

Chapter 3 Bassett House

The first reference to Bassett House in the trade and postal directories in Southampton Central Library (by Kelly and others) is in 1855. The occupier was a Mrs Brisco Price. Earlier directories including that of 1853 make no mention of Bassett House. Mrs Price seems to have lived there just a few years until the early 1860's. By 1863 (according to the Post Office Street Directory) C. H Reeve, Esq was the occupant, but the 1865 and 1867 Forbes and Marshall Directories, and the 1871 Census, have a Joshua R. Reeve as the occupier (perhaps a son?). In 1890 and through to at least the turn of the century the Rev. John P Bushe, M.A. is noted as living there.

Other major houses in the immediate area, such as Chetwynd, adjacent to the west in Chetwynd Road, South Hill, directly to the south and off Heath Road (now Glen Eyre Road), and Glen Eyre, the large house and estate with a farm and a lodge and drive opposite Bassett House, are mentioned in these later 19th century directories. They have now gone.

A building, presumably a house, is shown on Philip Brannon's artistic map of 1850 on the site of Bassett House. The building indicated by Brannon has a simple square footprint and bears no orientational or dimensional relationship to the present property. It may have been shown merely as an exemplar dwelling on one of the plots, for not many dwellings are indicated. Theoretically it could represent an earlier building, but this is considered highly unlikely. It is suggested therefore that no reliance can be placed on this at all and that the Brannon map does not support a date for the house before 1850.

The 1855 date of the first directory entry for Mrs Price accords with above conclusion that the basic road pattern, with some earlier dwellings, was still underway into 1853, having commenced three years or so earlier (despite the lack of the necessary Act?). This evidence supports a date of about 1854 or 1855 as the earliest date for Bassett House. The O.S. plan of 1865-68 indicates that the 'west wing' had been added to the original house by the mid - later 1860's (Fig. 7).

The mid-19th century date for Bassett House places it within a melting pot of architectural styles. The influence of the elegance of Regency classical design (the Regency strictly being 1811 - 1820), was still being felt in the 1850's. John Nash (English Architect; 1752-1835) and the Prince Regent, Albert, (1819 -1861) with his master-carpenter/builder-developer Thomas Cubitt (1788 - 1855) and Thomas's brother Lewis Cubitt, all popularised an Italianate style of architecture for houses. This influence came south with John Nash living (and dying) at East Cowes Castle on the Isle of Wight, and the Prince Albert and Cubitt designing and building Osborne House (1845-48) also near East Cowes. Nash influenced local architects, such as Thomas Ellis Owen in Southsea. Osborne House had a considerable influence on mid-19th century houses on the Island as well as into Hampshire.

Houses developed out of this Italianate influence as relatively simple rendered or brickwork buildings, with simple windows, some with arched heads, low pitched roofs, bracketed oversailing eaves, and often towers emphasising the entrance. There are many in Southampton.

But Nash was not solely committed to the classical language. He was deeply involved in the Picturesque movement, having met the Picturesque landscape designers Uvedale Price and Humphrey Repton early in his career. He worked in many styles, including a revival of Gothic. This eclectic approach influenced Owen in Southsea too.

The other influences at the time concerned the Gothic style more directly, namely, the building of the Houses of Parliament by the unequal classicist/gothicist partnership of Sir Charles Barry (1795 -

1860) and important gothic advocate and architect Augustus Pugin (1812- 1852). This great building project was classical in plan but wonderfully dressed in Gothic clothes.

Bassett House seems to have emerged out of this melting pot as an idiosyncratic essay in a vaguely Italianate Gothic. Its form and architecture certainly appears to have been very different, at the outset and through the present day, to the Victorian Gothic of South Hill (the adjoining plot to the South) and North Down, just down Chetwynd Road. Bassett House had shallow pitched roofs, simple rectangular windows generally under a sort of modillioned (classical) and dog-toothed (Gothic) cornice, and a dog-tooth string course at first floor level. It probably had arched windows (and perhaps an arched doorway to the entrance porch) enhancing the front (east) elevation. There are no brackets as such to the eaves but there are pairs (generally) of basic brick brackets flanking the upper parts of the windows (to both storeys), perhaps vestigial classical brackets, or consoles, found in many regency-style houses of the 1840's onwards.

