

The Barons, Reigate : A House Rescued

This fine town house built during the first quarter of the 18th century is of five symmetrical bays and has two storeys, basement and attic. The centre bay is brought forward slightly and there are deep aprons beneath the first floor windows. The house is of red brick with rubbed brickwork picked out in a lighter colour and with narrow lime putty joints. There are solid parapets to street and rear elevations. The garden front contains a central long window lighting the stair well with the door beneath, and because of the drop in level between front and back the garden is reached by a flight of steps. This elevation has a decorative pattern of red and grey bricks.

The end elevation has two chimney stacks with the parapets swept up to meet them. Between the stacks is a circular window lighting the attic.

The original wrought iron railings to the street frontage remain on either side of the pedimented door case.

The building is constructed as a brick shell, and all internal divisions above basement level are of timber with pine panelling. The house had been little altered, still being in partial domestic use up to the time of its purchase by Redlands in 1977. They have converted it for use as amenity rooms for the staff and for reception use generally. Two later wings, built onto the east side were demolished to the benefit of the original composition and the east elevation has been rebuilt using well matching second hand bricks as a copy of the west elevation.

The exterior has been carefully repointed, but using a struck finish which looks harsh. It would have been more satisfactory if the mortar had been slightly recessed, a more skilled and time consuming operation.

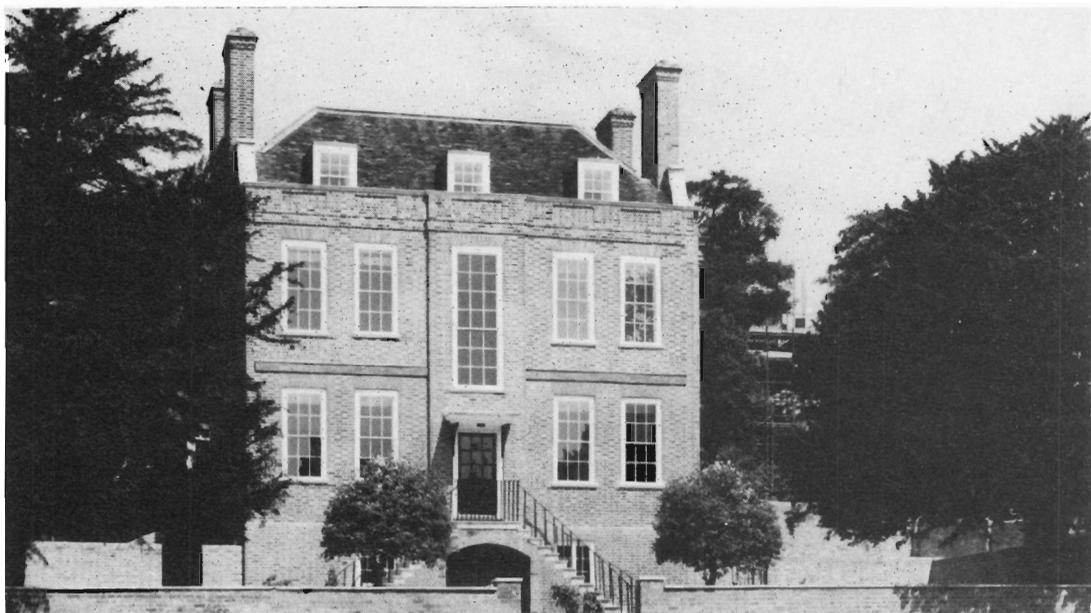
A considerable amount of renovation was necessary as the house had in recent years been allowed to deteriorate. The repair of structural timbers where necessary has been affected by the addition of steel plates and shoes rather than more expensive traditional repairs and in some cases joists have had to be shortened in order to accommodate new steel tie beams. Traditional repairs would in some instances have involved further disturbance of the fabric. The pine panelling has been carefully restored and the fire officer has accepted the partitions without additional non-combustible linings. The panelling in the hall already stripped down to the bare timber by previous owners has been cleaned but left unpainted. It would have been more accurate to have repainted this as it was designed to be seen originally.

The majority of the sash windows have been restored, but replacements where necessary have been made to the original pattern. The internal shutters have been restored to working order.

To comply with fire and safety regulations it has been necessary to introduce a second stair, and as the attic is now a caretakers flat it also requires proper access. The fire escape is a spiral, taking up the minimum possible space, but inevitably spoiling the two rooms it passes through. This had to be accepted as a condition of the project proceeding.

The principal mouldings were recorded and published by Tunstall Small and Christopher Woodbridge in 'Mouldings of the Wren and Georgian periods' a portfolio of full size sections, published by the Architectural Press about 1929 (undated).

The garden, which slopes away from the house has been truncated by the construction of a car park. Although this is unfortunate, the new dividing wall has been well contrived, and



The Barons, Reigate: the garden front

A house of 1710 that fell into decay because of its unsuitability for present-day residential use, which has been restored by Redland Ltd., the well-known manufacturers and suppliers of building materials, for staff and reception purposes.

when the new planting matures will be acceptable.

It is easy to find fault with the details of a conversion such as this one. Redlands have spent a large sum of money on the restoration of this key building in the Reigate townscape and without their acquisition and investment, the house, which already had a leaking roof, might have had a bleak and limited outlook. It is now secure for the foreseeable future.

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