

# THE CONSERVATION OF TRANSIENCE



Fascinating piece of restoration highlighted by Architecture Week 2004 | June 18 – June 27 Organised and Managed by Arts Council England



Long before upstart trader Nick Leeson put the boot into Barings Bank by secretly running up more than \$1bn of liabilities, financial difficulties had scuttled one of the key assets of the bank's founders.

Grange House, a stately home in Hampshire, degenerated fast after it was sold by the Barings family in 1933. Unloved and abandoned, it was effectively derelict by the early 1970s.

Thirty years later, the estate's dramatic restoration into a summer opera destination has earned it an architecture award.

Originally built as a Greek revival mansion in the mid-17th Century, Grange Park's recent transformation culminated in the conversion and extension of a Grade I listed building into a 500-seat auditorium.

Inspired by the Regency Theatre in Bury St Edmunds – which itself was designed by the original principle architect of Grange Park – the theatre seats are cast-offs from Covent Garden Opera House's own restoration.

The feel of decaying grandeur extends to the ceiling, which architect David Lloyd Jones chose to leave in its crumbling state. As a result, billowing nets hang above the audience to catch falling fragments that might otherwise interrupt a delicate aria.

Illuminated underfoot display boxes, which exhibit pottery and glass found during excavations, help maintain the site's sense of history.



Dining room.

[Link – BBC]