This building does not fit easily with general mid-19th century house design and is very different from nearby houses of the period and of the 1850 - 1870 development of Bassett - South Hill, North Down, Bassett Wood and Bassett Holt.

Questions and doubts about its design and development remain.

There are a number of aspects of the architectural design and its details lending support to the 1855 date including the asymmetrical plan form and generally asymmetrical elevational treatment. These suggest a date somewhere in the middle of the nineteenth century. And a classical influence is almost certainly present. One of the problems is lack of knowledge of the original elevations. The author has suggested one possibility in **Fig 23**. However although this certainly has inaccuracies, it has not been possible to envisage a design in which the author has more confidence. The evidence from the elevation is very difficult to interpret.

The elevational treatment, with the brick dog-tooth cornice, frieze, and lower string course, with the simple mostly paired (but not entirely paired) brick brackets flanking windows, the symmetry (almost) of the arrangement of round-headed windows at first floor on the east elevation over the asymmetrical ground floor configuration, the large areas of un-fenestrated brickwork to the garden elevations, is most unusual. It is certainly not evident at South Hill, North Down, Bassett Wood and Bassett Holt. Such details have not yet been observed on any other house.

It is unusual that these brackets are repeated at first floor level. They seem to draw attention away from the brackets at eaves level (being longer) and create an elevational in-balance.

As suggested earlier, the deep brick brackets high up on either side of the window seem to emulate extended cornice brackets often used in later 19th century houses. But these at Bassett House lack the refinement usually seen.

And the architecture is very different to that of nearby houses - South Hill, North Down, Bassett Wood and Bassett Holt. Bassett Wood had been constructed by 1863 (according to the directory), as had houses such as Glen Eyre to the east and Red Lodge and Ridgmont (Ridgemount?) on Bassett Avenue (London Road).

The present roof structure is not that of the mid-nineteenth-century house. The earlier structure is retained within the existing roof space and this indicates a significantly different original appearance. **Fig. 24** shows the probably 1855 roof plan. **Figs. 25 and 26** are photographs of the early roof.

The question of a date for the construction of the present roof remains. Was it in the early part of the twentieth century or in about 1950 when the building was converted into seven flats? The latter seems most likely, although there is no reference to such works on the planning and building control drawings.

Hampshire O.S. Sheet LVII.15, 1933 edition - revised 1931 (**Fig. 27**) complicates matters in that it shows an almost straight east elevation, on the line of the easternmost main part of the present east elevation, from the south-east to the north-east corner of the house. Careful examination shows, however, that there is a small return about a third northwards along this line - perhaps indicating the south-facing return of the present building. The northerly and westerly lines from the south-east corner are not quite square and this may suggest an inaccuracy with this survey. It is certain that this elevation has undergone a number of changes. Could it even be that the main present west front was a rebuilding in place of the original porch and northern projection arrangement shown on the 1865/68 and 1896/67 plans respectively? Might this be part of a phase between 1908 and the early 1930's - a phase in which other works were carried out such as the west elevation first floor bay window and the 'dormer' window in the south elevation of the 'west wing'?

Definitive analysis is complicated by these varied Ordnance Survey plan forms (**Fig. 29**). The 1865/68 plan shows the house with a single entrance 'porch' (one or two-storey); the 1867 (1908 revision) shows a more complex arrangement - there is a projecting structure near the north-east corner. The 1896/97 sheet shows the two eastern projections without a connecting line.

Detailed analysis of the elevations show that header bricks only form the brick course above the dog-tooth brick course at first floor ('string') level to the main east elevation and a section of the southern elevation after the return. All other elevations have a stretched course. Why is there this change? Could this provide further evidence that there has been at least some substantial rebuilding to this elevation?

