

Sugworth Hall and Boot's Folly

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Photograph by Blenheim Park Estates

When Sugworth Hall, at Bradfield Dale, was on the market last year, it was offered in the region of £1.5million. Not a bad price considering the Grade II listed country house is in beautiful Sheffield countryside, and it has a long history.

According to experts, this was once a farmhouse dating to about 1535, later listed in the will and testament of Robert Hawksworth in the 1560s. Passing down the family it eventually belonged to the Gould family and was extended in the late 19th century.



Photograph by Picture Sheffield



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The house was briefly occupied by Alfred Percy Hill, of the firm of J and P Hill, engineers, and later Russian Consul for Sheffield, and by the early 1920s it was owned by Charles Boot (1874-1945), son of Henry Boot, founder of the famous Sheffield construction firm, and notable for creating Pinewood Studios.

It was Charles Boot who made significant alterations and extensions to the house, with a tower and battlements, probably the work of architect Emmanuel Vincent Harris, the man who designed Sheffield City Hall.

The work is said to have taken place around 1930, about the time Vincent Harris was working on Sheffield's new civic building, but based on the architect's workload, it seems more likely the alterations were made between 1926-1927.



Photograph by Blenheim Park Estates

Boot's wife, the splendidly named Bertha Boot, died at Sugworth Hall after a long illness in 1926, giving rise to speculation that an isolated tower, Boot's Folly, built in 1927, about 330 yards to the north, was constructed so that he could see the graveyard at High Bradfield where she was buried.

Another story suggests that Boot's Folly was built to provide work for Sugworth Hall's workmen during the Depression, but more likely it was built as an observation tower for Boot and his guests to view surrounding countryside.

Whatever the reason, Charles Boot remarried five months later, to Kate Hebb, at St Peter's Church in London.

The materials for Boot's Folly, also known as Strines Tower or Sugworth Tower, was reputed to have come from leftover stone when nearby Bents House was built, itself said to have utilised sandstone and gritstone from three demolished farms – Bents House Farm, Pears House Farm and Nether Holes Farm.

Considering that Bents House was built in 1828 for Thomas Makinson, it seems a little fanciful, and if it was built from any surplus stone, the likelihood is that it came from Boot's extension at Sugworth Hall instead.



Photograph by Brian Mosley

Boot's Folly has fared less well. The 45 feet high tower, 20 feet square, once had a furnished wooden panelled room at the top, connected by a spiral staircase, but has sadly become ruinous over time. (The staircase allegedly removed after a cow ascended the steps and became stuck).



Photograph by Brian Mosley