

Suttons Manor, London Road, Stapleford Tawney Essex.
Description and analysis of a timber-framed summerhouse.
Surveyed 13 12 2010.



Location

This report details a timber-framed Summerhouse built as an ornamental entrance to a Walled Garden in the southern part of the grounds of Suttons Manor, 175 London Road, Stapleford Tawney, Essex, RM4 1BF or RM4 1SR. Suttons Manor itself is a highly documented Listed building in extensive grounds:

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TQ 59 NW STAPLEFORD TAWNEY LONDON ROAD 7/295 "Suttons" " 20/2/67 GV II House. Now mainly early C19, at present being restored after a recent fire which destroyed the earlier core. Double range building encased in brickwork of c.1815 now plastered, with ashlar lines. Grey slate roof, with projecting eaves and double eaves brackets. Parapeted verges. 2 storeys. 5 window range of small paned vertical sliding sashes in plain surrounds with dentilled reveals. Central 6 panel door, fanlight over with round and triangular lights. Porch with fluted columns, bases and capitals. Two symmetrically placed, plastered chimney stacks. To the right is a 2 storey range with grey slate roof and hipped grey slate bay to ground floor. 3 window range of small paned vertical sliding sashes. 2, six panel doors in plain surrounds with frieze and canopy over. Central plastered chimney stack.

Since the Listing in 1967 the house has undergone several renovations including very lately the conversion into twelve apartments.

The Summerhouse is centred on 31U 305181.97mE, 5726718.21mN (UTM).

Description- External Elevations



The northern elevation under restoration in December 2010.

The Southern Elevation

The southern elevation is the main facade and comprises of a three arched portico constructed in timber to resemble rusticated stonework. The central arch leads right through the building, down three steps into a rear room which accesses the garden. The others lead to a staircase to the east and a cupboard to the west.

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The Romanesque arches are 40in wide and 8ft 6in tall and the pillars are 19.5in wide. The building is 16ft 9in (100in) square. The arch heads are blanked off and a plat band added which corresponds to the ceiling inside. The plat band has been replaced with modern timber incorporating a drip course.

The rustication gives the impression of being applied plates but it is in fact chiselled from 30mm thick planks and boards to give raised fields 8mm deep. It can be seen in the back of the construction that the planks and segments are joined with wrought iron nails and glued in fillets. There are two types of timbers used - those that have planed smooth inner faces and those that are simply riven.

The timber has been stripped of its original paint and given a timber treatment but some layers of paint remain. These appear to be oil based paint and distemper mixed with fine sand to achieve the stone texture required. There are two schemes in light blue and granite grey. The timber is in remarkably good condition and all the features are sharp.

Above the arches is a plain tympanum with two applied vertical timber bands meeting a horizontal band. The tympanum appears entirely modern, constructed of marine ply. There is a thin cornice supported on modillion brackets and the underside of the boarded roof is similarly supported. There are modern plain barge boards above.



Original ashlar block pediments and stone door cills set on a brick plinth. Looking W.

The facade stands on ashlar stone blocks with stone thresholds to the openings which are all set on a buried red brick plinth which is visible in the flanks. The bricks are 60x110x235mm with creased faces, sharp arrises and no frogs or pressure lines. They are set in a thick bed of white lime mortar which has also been used to set the stones.

The roof is battened out with a modern membrane ready to receive the remaining original 12x24in grey slates of which a few were nearby on the ground.

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The western flank is entirely C21st built in 2009.

The Western Elevation.

The western and eastern elevations are entirely modern and consist of 2009 machined softwood studs clad with feather-edged boards. The voids are filled with rockwool and sealed with a membrane. The rear of the building is jettied over the garden wall.

The garden wall is also 2009 and is made from the brick bats salvaged out of the garden from when the wall was demolished to rob the bricks in the 1970's. The only original part that remains is on the SW corner that acted to support the building. Described on the southern elevation.

Whole bricks recovered from the wreckage of the garden wall were red/oranges, 60x110x225mm with creased faces, sharp arrises and no pressure lines. A very few had shallow frogs. There were also some very stout half-round coping bricks 110mm thick.



Brick plinths either side of the Summerhouse. Detail of the soldier course and white mortar.