There are queries too regarding the former Bedroom window at first floor level at the southern end of the east elevation. This appears to be original and its pair of coupled brackets are quite close to the opening reveals, closer than the brackets to windows in the main forward part of the east elevation. The other east elevation windows at this level have brackets a little further from the reveals. This is a puzzling inconsistency. This southern window and its cornice and eaves arrangement suggest that it is part of the 1855 house (the window sashes also have no horns, probably correct for a only slightly post-1840 date - the general London date when horns started to appear, the provinces usually being a little later than London). It is suggested that it sits comfortably in the overall house design but less so with the range of round-headed east windows. One would have expected more use of this window arrangement on this elevation. After all, similar windows exist elsewhere.

There are many other detailed problems with the main forward part of the east elevation: the 'shadows' of the dog-tooth string course brickwork (this course was probably continuous in its original form), the omission of the normal queen-closer bricks to some openings, and the visual brickwork evidence that all first floor windows (except the southernmost one just discussed) have all been raised 5-6 brick courses. This final operation was perhaps carried out in the c.1950 conversion of Bassett House to flats, allowing the sills to be higher and give more safety. It could have been an instruction given by the architects during works on site (hence any lack of notes on the 'Building Control' drawings of 1947).

In conclusion, and notwithstanding all these uncertainties, the overall simplicity of the house (ignoring the later elements which will be described in following paragraphs) with the brick dog-toothed frieze and string course arrangements support a post-Regency date (the 'Regency' period

being ‘loosely applied’ to the period 1790 to 1830 (Curl, 2006)). The idiosyncratic double supporting ‘brackets’ indicate a vestigial classical influence, fitting in with this mid 19th century period.

There is some relationship with the post-Regency-influenced domestic architecture in Southampton, such as the 1850-1870 villas of The Avenue and some of the larger houses in Southampton, including areas like Woolston, of the post-1850 period, and a earlier rather than later date in the second half of the 19th century. The yellow (probably Beaulieu) brickwork is a common theme in some of these houses as well. But the detailing is odd.

No evidence has been found to support an earlier date. The 1804 date suggested in reference MSH 4025 of the Southampton City Council Historic Environment Record is incorrect as development of this area did not commence until 1850. And no development is shown on the 1826 plan (Fig. 2).

Bassett House was therefore erected perhaps as early as 1850 but probably as late as 1854/55 as part of the first phase of the development of the woodland suburb of Bassett..

Site evidence shows that Bassett House was built in phases. But, at least three phases seem to have been completed within a dozen years or so of commencement of construction.

Some evidence of the original plan form can be deduced from the existing plans and evidence from the basement, walls (internally as well as externally), windows and the roof. Fig 19 already mentioned, gives the author’s thoughts on the 1855 plan. But there are many uncertainties.

Studies at the site and of the 1947 ‘Planning and Building Control’ plans (**Appendix 2**), as well as the history of the development of Bassett, have suggested the following phases for the development of Bassett House to the form in which it exists today. They are as follows.

Phase 1: c.1855

Figs. 30 and 31 show possible plans (ground floor and first floor) of the house when first constructed. It has a large central Hall spanning between the principal east and west elevations. The staircase appears to be in a similar position to the present one except that it has a lower quarter landing and a curtail step.

The ghost lines of a probably small staircase on the hall side of the east wall of Office 1009 (see the ‘as built’ plans from Drawing 2546-050, **Figs. 32 and 33**) indicate that there may have been another staircase west of the main staircase. However it is difficult to see how this worked and why it was there (there being a service staircase in the north-west corner of the 1855 house). Alternatively, it might mark a return flight for a more western main staircase, but this is thought unlikely.

Apart from some window surrounds, the most interesting internal features are the two simple classical timber pilasters to the bay in the ground floor Office 1007 (**Fig. 34**); yet even these are not original features being part of the later south bay. There are one or two cupboards of a little interest with Gothic design pulls (**Fig 35**).

