

The structural history of Sutton Lodge, Brighton Road, Sutton

Address	Sutton Lodge, 139 Brighton Road, Sutton SM2 5SW
Grid Ref	TQ 258 626
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1 INTRODUCTION

This historical survey was originally prepared in support of an application for listed building consent for major repairs. It has subsequently been revised to incorporate discoveries made on a visit to the site while the work was in progress.

2 THE HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

Sutton Lodge stands on the east side of Brighton Road, a short distance north of the junction with Cotswold Road.

Documents in Sutton Archives show that on 16 August 1762 John Wells surrendered to a London merchant called Thomas Thomas ‘a new brick messuage and dwelling house with the several stables granaries oathouses edifices and buildings upon the said [Downs] close lately erected and built by the said John Wells.’¹ The property was copyhold of the manor of Sutton.

The same papers include an account to John Wells from Christopher Trewhill dated between January 1756 and April 1762 for building materials and work.

There are four lead sash weights in Sutton’s museum collection which were salvaged from the windows of Sutton Lodge. Two of them have inscriptions cast on them: ‘1762 WAB’ and ‘IV 1762’. The V is inverted.²

On 3 July 1786 Thomas Thomas surrendered the property to his son the Rev Matthew Thomas of Ewell whose will was proved in 1812. A probate inventory was made which lists the contents room by room. This shows that there were three rooms on an upper storey above the first floor. Two of these were well furnished bedrooms and all three had one set of curtains. This must be the third floor on the back of the house. There were four first floor rooms with beds and, on the ground floor, a hall, butler’s pantry, dining room, study, drawing room and kitchen. The drawing room had four sets of curtains so it must have been in one of the wings. No other room had four curtains. The executors sold the property at auction to Thomas Froggatt who died intestate in 1826. The house passed to his youngest son Henry who was aged 10.³ His mother Jane was appointed guardian and she was licensed to rent the property until her son was 21.

In 1838 the house was acquired by John T Overton who bought out the copyhold on 10 December 1866. Overton was a substantial farmer. In 1841 he was working 140 acres which

¹ Sutton Archives accession 409 bundle 9.

² Accession number 2004.110. It is not known which windows they were salvaged from.

³ The custom of the manor of Sutton was Borough English which meant that the youngest son inherited.

had risen to 350 acres by 1851. He died in 1882. His obituary in the local paper described him as a 'staunch churchman and Conservative'. He had played a very active part in the administration of Sutton parish, as overseer of the poor, a churchwarden, and member of the Sutton Parochial Sanitary Committee. He was vice chairman of Epsom District Highway Board, and was one of the directors of the Sutton Gas Company. He was also a member of the Croydon Farmers' Club, The East Surrey Agricultural Association, and a prominent member of the Surrey Agricultural Association. The farm passed to his eldest son also called John Overton who died in 1891. Sutton Lodge passed by a trust to his brother Arthur Overton and then to his nephew Robert Sydney Overton a surgeon who was living there in 1926. The surrounding land was gradually sold off for house building but the Lodge survived and was bought by Sutton Council. It is now used as a seniors' day centre.

3 DESCRIPTION

The building consists of a three bay central block with matching north and south wings of two bays. There are several extensions on the back. Various obviously modern alterations have been omitted from the description.

3.1 The central block

3.1.1 Front

The front of the central block is of yellow to red brick laid in Flemish bond. It is two storeys high and three bays wide (figure 1). There is a door in the centre with a circular window above it and sash windows to either side. The windows have straight tops of cut and rubbed brick and stone sills. There is a cornice with a parapet above it.

The door frame appears to be original. It has a hood or porch supported by brackets with guttae at the bottom. The door itself is divided into six panels. The woodwork appears to be original but the upper four panels have been replaced with glass (figure 2).

3.1.2 The front roof

The block has a double roof with the ridges parallel to the front. There are two front facing dormer windows which, in their present form, appear to be of no great antiquity. Both roofs are covered with slates.