Down each side of the building to the rear is a low plinth finished with a soldier course of the same bricks and mortar as the foundations. It runs parallel to the back of the building and then returns to meet the foundations approximately where the building steps down inside. It may be the back of the building was originally wider or that this is a revetment to keep the soil away from the timber walls descending to the garden.



The eastern elevation is a reflection of the western one and entirely 2009.

The Western Elevation.

The eastern elevation is entirely a reflection of the western flank and is largely screened by trees.



The southern elevation has a replica window and applied rustication.

The Southern Elevation

The southern elevation is an entirely new construct reusing a replica window that photographic records show was made in September 1998. Very little was left of the rear of the building in November 1997 and it seems to have been rebuilt by the then owners.



November 1997 showing the regency pilaster in-situ and the early basculating window.



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Replica basculating window photographed on 24/09/1998.

The half round window has a central basculating large glass paned casement and there are two segmental side lights. A photograph taken in November 1997 shows the original window left in the back of the derelict building.



The capital of the regency style pilaster and the interior construction showing the fillets

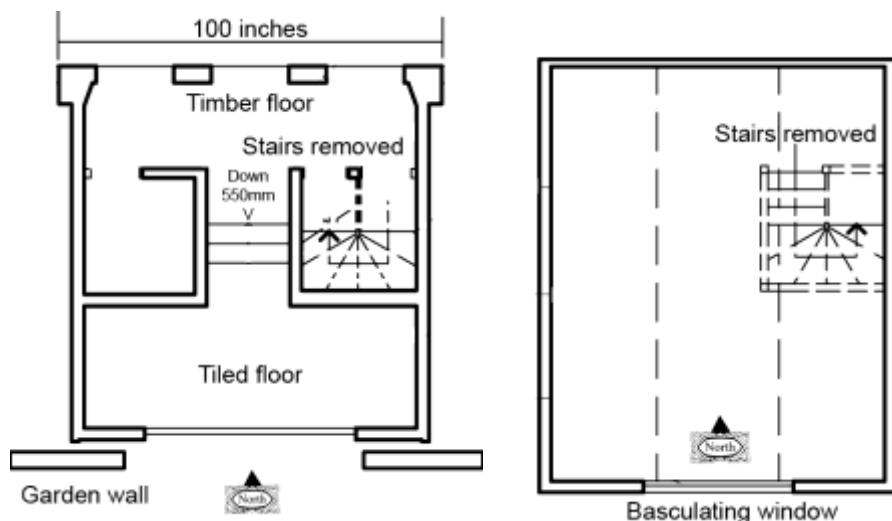
The same photograph also shows that the building was set on two timber pilasters in regency style cladding the ends of the garden wall. One timber pilaster has been salvaged and was on the ground and the westernmost brick remnant has been built into the new wall.



The brick remnant of the garden wall and detail of the penny struck pointing.

The bricks are a different colour and size to the rest from the garden wall. They are dark red/purples 65x105x225mm with smooth faces and sharp arrises. They are set in fine white mortar which has been penny struck. Four timber strakes are built in to receive nails from the timber pilasters.

Description - Internal



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Plans made in 2009 by Ken Judge Associates. Stairs were removed during the survey.



Doulton & Co ceramic floor tiles used in the rear of the building.

Apart from the rear of the facade none of the inside of the building is contemporary having been completely rebuilt in 2009. The floor drops 550mm from the front to the rear via three timber steps from a timber suspended floor to a paved area currently being finished with granite tiles and some earlier 12in textured tiles. These are ceramic and marked 'Doulton and Co' on the edges and probably date to c.1930.

Roof Structure



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The upper floor and roof structure are all dated to 2009 and is a copy of the original below.



The upper floor photographed in November 1997. Roof propped with a plank. Note tie-beam.

The roof structure is a 2009 copy of the original with the exception that an eaves level tie-beam has been omitted. This may have been a later repair. The roof had been propped with a plank to prevent collapse. The paired rafters are collared at ceiling height.

Fixtures and Fittings



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Original phase panelling with heavy section timbers dated 1806. (Overlined).



Second phase panelling from inserted staircase.



Third phase wainscoting dated 1930 and signed.

There is a collection of internal timber panelling which has been retained for restoration and repair. There are three distinct types.