The original form of the large first floor landing or upper hall is suggested on Fig. 31. It is not clear how this was day-lit. The room to the east is a little puzzling. If it was a bedroom it would be unique in having no fireplace. Maybe it formed - at least in part - an extended upper hall and used windows in the east elevation. The 1947 plans show a sky-light at the top of the stairs (but it is not altogether clear how this worked with the 1855 roof structure).

This eastern room or area could have contained bathrooms (as suggested in the March 2012 edition of this Statement).

Fig. 23, already mentioned, suggests one idea for the appearance of the house from the east. It is certainly very different to its present form, not least owing to the presently much higher roof structure.

Phase 2: early 1860's (the addition of the 'west wing')

The large rooms of the 'west wing' seem to have been the next phase. Access seems to have been through a doorway tucked into the north-west corner of the Hall (see 1947 plans and arrow on Fig. 24). Access at first floor presumably involved some changes to the service stair landing to facilitate access to the 'west wing'.

Phase 3: early 1860's but later than the 'west wing' (the 'north wing')

Phase 3, the north service 'wing' retains, broadly, its earlier internal form. It provided an additional Bedroom next to the 'west wing' (perhaps for a housekeeper), a Kitchen, and perhaps a store.

The 1947 plans indicate a washroom (with showers) in the western section of the ground floor of the 'mews block', with access from the Yard, a narrow room with a fireplace, further east and a large double garage with two doors, probably originally a coach-house. Loft storage was located above - the building being 600mm lower than its present form.

The shower accommodation is puzzling. It is wondered whether this was washing accommodation for soldiers or members of the Home Guard during the second World War - the 1947 plans specifying the bricking up of firing points in the north elevation.

Phase 4: early 20th century (c.1908 to 1930's)

It is conjectured that this phase included substantial changes to the windows to the east elevation (raising them by 600mm or so, and changing the disposition of windows?), the addition of the first floor bay to the west elevation of the 'main block', changes to the south-facing bays (although the 1933 OS plan indicate they were changed even later), other modification to fenestration, including the tall window to the south elevation of the 'west wing' (along with internal partitioning to the first floor of the 'west wing' into three bedrooms).

Perhaps the new roof was erected over the 19th century original roof at this stage.

It may even have been that the main east elevation was rebuilt (or partially rebuilt) in this phase (if it was rebuilt at all).

Phase 5: c 1950

The conversion of the property into seven flats (six in the house, including 'west wing' and 'north wing', one at first floor in the 'mews block'), as described on the 1947 plans. This included many alterations to the elevations, especially in a substantial reworking to the entrance arrangement.

Phase 6: 1966 and beyond

Adaptation to provide university accommodation after the purchase of Bassett House by the University of Southampton in 1966. This phase seems to have included alterations to the internal partitioning, to door positions, the removal of domestic fixtures, alterations to the main staircase, the insertion of new internal doorways, and the removal of the south-east balcony.

It is interesting to note that these phases run closely parallel to the development phases of Bassett itself (discussed in Chapter 2). The many changes to Bassett House reflect phases of Bassett's development. Bassett retains some of its original character but much has been lost; the same has happened to this house. Bassett continues to develop.

Bassett House: The exterior

The Photographic Record (Chapter 4) of the exterior of Bassett House comprises 'Series' E photographs - 1M to 17M for the Main House and 1N to 7N for the 'North Wing'.

East Elevation (House)

Close examination of the front (east) elevation (**PR/E/2M**) indicates that the round-headed windows at first floor have been raised from a lower position (or possibly inserted) after this 1855-65 period but probably before Bassett House was converted into flats around 1950. It is possible that they were changed in the c/1950 works, as discussed earlier. The regular pattern of projecting headers (in effect modillions) in the frieze (header/single brick recess/header; four header recess; header/single brick recess/header; four header recess, and so on) used around the house is cut by the windows carelessly and at irregular intervals (even though the windows are presumed to have been intended to be at equally spacing). Other elevations preserve an uninterrupted frieze with windows located just below. This latter arrangement is more usual architecturally and one that is much more attractive. The disruption to the frieze has caused visual harm to this elevation.

