

## ***Summary***

A historic building survey was carried out prior to demolition of 316 Woodstock Road, Summertown. The survey established that the house had been subject to few interior and exterior modifications throughout its 105 years. The main alterations involved the division of space to create two distinct units or flats. A significant finding of the survey was the high rate of survival of the interior features.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Planning permission (application number 02/00855/FUL) has been granted by Oxford City Council for the demolition of the existing house at number 316 Woodstock Road, Summertown, Oxford and the subsequent construction of 12 flats. The building was considered to be of local architectural significance, and it is for that reason that condition 12 of the consent required that a drawn and photographic record be made of the building prior to demolition.

*A Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by John Moore Heritage Services.

### **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1 To make a record of the structure of the building.
- 2.2 To make public the results of the investigations.
- 2.3 To put it in the context of the development of Summertown.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The building recording was undertaken at Level II as defined by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (Recording Historic Buildings: a Descriptive Specification). It consisted of three main elements: a drawn survey, a photographic survey and a written, descriptive record. The drawn record was based on an existing survey of the buildings and consisted of archaeological annotations added to explain the construction, phasing and history of the building. The photographic record was undertaken using 35 mm black and white prints and colour slide film. It consisted of general internal and external views together with specific details of features of interest. The written record was a descriptive, analytical survey to complement the other elements of the recording.
- 3.2 The project archive, which will include photographs, photographic negatives, slides, plans, elevations and site notes, will be deposited with the County Museums Service or other agreed body. Copies of this report will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record and with English Heritage's National Monuments Record in Swindon.



## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 DOCUMENTARY AND MAP EVIDENCE

316 Woodstock Road was situated on the corner of Squitchey Lane and woodstock road in what is now known as Summertown.

It appears that the land on which the house was built was originally part of the whorestone Farm estate (lot 68), auctioned in 1821 (Crews Dudley and George Kimber were the vendors. Fasnacht, R. 1969). Squitchey Lane is at this time a private, gated road shown as Victoria Road on the estate plan. By 1832 the road had become a public right of way. By 1834 the site was situated just outside the northern boundary of Summertown proper, an area created by annexing the land from St Giles Parish to form an ecclesiastical parish. Summertown then encompassed an area bounded to the north along Squitchey Lane, to the east by the river Cherwell, the west by Woodstock road (and some additional fields towards Port Meadow) and to the south by Moreton and Marston Ferry Roads (Fasnacht, 1969).

By the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey Map (1876), the Parliamentary Boundary of Oxford is shown extending along what is now Field House Drive to the north of the property, and the site falls within the parish of St Giles once again. Fasnacht states that the boundaries had been altered four times to include newer parishes that developed between Summertown and St Giles (Fasnacht, 1969). At this time a small house is shown on the lot later occupied by 316 Woodstock Road.

The second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1899 shows the boundary in the same location and the parish is marked as Summertown. The area had become a northern suburb of Oxford under the 1889 City of Oxford Order. It is at this point that the house is shown marked as *Apsley Croft*. The small building shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map is marked as *Lodge* and the name suggests a link with the Apsley Paddox estate. This is substantiated by the Oxford Corporation New Building Plan no. 3022 lodged by the builder Mr J. H. Kingerlee on November 10<sup>th</sup> 1897 for the proposed construction of one house on the east side of Woodstock Road for the Canon Bellairs. Canon Bellairs is documented as being a resident of Apsley Paddox at this time.

The 1901 Census lists the occupants of the house in that year as Ms C. M Bellair (head mistress) and four other female occupants: the cook, Sister, parlour maid and house maid, positions held in addition to administrative duties.

The next documented event in the development of Apsley Croft or 316 Woodstock road, was the addition of a garage. The plans for the garage were approved on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 1910 (plan no. 1676), and a single storey structure was added to the south east corner of the original building. The design was by Beufield and Loxley for a Mr Charles Robertson (owner), resident of Apsley Paddox.

The inhabitants of 316 Woodstock Road are listed in a number of editions of the Kelly's Directory. At each edition consulted, where there was information available, there were multiple inhabitants at the address. For example: the 1949 edition lists Mr H. Pye, Mr R Barff and Mr R Scarr. In addition there was one Mr K. J. Veitch (6a Field House Drive) – a separate address, but in association with the property. Mr R. Barff is also listed as an inhabitant of the property in 1939. All the indications are there that the property was in some way linked to St Edwards School: Apsley Paddox itself (formerly of Wolvercote Parish) appears to have been bought over by the school and possibly renamed Field House. The Roll of St Edwards School 1863-1992 lists Mr R Barff as a school master from 1927-65 and Mr K. J. Veitch is associated with the Order of St Edwards Lodge during the period 1946-64. In addition to this, Mr R. Scarr is also listed as a school master between the years 1942-80.

#### 4.2 SITE SURVEY

A further piece of evidence pertaining to the use of the building was discovered in the attic cistern room during the site survey. This evidence was a list of 'rules' posted on the wall adjacent to the door. This document is reproduced here (Plate ?)