The earliest has heavy section stiles, transoms and muntins 2ins thick with a 1in rebate to take heavy panels faceted on the rear to fit. The outer faces are painted stone grey with distemper which rubs off easily and an oil based paint. Most of the panels are missing but there is one marked JAMES in a 1970's typeface on the back. Below this there are two pencilled signatures or sentences which were unreadable due to the wetness of the timber but they did not appear to be in English. The date 1806 is also written below these.



Lower section of the inserted staircase.

The second set of panelling is associated with an inserted staircase made of thinner 1.25in machined softwood and planed boards. The remains of the lower part of the staircase was also retained although it is beyond reuse. There is an important distinction in the types of nails used to fasten these components together.



Type A cut clasp nail. These were developed at the end of the 18th century. Cut in a water-powered guillotine both faces are burred. The head and point was hand forged. (IMACS User's Guide).

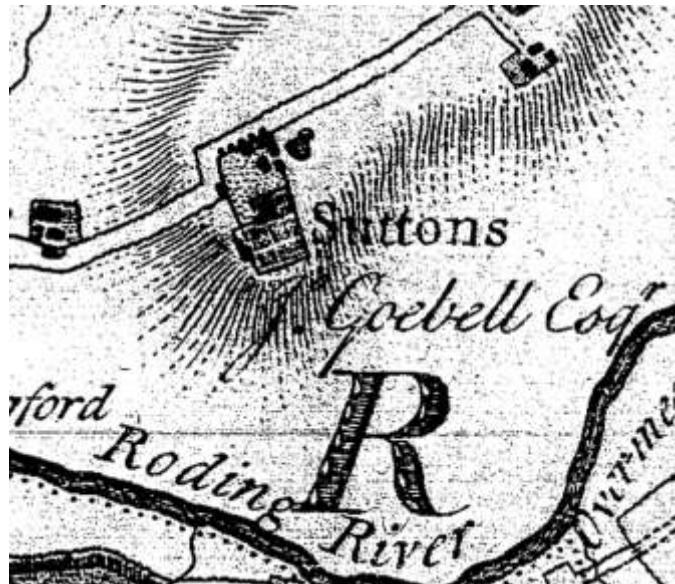


Type B cut clasp nail. The machinery for cutting this type of nail was introduced in 1810. It is identified by having two burred edges on the same face. (IMACS User's Guide).

In the older sections, including the Regency pilaster, the nails are wrought iron, rose headed, square section shanks with sharp points often clenched. The later sections have wrought iron Type B cut clasp nails which were introduced after 1810.

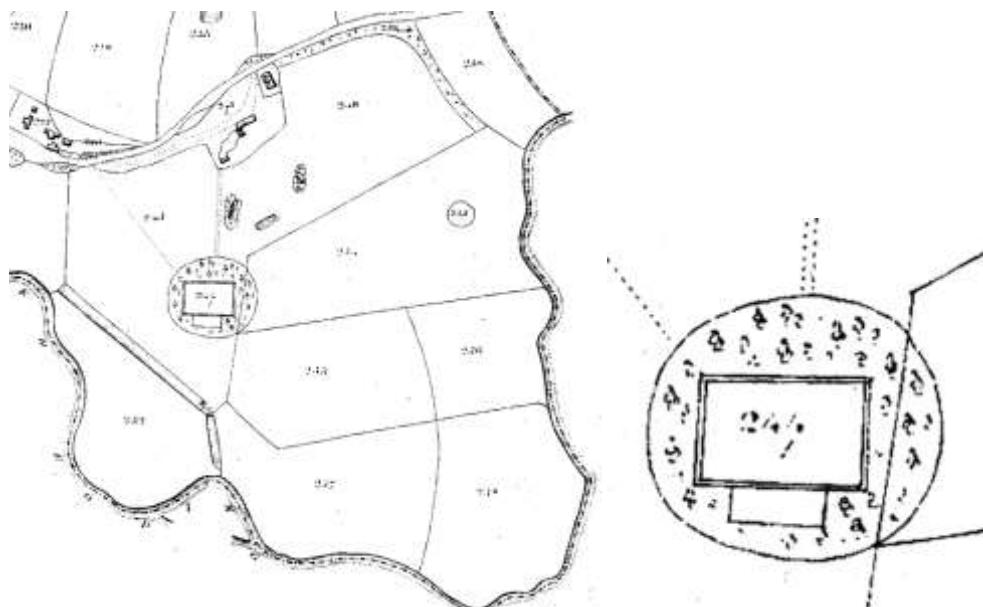
The third phase of panelling in the form of wainscoting was made in December 1930 by H Pewson and W Staines who were kind enough to write it clearly in pencil on the back.