The spacing of the dog-tooth bricks has a slightly irregular pattern that is odd - 5 dog-tooths/window/3 dog-tooths/window/4 dog-tooths/window/3½ dog-tooths.

To make matters worse the window heads are too high in the elevation architecturally. And the semi-circular lights at the top lack purpose by being overshadowed by the over-sailing eaves.

As has been stated already, the present entrance door and doorway is a c.1950 intervention. The original doorway opened into the small Kitchen, which was the Porch (probably with a open doorway and side windows); there was a window (perhaps round-headed) in place of the present entrance.

The store to the south side (with external access door - former window) has a high quality herringbone-pattern tiled floor, with fine 1-2mm joints, evidence of dado-panelling and a picture rail. The floor level matches the top of the stone step to the former porch entrance doorway still visible in the brickwork of the east elevation.

The 1867 OS plan (Fig. 8) and the 1865-68 version (Fig. 7) help considerably although there are interpretative problems. Fig. 29 shows four differing OS plans of Bassett House on a comparative basis. The Fig 8. plan shows that there may have been a large, roughly central recess (under the first floor accommodation?). The Fig. 7 plan shows a porch only. The building as it is today though shows no evidence of this and there may be errors in the OS plans, although this is thought to be rather unusual. The important matter is the presence of the recess - a feature that would give the entrance much more interest than its present form. A possible arrangement is shown on the sketch plans and the sketch elevation already mentioned (Figs. 30, 31 and 23 respectively).

These conclusions indicate that the front elevation of Bassett House has been altered virtually beyond recognition. Only possibly one window, the flat-arched window immediately to the right of the entrance, is original. The architectural result is poor.

Working around the house in an anticlockwise direction, the best remaining semi-circular gauged-brick arch in the whole building was to a window rather than the present door (with its flat lintel below the arch). This is indicated by the 1947 plans. It probably lit the main entrance Porch (thought to be an open structure - it had a now-bricked-up north window). (See **PR/E/6M**).

South Elevation (main block)

The south elevation of the main block also has evidence of considerable change (**PR/E/7M**). The attached projecting wall at the south-east corner must have supported a balcony. This would explain the French doors at first floor, the otherwise strange existence of this projecting wall, and the white-painted timber fascia at first floor with its attendant lead flashing.

The other change is that the ground floor bay, with its first floor level balcony, is almost certainly a replacement bay. The 1865/68, 1896/97, and 1933 plans show two bays, one here and one to the south elevation of the west wing; but they differ in size. The present bays are identical in width and depth. The brick reveals, with their ovolo arrises, are only found on this bay and the south elevation of the 'west wing' - they do not seem to accord with the original house. Other reasons for this conclusion include the dentil rather than dog-tooth brick course above the windows and the rather plain, almost crude, balustrading. It may have been added during at the end of Phase 4 or even after the second World War.

This elevation then, although not without some attraction, is of a lower value with these changes, especially with the unfortunate French doors opening into space rather than onto a balcony.

West Elevation (main block)

This too is changed (**PR/E/11M**). Generally, there seems to be a surprising lack of fenestration in this elevation, overlooking, as it does, the south-west part of the private gardens. It appears that originally there were even fewer windows. Only the southernmost window and the bay existed at first floor level before c.1950, and the middle window at ground floor level is post-1950.

The projecting bay, an attractive feature in an Italianate Arts and Crafts style, with joinery not found anywhere else at Bassett House and with a pebble-dash panel below the window cill, again unique at the site, is certainly an addition - possibly of the early 20th century (Phase 4). It has been carefully designed to complement the detailing, but the frieze above the window head, with its dentils and dog-tooths, is all in timber rather than brick.

It is also important to note that no chimney remains to serve the reception and bedroom fireplaces (at ground and first floor) to this elevation - or elsewhere at Bassett House except for the stack to the 'main block'/'west wing' junction and the one to the 'north wing'. The removal of chimneys is seriously detrimental to the architectural interest of Bassett House.

