

INIGO



Birdcombe Court

WRAXALL, NORTH SOMERSET

£2,850,000 FREEHOLD

Birdcombe Court is an extraordinary Grade II*-listed medieval manor house set in almost two acres of grounds amid the bucolic north Somerset landscape. Its core is 13th century, with later additions in proceeding centuries all unified and beautifully restored; the result is a singular home that spans almost 5,500 sq ft and embraces countless historic features. The home also has ancillary buildings, including a coach house and a stable block. Despite its blissfully rural position, the house is just a 20-minute drive or a 10-minute train journey from central Bristol, and just an hour and 45 minutes direct from London Paddington.

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Setting the Scene

From first sight, the house has a remarkable presence: the various phases of its construction over the centuries are unified by a roughcast render façade, in turn punctuated by trefoil casement windows, some mullioned, and crowned by pantile roofs of varying pitches. Pevsner records the house as an “astonishing survival”, with the hall and cross passage dating from the 13th century, and the solar wing added to the south in around 1441-42. The earliest documented evidence of the house is from 1331 when the Bishop of Bath and Wells gave permission to give mass in house (it still has its own private chapel).

The entrance’s porch tower’s first and second storeys were built in the 15th century and heightened by two storeys and given an ogce-capped roof in the early 17th century, with the weathervane dating from 1633. A brilliantly contemporary contrast to its medieval core, a glass-fronted two-storey addition at the north of the house allows access from the secondary driveway and parking area. This glazed addition is discretely positioned to the rear of the house and framed around an oak-beamed, open-pitch structure to mirror the original cross hall in the main house.

The Grand Tour

Set just off Tower House Lane, a single-track road leads through meadowlands to Birdcombe Court, positioned on a gentle hillside with southerly views to Backwell Hill in the far distance. Wooden gates open to the primary pea-gravel parking area, and the main original entrance to the house; a secondary driveway continues past the north range of the house to the ancillary buildings and further parking area, discretely sequestered to the north-west of the plot.

The main entrance’s open porch has a rubbed outer arch that is as wide as a carriageway; the interior is four-centred with broad stone mouldings. The porch most likely originally functioned as a porte cochere. It has a tierceron vault resting on head corbels and arms in the heraldic bosses refer to the Courtenays, Percevals and the Gorges and the floor is lined with large flagstones.

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A door to the right leads to a private study, and directly ahead is the entrance to the central galleried triple-height entrance hall, with an open-pitched timber roof soaring above. Pamment tiles line the floor and a vast open fire warms the space, with a large bressummer above. The mezzanine level at the first storey allows upper views, framed with a contemporary glass balustrade. The private chapel lies directly ahead, a contained space complete with the original altar and a stained-glass roof light above, lending an additional ecclesiastical atmosphere.

The open-well staircase lies in the south range of the house – an impressive structure crafted from oak and originally built in 1883 for Clevedon Court; the staircase was installed in 1960 after the west wing of Clevedon Court was demolished. Two reception spaces lie on either side of the staircase, with the westerly open-plan sitting room from the stair hall, with remarkable chamfered beams, deep ochre lime plaster walls and an open fireplace set in an oak surround. A mullioned canted bay window frames views to the south-facing parterre garden.

An additional sitting room faces east, making it a lovely morning room. This room has elegant proportions and was aggrandised in the 18th century in the classical style with wainscotting, dentil and egg-and-dart plaster cornicing, and an eared Carrara marble chimneypiece. A further mullioned canted bay window looks to the immaculate front garden and pleached hornbeams beyond.

The centre of the ground-floor plan is home to a large utility room and secondary kitchen space with a blue electric Aga; there is also a boot area with exterior access adjacent. Discreetly located to the rear of the chapel is a wonderfully private ground-floor bedroom suite, with its own courtyard garden. The en suite bathroom has been cleverly designed with the bathtub positioned beside the floor-to-ceiling glass plate window, allowing views to a small pond; the en suite also has a separate shower enclosure. As part of the home's extensive restoration and consolidation of the spaces within, the house was cleverly laid out so that there are lots of spaces for privacy and hiding away, with bedrooms and reception spaces on all floors.

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In the south wing, the staircase opens to the first-floor drawing room, where the vast ceilings are exposed to the solar roof, with four arch braced collar trusses with two tier wind braces – these have a tracery effect and enclose the 13th-century gable end of the room, with pigeonholes. Walls are limewashed a deep green colour, and a large medieval stone chimneypiece is inset with a brilliantly effective Darby wood burner.

A set of steps ascends from the other side of the stairwell to the primary kitchen area, with an interior tracery timber frame in a trefoil design acting as an open aperture, connecting the drawing room in a contemporary fashion. The kitchen is mainly freestanding, formed around a vast central island with an oak worktop and plank cupboards below. Inset is a double butler sink with a polished brass Perrin and Row crosshead mixer tap. An open dresser lines one wall and the range cooker is by La Cornue. A window seat is set into the canted bay, allowing brilliant views to the paddock opposite.