Topographical Survey from Maps



1777 Chapman and Andre's map of Essex.

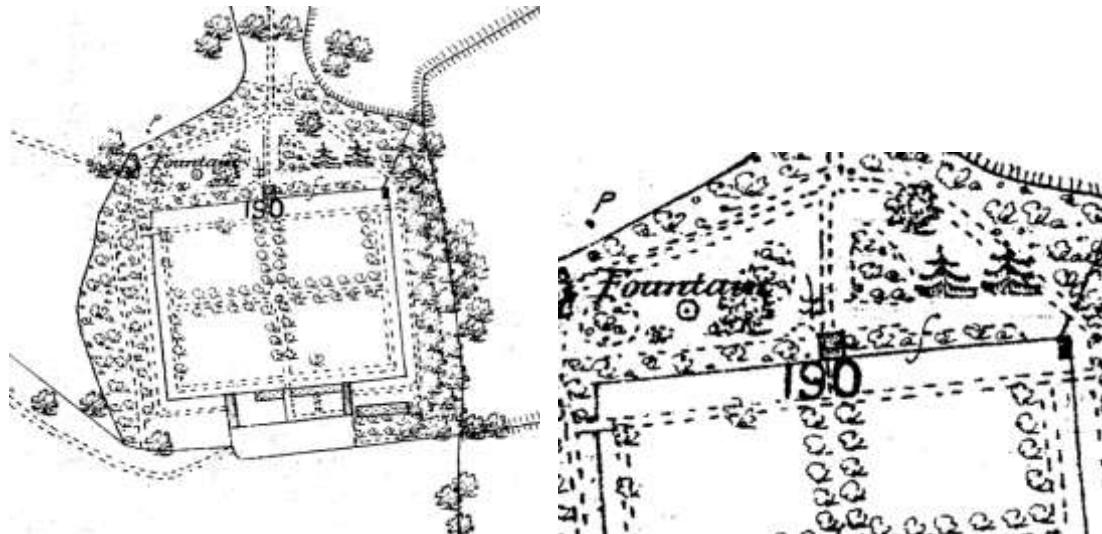
Suttons is clearly depicted under the ownership of J Goebell Esquire. In 1777 the house had a garden directly adjacent to the south. The plantation, walled garden and summerhouse did not exist.



1838 Tithe Map ERO D/CT 331

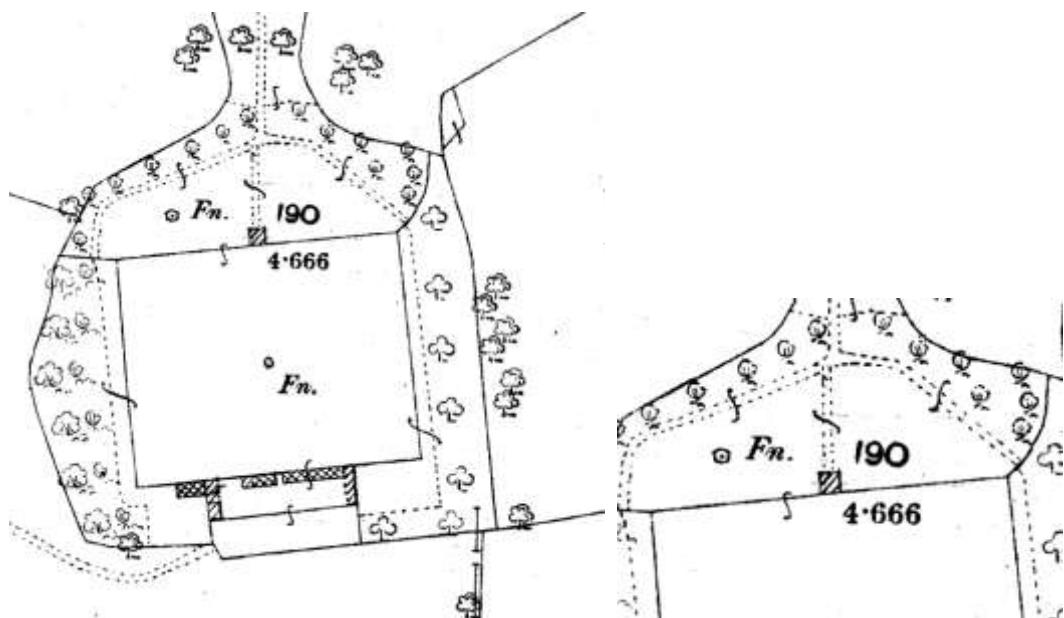
The 1838 Tithe Map shows the plantation, walled garden, greenhouse area to the south but not the Summerhouse. This is not altogether surprising as it also shows no break in the wall to allow entry. At this time the owner was Sir Charles Smith, Baronet and the manor, paddock and shrubbery 243, the pond 242, the garden and plantations 244, the canal 251 and another plantation 255 were occupied by Lady Smith.