'West Wing'

Careful examination of the external brickwork courses, the plans, and such internal details as the skirtings, demonstrate that this wing was added to the 1855 house. A primary reason for this conclusion is the awkward relationship to the entrance Hall and the fact that it is accessed presently from the 'service' side of Bassett House. However, with the help of the 1947 plans it seems that access was gained through a doorway in the extreme north-west corner of the Hall, the Hall running from the east elevation to the west elevation of the main block.

The brickwork dog-tooths at the internal angle originally continued in a northerly direction and the sole brackets in that internal angle (at first floor and eaves level) cannot be a design intention at this position.

Having said that, the brickwork is similar and there is evidence that the 'west wing' was added almost as an after-thought soon after completion of the original house. The skirting boards inside are the

most elaborate anywhere in Bassett House, including the original lengths remaining in the two south reception rooms in the 'main block' (which are the next best). The ground floor room in this 'wing' was clearly an important room (and the largest, although the room above, presumably a master bedroom, is the same size). One is tempted to think it may have been a ball-room; it was certainly the principle reception room.

Was this built in the time of Mrs Brisco Price or, perhaps at about or soon after 1860, when C. H. Reeve came to live at Basset House?

The south elevation of this 'wing' is a puzzle (**PR/E/13M**). The bay at ground floor level has, as has been mentioned, the same detailing at the south bay to the main block. It is a different size to the bay shown on the historic (1933 and earlier) plans. This suggests a 1950's change. This is a substantial although not unattractive modification.

What was the original disposition of windows at first floor? The tall sash window (now serving a small store), breaking through the eaves and with a small dormer roof, is clearly an addition (but pre-1950 and constructed to serve one of the three bedrooms built in the late 19th century or early 20th century, and shown on the 1947 plans). The window towards the west end is c.1950. Again the lack of substantial outlook to the south and west, and over the gardens, is surprising. However, the bedroom would have gained daylight and outlook from a similar window, a c.1950 window, in the west elevation of the wing.

Another puzzle is the lack of 'brackets' at frieze or string-course level. The brackets occur again on the west and north elevations. This suggests that there have been major changes to this elevation; indeed brickwork evidence suggests most of the wall (apart from the westernmost 1.5 - 2.0 metres) has been completely rebuilt above first floor level.

This south elevation is clearly very different to its original form and as a composition is unsatisfactory.

The west elevation of the main block and this south elevation of the 'west wing', taken together, whilst not unattractive, especially on initial examination, are marred by large areas of brickwork and the imbalance of the south elevation (**PR/E/10M**). This is not architecture of a high standard.

The west elevation of the 'west wing' has french doors, with a large upper light (**PR/E/15M**). This feature is an pre-1950 alteration, poorly executed, breaking through the dog-toothed string course and widening the original opening (leaving only one rather than two 'brackets' on either side of the doorway). Perhaps the large room inside suffered from a lack of light. This west elevation has been badly modified and again its architectural value has been diminished.

The north elevation of the 'wing' has just two windows, both to the first floor. The western one is almost certainly original (and the only one that is) with simple twin two pane casements in a rectangular opening under the dog-toothed frieze and the eaves. It has a delicate projecting tiled cill supported on projecting headers (**PR/E/16M**). The window further east was similar but was widened c.1950.

The 1947 plans indicate that there was a cellar beneath the 'west wing' - access points and a coal hole are shown on these plans, and they still physically exist although no access to this cellar has been found. It is suggested that it may have been filled with brick rubble during the works carried out around 1950.

The ‘north wing’

The way the brickwork of the ‘west wing’ penetrates the ‘north wing’ brick at the north-west internal angle demonstrates that the ‘north wing’ came still later. The overall form of this single storey third phase, with a modest chimney at the north end of the ridge of the higher roof, is simple but attractive (PR/E/1N).

The horned vertical-sliding sash windows set in brick arched head and simple stone cills are part of this attraction.

