

The History and Structural development
of
68 CARLTON HILL
ST JOHN'S WOOD
London NW8



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for
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Introduction

This report was commissioned by the architects Casson Conder Partnership to investigate the structural and documentary evidence for the original form of the roof to 68 Carlton Hill, St. John's Wood. The house is a four storeyed, detached villa in Italianate style which has been identified as an 'Unlisted Building of Merit' within the St. John's Wood Conservation Area and the report is intended to inform proposals for alterations to the building. The survey drawing used as the basis for Fig 2 was supplied by the architects.

History

St John's Wood was developed in the first half of the 19th century from what were previously open fields belonging to three estates, owned by the Eyre family, the Duke of Portland and Harrow School. Construction was piecemeal and the majority of plot leases were sold to individual speculative builders with some limited building controls. The resulting suburb was characterised by tree-lined streets with a mixture of terraces and detached villas in ample gardens. Architectural styles were mixed, ranging from the Italianate to the Gothic (Cherry & Pevsner 1991, 664).

Carlton Hill runs between Abbey Road and Edgware Road and was laid out between 1832 and 1846 on the line of a former field boundary. Map evidence (Fig 1) shows that most of the adjacent plots were developed by 1846, when the site of No 68 was still vacant, but the house had been built by 1862 and its plan is shown at a larger scale on a map of 1871. There are a few historic photographs of the street as a whole (Edwards 1997) but only one is known of the house itself taken c.1950 (WAC; Fig 1) and reproduced in Tames (1998, 28). This shows the house from the east with several differences from its present appearance; there is a single central sash window in the gable and a much bolder cornice moulding rising from pilaster caps to the quoins, without the flattened eaves. There was also a projecting porch to the front door like the one which survives on No 70.

Description

Principal elevation (Figs 2-3)

The house is a detached villa set back from the street frontage and facing south-east. It has an asymmetric two-bay front elevation four storeys high, consisting of a half-basement, emphasised ground floor, first floor and attic with a low-pitched gable. The main part of the façade is yellow London stock brick above a stuccoed basement and the dressings are also stuccoed. The basement has a large sash window set below the over-size ground floor window which has stuccoed pilasters carrying a plain cornice. The double front door is set close to the corner of the building and approached by a flight of steps; it has a plain surround with a modern glass canopy where there was formerly a porch. The two first floor windows are of unequal size and disproportionately small in relation to the ground floor. They have narrow raised surrounds with cornices on console brackets and two-light plate glass sashes. The central attic window has a surround of the same pattern but without a cornice and is now a two-light casement. It is flanked by a pair of single-light windows with unmoulded eared surrounds; the photograph of c.1950 shows these to be later 20th century insertions.

The façade has alternating rusticated quoins which stop some 0.6m short of eaves level and are continued as a plain stuccoed band which returns below a narrow projecting parapet to the gable. In the angles below the eaves there are triangular patches of red bricks where the wall has been made good. These represent alterations made since c.1950 when the original bolder and deeper gable moulding was removed and the profile altered at eaves level to create flattened terminals. The attic storey has been repointed, possibly in conjunction with the inserted windows but there are no other significant variations in the brickwork suggesting alterations to the façade.

Rear elevations (Fig 3)

The rear elevations are built of brown brick and the side elevations are largely blank walls, serving to house the slightly projecting chimney flues whose stacks rise from eaves level. The gabled north-west elevation mirrors the proportions of the front. The basement windows have been altered to form French doors and the principal emphasis is at raised ground floor level where the heavy stuccoed architraves match the front of the house. The first floor windows are disproportionately small with plain brick

surrounds and at attic level there is a pair of small sash windows under the apex of the gable; these appear to be original. There are no quoins or stuccoed bands and the roof has a narrow parapet course. There are no indications in the brickwork of alterations to the fabric on this elevation.

Interior (Fig 3)

There have been modern alterations to the layout of the top floor and what was a single large front bedroom has been divided into two across the centre of the original window. This has occasioned a change from sash lights to a pair of casement windows. Each room is also lit by a smaller modern window alongside which have Crittall type casements. The ceilings are boarded and slope towards the eaves. The paired windows on the rear elevation now both light a single room and there is an adjoining bathroom with a roof-light.

Roof structure (Fig 3)

A hatch gives access to the apex of the roof which has been extensively renewed so that the ridge board and rafters are modern. Many of these reinforce sawn-off original rafters of a smaller scantling and there were originally two trusses represented by short king posts rising from tie beams above ceiling level but the principal rafters have been removed.

Discussion

Adjacent properties are of a similar date and generally Italianate in character although each building is individually designed. The closest in style is the adjoining house to the north-west, No 70 which was probably built at the same time. It is also a two-bay four storey detached villa, part stucco and part stock brick with the same quoin and window detailing and a surviving porch but it is finished with a heavy parapet moulding which masks a low-pitched roof, hipped at the rear.

The possibility that No 68 was originally finished in the same way with a parapet rather than a gable does not seem to be borne out by the structural evidence. The eaves level is lower than the adjoining building and the rusticated quoins stop short of the gable moulding. The photograph of c.1950 shows that this gap was infilled by projecting basal mouldings to a much bolder cornice, similar in style to No 70. This

was not flattened at the eaves and framed a single central attic window to produce more pleasing overall proportions than is now the case.

At some point in the second half of the 20th century, probably the 1960s or 1970s, the original gable moulding was removed and replaced with a new plain and narrow parapet course flattened at the eaves. The gaps were filled with brickwork of a different colour and a pair of side windows inserted. Probably at a more recent date the roof structure was very largely replaced.

Conclusions

Structural and photographic evidence indicate that the house was constructed with a gabled roofline and not a parapet like No 70. However the original proportions of the design have been compromised by alterations carried out in the third quarter of the 20th century which changed the form of the gable and inserted two additional windows. The original roof structure has also been almost completely replaced.

Given the extent of the modern alterations to the attic storey and their detrimental effect on its overall appearance the proposed scheme to remodel the roofline to match that of No 70 seems a viable design solution. The two houses appear to have been built as a pair and apart from their rooflines have a near-identical architectural appearance.

References

- Cherry, B and Pevsner, N, 1991 *The buildings of England: London 3: North-West*, Harmondsworth
- Edwards, P, 1997 *St. John's Wood and Regents Park in Old Picture Postcards*, Netherlands
- Tames, R, 1998 *St. John's Wood and Maida Vale Past*. London
WAC – Westminster Archives Centre

List of Figures

- Fig 1** Historic maps and photograph
- Fig 2** Principal elevation showing 20th century alterations
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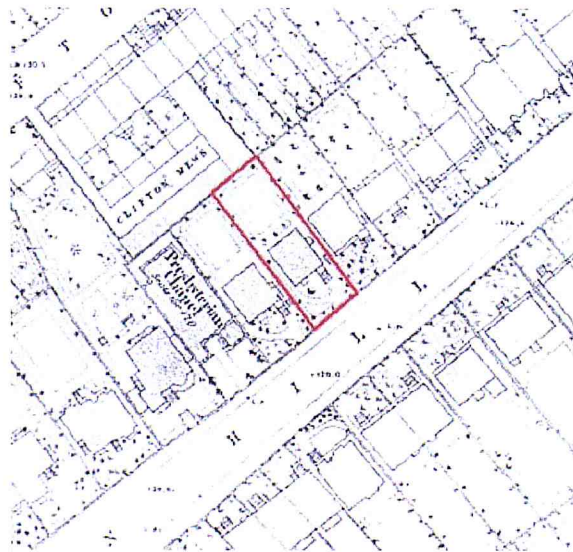
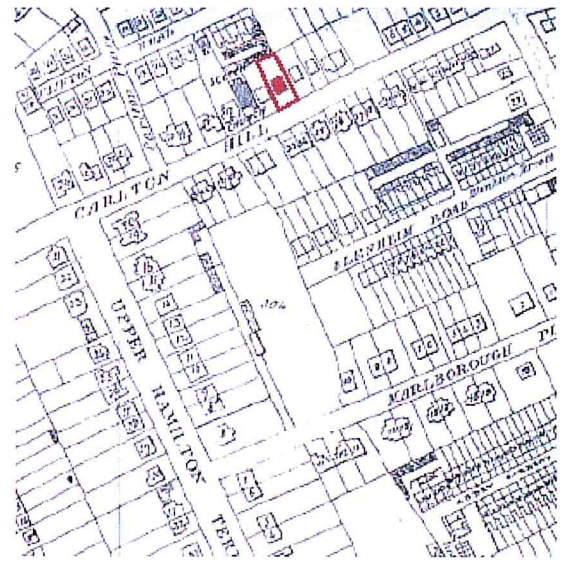
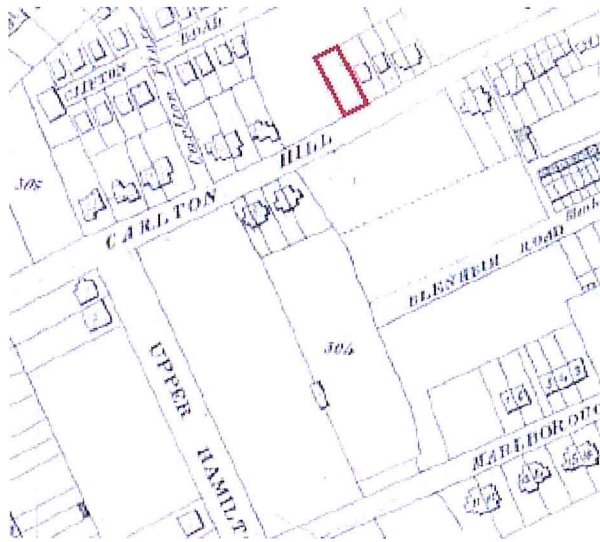


Fig 1

1846 map showing undeveloped plot

1862 map showing plot developed

1871 map at larger scale

Photograph c.1950 showing house before alterations (WAC; Tames 1998, 28)

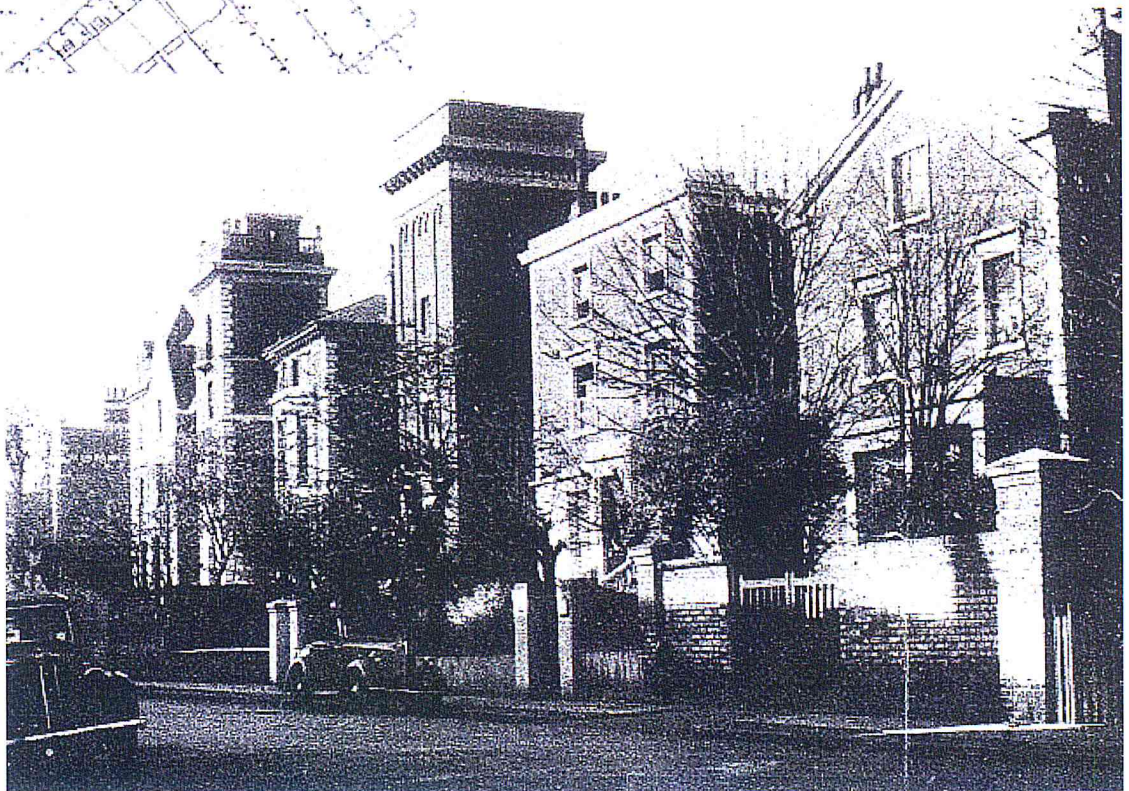




Fig 2 South-east elevation

20th century alterations in orange
original cornice & porch profile in blue



Fig 3

(clockwise from top left)

Principal elevation

Rear elevation

Top floor front bedroom, partition divides window

Roof space showing original king posts and truncated rafters

Eaves detail showing red brick infill