Other plots 236 238, 240,254 were occupied by Jonathon Stokes and 252, 253, 256, 257,258 by Forster Charlton. This would account for the unusual division of the circular plantation giving cover and timber rights to more than one occupant.



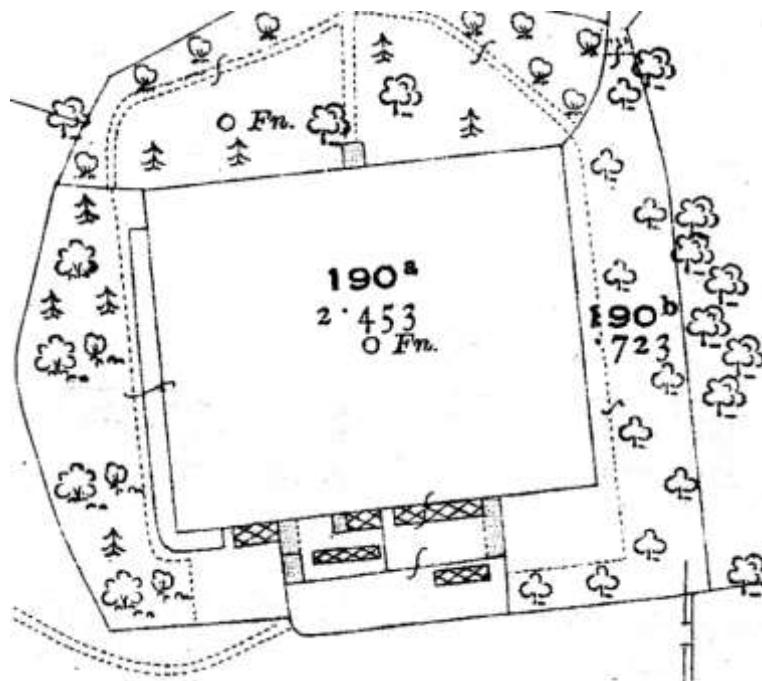
1873 1st Edition Ordnance Survey

In 1873 the Summerhouse is clearly shown with a path passing through it from the house as well as shaded walks all around the walled garden. A fountain is shown. To the south of the garden wall is an extensive greenhouse complex.



1896 2nd edition Ordnance Survey

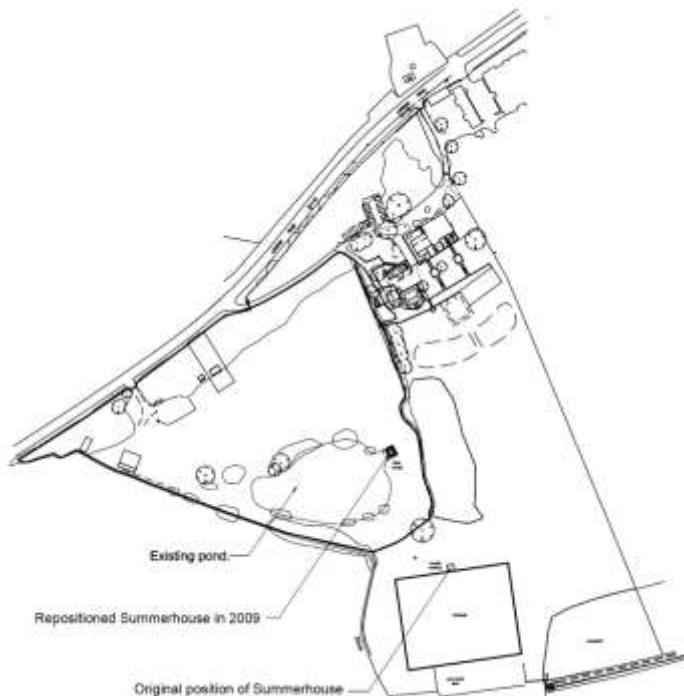
The 2nd Edition OS is less detailed than the first and shows no detail in the garden other than there is now a fountain. The surveyors were required to show all sources of water for the army horses to drink. One of the big greenhouses has been lost - possibly moved to the west.