The north end has been spoilt by a rather unpleasant later twin former WC extension. It has harmed the attractive north door and porch.

The north entrance door and porch is an attractive element (PR/E/2N), with a boarded and beaded door, a diamond-shaped four-quarried leaded window centrally and a simple three-light fan-light above. The porch is supported on two timber brackets with ‘mouchette’ tracery, a Gothic device. The felt flat roof finish detracts from its generally good appearance.

The courtyard elevation will be discussed under ‘Courtyard’.

Mews block - Phase 4

Brickwork evidence in the north-west internal angle of the Courtyard demonstrates that the two-storey mews block may have been built butting up to the ‘north wing’. There are stables/garaging at ground floor and residential accommodation at first floor. The entrance is from the north side. Evidence from the 1947 drawing of this building shows that the upper section was substantially rebuilt around 1950. The roof was raised approximately 600mm and the roof structure modified to take a ceiling within the roof space zone providing comfortable headroom for accommodation. This was to facilitate the construction of a flat at first floor in place of hayloft type storage. All first floor windows are part of this conversion and date from c.1950. The proportions, and thickness of the dowelled frames, are not attractive. (PR/E/3N-7N)

The interior of the flat has no particular features of interest.

Bassett House: The interior

The Photographic Record (Chapter 4) of the interior of Bassett House comprises the following ‘Series’ of photographs - B (Basement), GM and GN (Ground Floor Main House and ‘North Wing’ respectively), and FM and FMWS (First Floor and First Floor Mews Block respectively).

It is likely that the original plan of Bassett House will never be known fully unless substantial documentary or archaeological data becomes available. However, the availability of the 1947 planning and building control plans in the Southampton City Council Archives have helped greatly. There have been many alterations commencing from a few years only after initial construction of the house around 1855. Earlier in this Chapter at least three probable phases (occurring between around 1855 to around 1865) have been mentioned. After 1865 there were more far-reaching changes including, in the mid 20th century, adaptation to form ‘seven self-contained flats and five lock-up garages’ (Ramboll, 2012, and the 1947 plans). The building was then changed, after purchase of Bassett House by the University of Southampton in 1966, into academic departmental offices and then into its current use as administrative offices.

Consequently, the interior has changed almost beyond recognition. Early or original features are few.

The principle features remaining are:

- a number of window and french and other door surrounds and details;
- chimney breasts;
- a few pictures rails;
- two pilasters to the western office (Meeting Room 2) at the south end of the house (typical of many houses of the mid-nineteenth period - classical style);
- some skirtings which are probably original (although of a rather utilitarian design generally - the skirtings in the ground floor, former single, room of the ground floor of the 'west wing' is the exception); and
- elements such as borrowed lights, and some cupboards.

There are no decorative coves or other items of decorative plasterwork.

Some features may be hidden behind modern suspended ceilings. The presence of what is presumed to be the 1855 roof within the present much higher roof space, shows a major alteration thought to date from the early 20th century (it is not mentioned on the 1947 planning and building control plans). It has been sketched by the author (**Fig. 24**).

Conclusions regarding the interior of Bassett House

The loss of much of the original plan layout and almost all internal details is disappointing. Not only has Bassett House been dramatically altered externally, the internal alterations have caused the loss of almost everything of architectural interest, including certainty about its original plan form.

Bassett House and its legacy

Almost all the houses of the mid-nineteenth century villa estate of Bassett have been demolished. Bassett Holt, the former Lodge to Bassett Wood, the substantial Saxholm lodge on the west side of Bassett Avenue, Bassett House, and some elements of the road layout, remain.

Sadly, Bassett House has lost so much of its earlier character and appearance and cannot be viewed as reaching the standards necessary for inclusion on 'The National Heritage List for England' or the 'Local List' administered by Southampton City Council. This record has been written to secure information about Bassett House, for present and future generations. It includes some details of its context in Bassett which may not have been published before.

It is hoped that a 'watching brief' may be possible if Bassett House is demolished in order to glean any further information about its history and architecture.