The mezzanine gallery wraps around the main hall entrance below, leading to the newer contemporary addition and first-floor hallway in the north range. This takes the form of a contemporary glass-fronted addition, with a secondary oak tread staircase leading to the upper floors from this dramatic double-height rear entrance hall. It also gives exterior access to a sheltered outdoor seating area, the secondary parking area and exterior plant room.

There is an en suite bedroom in this part of the house, with the hallway connecting a small reading room, part of the original plan, and leading to the tower's circular stone staircase. The principal bedroom suite is in the east range of the original plan on this floor, discretely sequestered away from the living spaces, with a polished brass bateau bathtub set beside the north window and a spacious en suite shower room lined with black and white marble floor tiles.

The second floor has a large landing space, two bedrooms and a further shower room, with further access via the tower staircase to the upper storeys. The third floor is currently used as a study, and the uppermost storey's room functions as a watch tower and repository of the home's historical documents. Four windows allow views to each aspect, with brilliant views to the surrounding landscape.

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The Great Outdoors

The grounds at Birdcombe Court envelop the house, incorporating a series of garden areas of various designs, and a pig paddock to the north. To the front of the house is a newly instated low stone wall inset with gate piers and an iron gate for a boundary from the primary parking area. The wall here is flanked by banks of pleached hornbeams leading to a lawn with stone pathway that guides towards to the house's main entrance; a flagstone terrace also surrounds the east and south of the house. To the south-east of the lawn is a charming summerhouse with its own seating terrace, inset with leaded windows and crowned with a clay tile roof. To the immediate south of the house, through an archway, is an elegant, enclosed parterre garden.

The secondary driveway leads around the north range of the house to the rear, with a hillside bank along one side of the track comprised of woodland and wildflowers. The driveway leads to a secondary parking area and the ancillary buildings, including a coach house, currently used as a two-storey pottery studio, and the three-bay stable block with garaging. A bank of woodland forms much of the north of the gardens, punctuated with wildflowers dotted on this gentle hillside.

Nearest the ancillary buildings is a further entertaining area set midway up the gentle bankside, with a garden room formed from a Victorian greenhouse, now an outdoor dining room with a terracotta-tiled floor and kitchen area with room for a barbeque. Nearby is a pergola with climbing roses, and a small orchard with apple, pear and fig trees. A potting shed is provided a handy additional space, and a pig paddock is set above here. Deer and buzzards sometimes visit this part of the gardens in addition to much other wildlife, and views to Backwell Hill in the distance are excellent, as are the beautiful sunsets.

Ancillary buildings include a two-storey coach house, now used as a pottery studio, and a three-bay stable block with a pantile pitched roof and further storage. There is also a side store incorporating a wood store and bike shed and the coach house has a convenient EV charging point outside.

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Out and About

Wraxall is a charming village and hamlet on the outskirts of Bristol, though Birdcombe Court is in fact closer to Nailsea to the south, a well-served town with many amenities, including a large branch of Waitrose. The immediate area is surrounded by beautiful countryside and there are splendid wildlife walks through the surrounding landscape.

Bristol city centre can be reached in around 20 minutes' drive. Well-served for cultural activities and annual festivals, Bristol city has a thriving art and music scene; Arncliffe and Spike Island lead a well-regarded programme of contemporary exhibitions and performances. The Watershed, a well-loved institution located along the city centre's harbourside, hosts talks and events alongside its programme of international film screenings.

The broader independent food scene in Bristol is excellent. Notable highlights include Wilson's, an excellent, independently owned bistro on Chandos Road, Redland, co-founded in 2016 by partners Jan Ostle & Mary Wilson, and for pasta, Little Hollows is a few doors down.

The busy seaside town of Clevedon four miles away on the Severn Estuary and has a community cinema, bookshop and enormous marine lake which is filled with seawater from the Bristol Channel every spring tide. It is perfect for year-round cold-water swimming.

Birdcombe Court is close to the Avon cycleway, alighted at nearby Backwell, a stretch of cycle path over 85 miles long which circles Bristol. The house is also near to the Strawberry Line which runs to Axbridge and Festival Way to Bristol, which are both mainly traffic free routes.

There are a host of highly commended schooling options which include primary schools at Wraxall, West Leigh and Kingshill, and secondaries Backwell School and Nailsea School. The Downs School is a respected local independent prep school. Further excellent independent day schools are in Bristol, including Clifton College and Badminton School.

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Transport links are very convenient. Trains run from Nailsea and Backwell station, around a five-minute drive from the house, directly to London Paddington in an hour and 45 minutes, and Bristol Temple Meads in just 10 minutes. Regular buses also run from nearby Clevedon Road into Bristol city centre. Bristol Airport is a convenient 15-minute drive away and access to the national motorway network is via the M5 or the A370.

Council Tax Band: H

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About

Inigo is an estate agency that specialises in selling marvellous historic homes, believing that a beautiful home is a pleasure that never ages. We connect discerning individuals with extraordinary spaces, no matter the price or provenance. Covering urban and rural locations across Britain, our team combines proven experience selling distinctive homes with design and architectural expertise.