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1920 3rd Edition (New Series) Ordnance Survey

By 1920 little had changed. There is now a raised brick flowerbed to the west flank of the walled garden and a new greenhouse to the south.



2009 Repositioning of the Summerhouse to the lake. Ken Judge Associates.

In 2009 the Summerhouse was dismantled and re-erected by the Burrows Lake. Only the timber facade was used and the other old timbers were retained. In 2010 the building was lifted by crane and returned to its original position on the same footings.

Historical Photographs



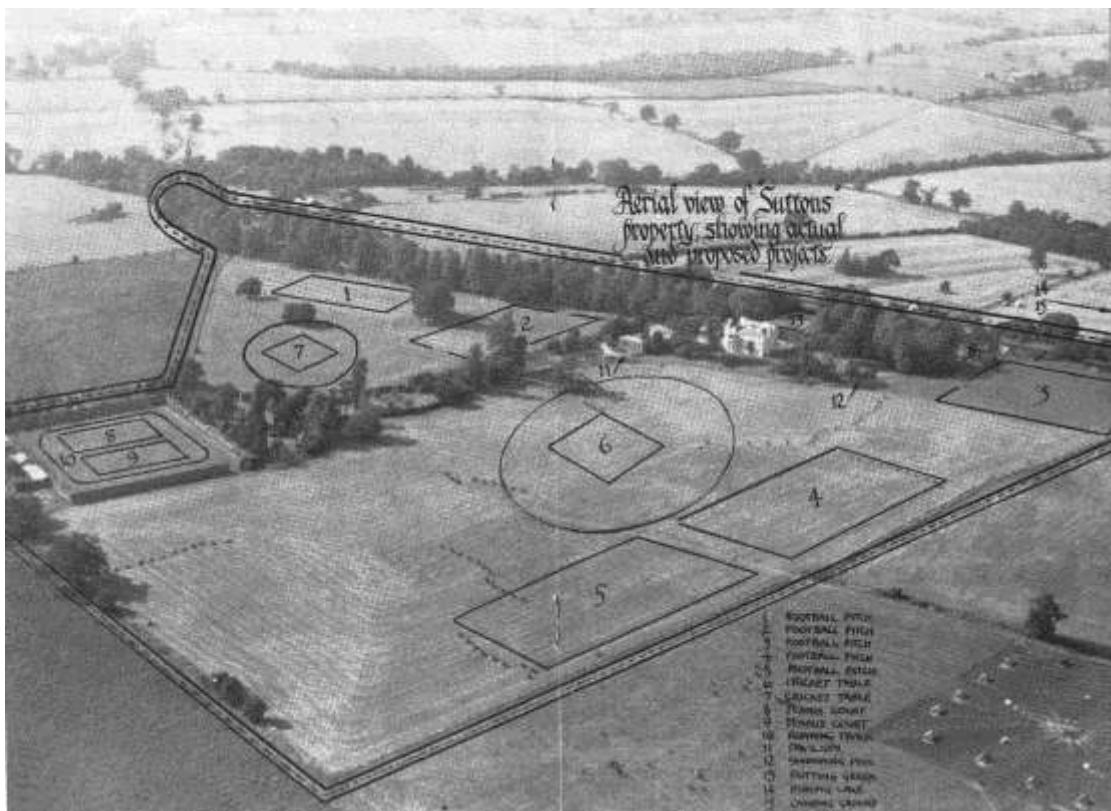
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1946 RCHME Aerial photo of Suttons showing the garden in full use.



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1966 The Summerhouse from the north.



1974 Inns of Court Mission Report showing the walled garden in-situ but neglected.



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1997 The Summerhouse northern elevation. The garden wall is removed.