By the time of the survey in December 2002, the house had fallen into disrepair. The house appeared to have been used for storage for a number of years judging by the great quantities of household goods heaped up over the floors and surfaces. A quantity of letters and postcards mailed to the address were included in the contents at this time. The addresses on this post included various members of the Pye family and postcards to a number of other occupants, some dated as late as 1990. The number and variety of occupants of the building suggest its continued use as school accommodation until fairly recently.

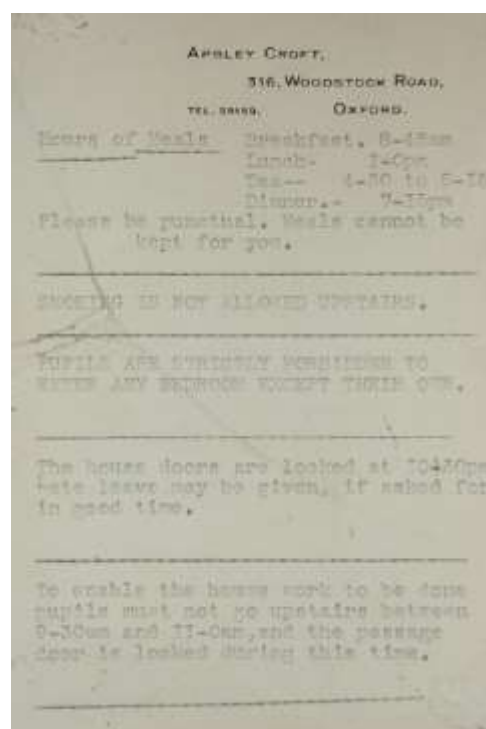


Plate 1

The house was constructed of red brick in Flemish Bond with quantities of tile hanging around the first floor windows (particularly on the corner canted bay). Interest was added to the gables in the form of timber detail. The roofs were originally tiled and there was a decorative ridge tile, ornate chimney stacks and a skylight access to the flat central portion of the roof. The windows were wood- framed and had a form of double glazing fixed to the internal frames.

Further observations concerning the construction detail of the building were made during the demolition. This allowed examination of the walls and roof in detail. The walls are of particular interest in that they were of cavity wall construction. Although this method of construction was in use at the turn of the century, it was not common practice until an increase in housing in the period between the first and second World Wars.

The internal walls and ceilings were of typical lathe and plaster, the roof construction was that of a common rafter roof.

#### 4.3 EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS

The building prior to its demolition (March 2003) existed in much the same style and set-up as intended in the original design of 1897. The exterior of the building had only suffered minor alterations including the addition of a cast iron spiral staircase on its northern elevation with an inserted doorway taking up half of an original window, at the north end. These alterations may have taken place in 1981 as there is a plan dated 12/08/81, application number A 339\81 (however no actual plan details accompanied the application – I contacted the planning dept, by email – no reply. Don't know how to get hold of the plans otherwise).

This plan may also apply to the various internal alterations that had been made. It appears that two separate sets of accommodation had been made of the original building, and the external spiral staircase provided access to the upper flat (?).

A further modification to the exterior of the building, was the addition of a glass house on the south elevation at the east end. Access to the glass house was achieved through a door inserted in the position of the central window on the south elevation (east end, the original dining room). The glass house does not appear on a photograph of the building taken in 1954. The last external alteration was the addition of a box like extension to the ground floor window on the west elevation (south end).

#### 4.4 THE INTERIOR LAYOUT:

The available plans in addition to the building survey of the interior of the property point to two phases of alteration: the first involved a degree of internal re-organisation as shown in blue on the plans below. The second set of modifications are shown in red and produced the building layout as it stood at the time of the survey.

#### 4.4.1 GROUND FLOOR:

The Layout of the ground floor had changed little structurally, since construction in 1897/8. The main modifications were the removal of the second staircase adjacent to what was originally the service side of the house, creation of a window adjacent to the modern boiler room and the blocking of a window that would originally have given light onto the second staircase. In addition to this, a garage was added in 1910 at the eastern corner of the house. The function of the individual rooms changed over time: the original allocation of space involved separate quarters for the owners of the house and the hired help. Later divisions of space appeared to respect the internal features such as fireplaces and cupboards, as these were largely preserved. However, the establishment of an early, bulky, central heating system affected internal fixtures and fittings due to the installation of boilers and ducts.

Access to the house was through a verandah into the ground floor hall and an oak staircase leading to the upper floors. This staircase had been boxed in with plywood and papered over and the true excellent condition of the staircase was unknown until demolition. The picture shows the wooden lathes that were used to attach the plywood to the staircase. After boxing the staircase in, it was wallpapered over with yellow paper to match the walls. Facing the stairs was a fireplace with a heavy wooden mantle piece. This feature was part of the original design and construction of the house.



Plate 2

During demolition the mantle piece opposite the staircase was removed and a date stone was found behind it. The stone and the cement sealing it were dated 1898.

Access between the main bedroom (dining room) and bathroom (stores) was a later event, as was the blocking of a window between the bathroom (store) and bedroom 2 (garage). The window may have been blocked in 1910 when the garage was added to the main building.

