

Ottley Whitehouse Builders

‘If you love old houses, you will love the craftsmanship and work ethic of Ottley Whitehouse Builders.’

The house in Preston St Mary was built in the early 1700’s as two workers cottages. It’s located just outside of the historic town of Lavenham in as quiet and idyllic a village as any old house enthusiast could picture. I know because I am one.

When Mark Whitehouse of Ottley Whitehouse builders purchased the old house in 2010, it was a picture perfect disaster. The previous owners had allowed the house to fall apart around them. Time had been brutal. Severe structural issues had made the house unstable. Both the foundation and roof were in terrible shape and interior damage from years of water, frost and heat penetration had brought the structure near to collapse or even demolition, but Mark saw hope.

I grew up in an old house in Little Baddow in SE England. It was built in the 1760’s. The rough hand hewn timbers used to construct it, had history and character embedded deep within them. Many had evidence of being used previously in earlier structures, or long ago ripped from the guts of a wooden sailing ship. I was always sliding my hands over the notches and across the axe, saw, and adze cut marks, wondering who the craftsmen were who slaved over them. In my mind I wondered which battleship they might have come from.

All this made me really appreciate not only the beauty of old houses but also the craftsmanship and the skills put into

the construction of them by these old time builders. It also caused me to viciously scrutinize the efforts of renovators.

I know people do not buy an old house because it’s a house. They buy because of the history of the house. It may sound like a romantic statement but if you’re reading this, you know exactly what I’m talking about. You feel it in your heart when you walk into an old place and duck under a beam, or notice burn marks on the mantle above the fireplace, made by candles that once lit the room. The age, character and history of the place seeps into your soul and never leaves.

Maintaining that character and historical integrity that every old house has, while bringing in the modern elements during a renovation, is a complicated and delicate balance to achieve successfully.

We have all seen the results from builders and some old house enthusiasts, who have renovated or updated older buildings. Many unfortunately make you cringe. Either they failed to capture the character of age or history of the building, or they removed or covered up the things that make an old house old. This oldness is what makes an old house so attractive to people like us...

Ottley Whitehouse builders impressed me by the lengths they went to in achieving this delicate balance throughout the renovation of the Preston St Mary house, known as ‘Carpenters Cottage’. Why else would you buy an old house if the beams, walls, fireplace and the history that has taken place there throughout the ages, no longer seeps into your core, speaking to you as you walk from room to room.

When I walked through the renovated Carpenters Cottage, I could feel those voices, the history was gripping, it was alive and well and beckoning the newest owners to add to it.

The builders who originally constructed that house in the 1700's would, I believe, be proud of the skill and craftsmanship of Ottley Whitehouse builders.

If you have seen an old house, the one that speaks to you, and folds you up into

the warm arms of history, then you need to talk to Mark Whitehouse.

You can contact Mark by phone or at his website:

www.ottleywhitehouse.co.uk

Mark Whitehouse cell #

Address:

If you love old houses, you will love the craftsmanship and work ethic of Ottley Whitehouse Builders.

They bring the old time building skills and quality craftsmanship back into style.