1997 The Summerhouse southern elevation.



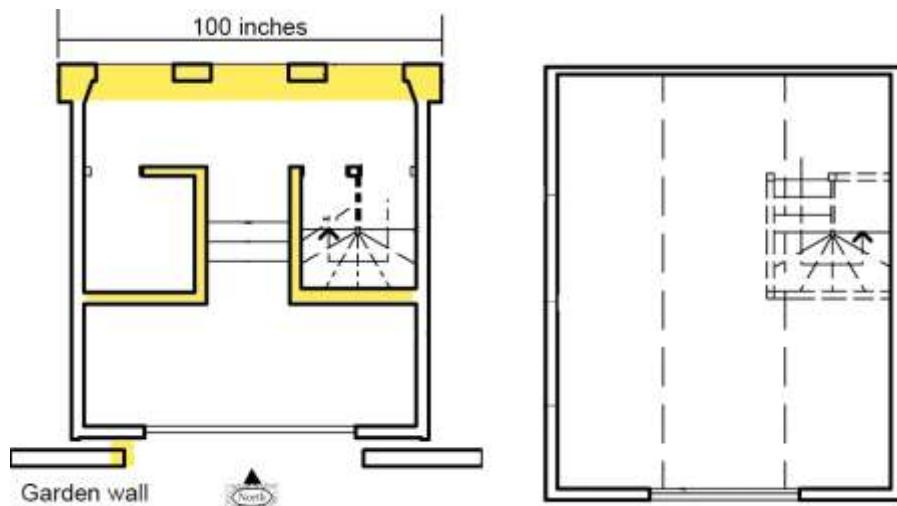
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1997 Summerhouse upper floor looking south.



1997 Summerhouse upper floor looking NE at the staircase. Note door in the side wall.

Phasing the Development of the Building



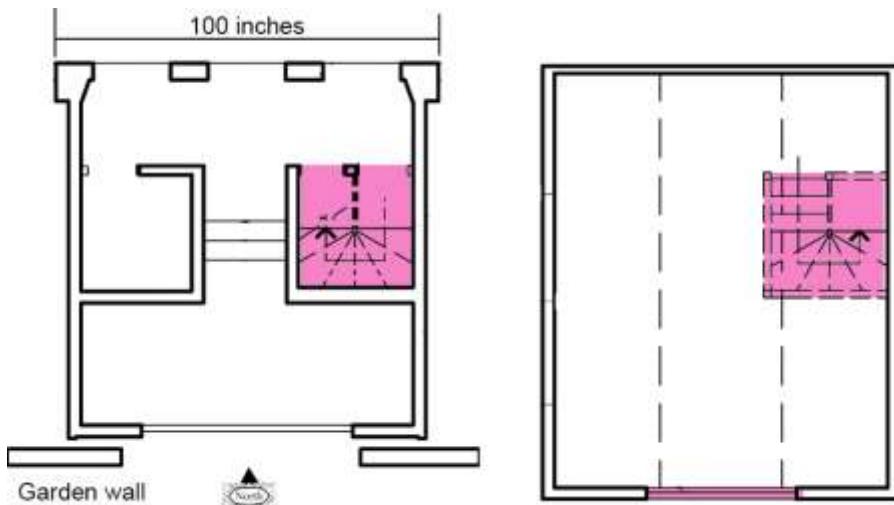
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Phase 1. 1806?

The Italianate style of the facade with its romanesque arches and rustication was very popular in the Georgian period (1714-1838). The fabric, the methods of construction using glued fillets and wrought iron pointed nails are consistent with this period.

There is a pencilled in date of 1806 together with some undecipherable writing on the back of the internal panels which strongly indicate that this is when the Summerhouse was erected. The previously built garden wall was altered with later, darker coloured and different sized bricks used to finish the opening and the pointing penny struck. Timber strakes were incorporated in the terminals to nail two Regency style plain pilasters to support the rear of the building.

The bricks used in the foundations and the flanking revetment plinths are also typical of this era. The 12x24in grey roof slates were commonplace and were used universally to clad all kinds of buildings. Most of the lower facade is original and some of the internal panels that have been saved are too.

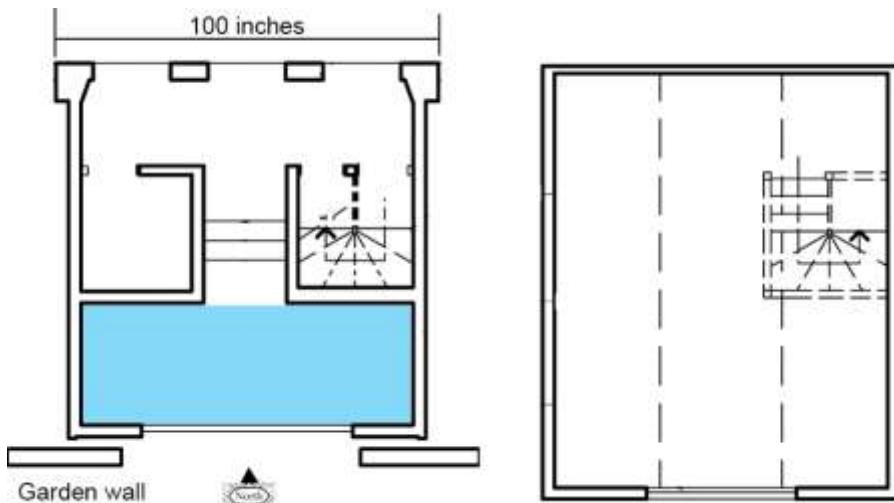


Phase 2. Victorian Additions.

The staircase is made of machined timbers and fastened with Type B cut clasp nails which were not available until 1810. The thin sections and finely routed mortices indicate a construction date later in the Victorian period. Photographs taken in 1997 indicate there was a side door for access to the stairwell and the first floor walls were horizontally boarded.

The half-round basculating window can also be ascribed to this period not least for its design features but also for the large pane of glass required for the tipping casement. The replica that is in place now appears to be faithful to the original shown in photographs.

This indicates that there was not a room above until the Victorians put it there. The large vista window would have given a superb view over the walled garden and valley beyond to the River Roding.



Phase 3. 1930.

In December 1930 H Pewsey and W Staines constructed wainscoting for the rear of the building. It is also likely that the Doulton & Co floor tiles were laid at the same time.



Discussion

One has to be careful when finding dates written on buildings and consider whether they are genuine and credible. The date of 1806 is written in the correct style of the day and is accompanied by two lines of cursive script which at present are unreadable but are likely not to be in English.

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The position of the scripts on the unpainted back of a panel implies they are genuine but the large addition of JAMES in a typical schoolboy style of the 1970's shows that later the panels were accessible. 1806 is therefore a 'terminus ante quem' - the latest date before which the building was constructed.

The design, fabric and construction features all support a date of this time when the historic documents show that the house was occupied by Charles Smith of Mile End. His second wife Augusta is credited with having the house 'Georgianised' by cladding it in brick and stucco after 1814 when she inherits.

The Summerhouse was converted into a gazebo in Victorian times by creating an upper floor with a panelled staircase and an half-round vista window. It continued in use and was refurbished in 1930. Aerial photographs show the garden to still be well maintained in 1946.

The site in general suffered terrible neglect under the ownership of the Inns of Court Mission from 1966 to 1978 when it was used extensively in aiding the poor and delinquent. This may account for some of the damage and graffiti.

Photographs taken in 1997 show it to be in a parlous state and a replica window was made. It is not clear whether it was installed at this time as this would have required building a new rear wall.

The building was dismantled in 2009 and the timber facade rebuilt into a small boathouse on the edge of the Burrows Lake. After an enforcement notice the building was lifted complete and reinstalled on its original foundations. Work is underway now in 2010 to restore and repair the original panels.

Significance

The assessment of significance for a building that has been dismantled to such a great degree but still retains a large part of its original facade and interior decor is difficult.

The Summerhouse was designed for its appearance, rather than its function and the landscape sculpted around it. In principal it was an elegant, fashionable gateway to the walled garden that was later adapted to a gazebo for enjoying the view.

Its removal to the lake in 2009 has been admitted as a mistake and the obvious thing is to return it to its original position and reinstate it in the prospect from the house. It is intended to restore the walled garden and the northern wall has already been built using the original brick bats found abandoned in the ground.

A rusticated timber building in itself is a rarity but a facade of this quality may be unique.



Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the owner Mr Andy Sheen for commissioning me to record the building and to the architect Ken Judge for supplying the technical drawings.

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