At the back of the house, the passage, WC and lobby are almost without modification, although the original access to south gardens was blocked due to the construction of the garage. Access was further reduced by the later blocking of the garage door to convert the room into bedroom 2.

The addition of a glass house attached to the southern elevation at the east end (after 1954), brought about the conversion of the central window in the main bedroom (original dining room) to a doorway.

The Kitchen (butler's pantry) appears to have been modernised. There were radiators added to the walls and additional worktops fitted in order to bring the pantry in line with modern kitchen requirements and standards.

The removal of the second staircase left a room with no visible function. A boiler had been installed in the south east corner, and a window knocked through south of the doorway, while another was blocked to the north of the doorway. The later function of this space is unknown and an accumulation of occupation debris obscured any possible detail that may have shed light on use.

Access to the Dining room (kitchen) was through the original doorway, which was roughly in line with the serving hatch still *in situ* in the bedroom wall (original dining room). There is further access to storage facilities through the dining room (kitchen) towards the northwest corner of the house. The layout at this side of the house was untouched, although the original facilities of coals, boots and larder had become more general storage by the time of demolition.

Access to the gardens at the front of the house was to be had between the store (larder) and Boiler room (scullery). The boiler room (scullery) doorway was relocated slightly further to the east, and the interior appears to have been modified on two occasions: first with the addition of kitchen type units not shown on the original plans, and finally, at a later date, with the installation of a boiler still *in situ* at time of demolition.

The two front rooms, the study (morning room) and living room (drawing room), appeared to have retained all of their original features. The only apparent modification within the study was the creation of a doorway adjacent to the fireplace, through to the dining room (kitchen). The drawing room had the addition of central heating facilities on the northern wall, adjacent to the door, and a box- like extension to the western window.

#### 4.4.2 THE FIRST FLOOR:

The Layout of the first floor had also changed little structurally, since construction in 1897/8. The main modifications were removal of the interior second staircase at the rear of the house, and the addition of an external spiral staircase of iron on the north eastern wall of the house, adjacent to the garage extension. This staircase called for the creation of a doorway to give access to the first floor. The door was let into an original window; the shaped brick sill was cut back and capped with concrete. The door opening was also finished with concrete and the staircase supports were bolted to the brick arch over the window. The door incorporated a letterbox, suggesting access to a self contained flat.

At the time of demolition, the doorway let onto a small vestibule institutional in design, formed of thin partition walls incorporating panes of safety glass. This vestibule originally contained a sink, but had been developed into a bathroom at a later date, prior to the addition of the staircase and doorway. The adjacent original bathroom facilities were converted to kitchen accommodation by the time of demolition, the original room allocated to WC remained unchanged. A further modification to the layout of the first floor was the addition of an en-suite bathroom to bedroom 4 at the north west corner of

the house. Once again, thin partition walls were used to divide the room. The original fireplaces, cupboards and general fittings were retained.

#### 4.4.3 THE ATTICS:

The attic is the least affected by alterations. The water tank has been relocated or replaced, a partition wall adjacent to the stairs has been removed and a new one repositioned to shorten the cistern room. There appear to have been some modifications made to the stairwell, possibly the addition of a new or replacement banister. The original room functions were largely preserved, although the two front bedrooms appeared to have been converted to play and craft rooms. There was stepladder access to the flat roof from the attic, in its original location.

The cistern room contains the original wooden, lead lined cistern as was originally installed in the house at time of construction (Plate ?). The window behind the cistern also remains unchanged. The cupboard in the southern corner of the room, adjacent to the door does not appear on the original building plan, but is however an early addition to the room.



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Plate 3









## 5. SUMMARY

The house at 316 Woodstock Road was remarkable in that it had remained virtually unchanged since the time of design and construction in 1897. The windows, tile hanging and roof details remained intact, and the only changes visible from the exterior were the additions of the spiral staircase when the house appears to have been converted into separate flats, and the glasshouse on the south elevation. Both of these changes added doorways in locations that had originally housed windows. This meant the conversion of features already in existence rather than the more destructive creation of new openings.

The interior period features also survived to a high degree, particularly in the attic where there were fewer attempts at decoration over the years. The survival in the cistern room of the early cistern was particularly interesting, as features such as this are generally removed in attempts at modernisation. The majority of the windows were original with only the loss of some detail, general deterioration, and the addition of separate double glazing panels affixed to the interior of the windows. The fireplaces, mantle pieces and moulded detail survived in all of the rooms. The discovery of the date stone behind the mantle piece in the hall emphasises the degree to which the internal detail had remained largely unmodified for 105 years.

The single significant internal modification was the removal of the second staircase. This would have hampered circulation through the building if it had remained as a single house, but the evidence of the spiral staircase leading to the door with a separate letterbox, and the conversion of the first floor to include its own kitchen, all suggest that the internal space had been divided into two distinct units.

The survey carried out in order to fulfil the planning requirements and in so doing, produce this report, has provided a rare opportunity to record in detail those features that were designed specifically for the house and that had remained *in situ* there for 105 years.

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY