Trust. After extensive searching for a new headquarters building, the Owners' Club acquired this mediaeval Manorial barn (built circa 1350) in Drayton St Leonard, listed by English Heritage as one of the hundred most important buildings at risk.

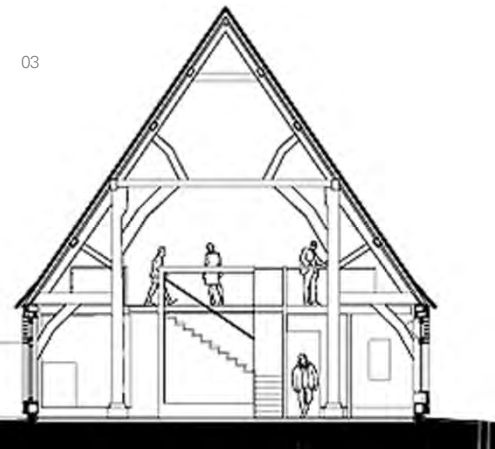
Considered to be one of the most important remaining structures of its type in the country, a sensitive approach was required towards conserving the existing building fabric, with a new extension and contemporary materials carefully incorporated alongside the retained timber exterior and interior spaces.

A survey concluded that apart from some rotting due to rainwater penetration, structurally the main building was sound. The outer envelope, however, was in a poor state of disrepair; much of the original elm cladding had rotted and been replaced by pine and many of the roof tiles were missing or damaged. As good elm was hard to find after the ravages of Dutch elm disease in the 1970s and 1980s, it was decided that traditional green English Oak would be the best

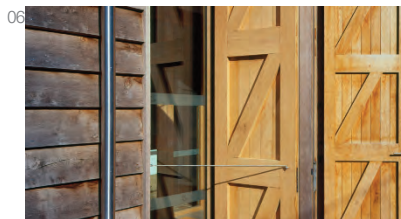
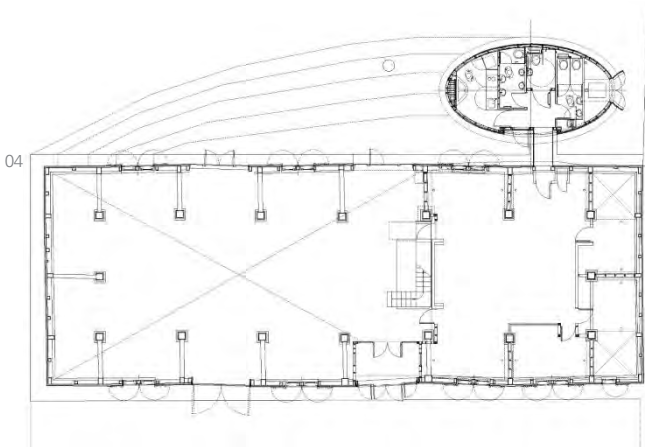
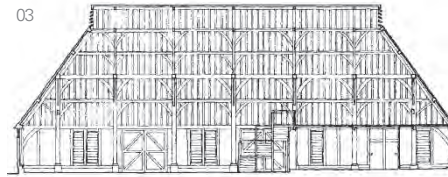
material with which to replace the rotted sections.

As oak is heavy, yet malleable when green, this allowed for the cutting of the complex structural joints that are a feature of the mediaeval carpenter's work, whilst becoming dense and strong as it dries out and matures, as well as being much more resistant to fire. The huge roof is supported by two lines of central posts nearly half a metre square, which stand on thick oak pads on top of square blocks of limestone; the posts are jowled at the top to carry the main horizontal beams.

In addition to the headquarters offices, space needed to be provided for a museum and archive for the then newly-formed Heritage Trust, to house historic racing and development artefacts, memorabilia, photographs, trophies, records and drawings. A modern oak staircase, linking the ground and first floor mezzanine, incorporates a large trophy cabinet inviting guests to view as they ascend. The kitchen and toilet facilities are housed in an outlying, linked pod of contemporary design, as advocated by English Heritage. This oval, hardwood clad service pod is connected to the barn by an all glass link.



01 Museum within barn interior
02 Barn exterior with linked pod
03 Cross-section through barn



The Conservation Officer from South Oxfordshire District Council remained closely involved throughout the restoration on behalf of English Heritage, to ensure the historic fabric was carefully recorded during the dismantling by the Oxford Archaeological Unit. The conservation programme maintained the exterior form and dramatic interior space, whilst the incorporation of modern design and materials affords an exciting juxtaposition of old and new in line with the prestigious and innovative marque.

The project won an RIBA Award and the Downland Design Award in 2002, and a Civic Trust Award in 2003.

- 01 Barn and pod exterior
- 02 Existing barn before restoration
- 03 Elevation
- 04 Ground floor plan
- 05 Trophy cabinet and staircase
- 06 New and traditional materials