During the building work the slates were taken off the front of the roof (figures 3 and 4). The rafters rested on a ridge piece and were of rather mixed timber, some with waney edges and a few with mortises suggesting reuse. There were various pieces of reinforcement and more were inserted during the work. The dormer frames were recent.

3.1.3 Back

Here, the central block is a three bay, three storey structure, in soft red brick laid in Flemish bond (figures 5 and 6). There is a two storey cement rendered extension in the centre and a small single story extension to the north of it with a fire escape over the top of it. The latter looks very modern – perhaps from the 1970s. These extensions mean that there is only one surviving window on the ground floor which has been widened and replaced in UPVC.

There are two windows on the first floor. One, at the northern end of the elevation has a segmental head, while the southern one is wider with only a slight curve at the top.⁴

⁴ The northern window has been converted into a fire escape door.

There are three square windows on the top floor which are wider than the northern first floor window. These have a soldier course along the top and there is then a line of dentilation along the eaves.

The brick of the top floor is slightly darker suggesting that it is an addition, perhaps of the same date as the wide southern first floor window although there is no associated bonding break in the north wall.

The chimneys on the end walls of the central block are flush with the outside of the wall.

3.1.4 The south side

Above the extension the south wall is covered with cement render. When the roof of the south wing was removed mathematical tiles could be seen below the cement render at the western (front) end of the wall. They appeared to extend east to the edge of the chimney stack (figure 7).

3.1.5 The north side

This is mostly of red brick laid in Flemish bond (figure 8). There are two chimneys. The eastern one is flush with the wall on or close to the back roof ridge while the western or front one projects from the wall behind the front ridge. A high parapet wall links the two chimneys above roof level. A door has been cut into the eastern side of the front chimney to give access to the caretaker's flat. There is a narrow window on the west or front side of the chimney stack and then a vertical bonding break. The wall to the west (front) of this is covered with mathematical tiles (figures 9 and 10).

3.1.6 Interior

The front door opens in to a room on the south side of the central block. A staircase in a vaguely Jacobean style rises from this to the first floor (figure 11).

The room at the front of the house to the north of the door is lined with wooden panels of uncertain date.

The bottoms of the two front windows are set back into the wall. The window frames end in brackets with guttae at the bottom, similar to the front door (figure 13).

There are east – west running bridging joists in the ceilings of both front rooms.

A corridor, in line with the front door, runs through the centre of the house to an extension at the back.

The two rooms at the back of the original house have been much altered: the southern one to create a kitchen and the northern one toilets.

The second floor has been much altered and there are few remaining period details apart from some doors and a staircase which doglegs up to the attic in the centre of the building.

3.1.7 The cellars

The cellars were not investigated but the western wall is known to include some chalk blocks.

3.2 The north wing

3.2.1 Front

This is a two bay structure set back slightly from the main block. It is of brick which is largely yellow although it occasionally shades towards red. It is laid in Flemish bond and has been repointed with hard brown mortar in the relatively recent past. The window heads are of good cut and rubbed brick and there are stone window sills. There is an offset above ground level which runs right across the front including the wings.

3.2.2 Back

This is soft red brick laid in Flemish bond with some irregularities to accommodate the windows. The two windows have cut and rubbed brick heads.

3.2.3 North side

This is of soft red brick in Flemish bond with tuck pointed joints. At the northwest corner it is neatly bonded into the front wall. There is a metal fire escape.

3.2.4 Interior

The north wing contains one large room. The floor level is above that of the main block to which the room is connected by two doors, one at the east end and one at the west. The doors are divided into six panels with two small ones at the top, similar to each other, and to the front door (figures 15 and 16).

There is a very late 18th or early 19th century fireplace of grey veined white marble connected to a chimney against the wall of the main block (figure 14).

The walls are decorated with large moulded panels without a dado rail.

The windows are much wider at the back than the front. The bottoms are set back into the walls.

3.3 The south wing

3.3.1 Front

This is very similar to the north wing. The brick is yellow, sometimes tending to purple and is laid in Flemish bond. It may be slightly lighter than the north wing but the apparent difference may be due to the pointing, as the bricks here are closely spaced and bonded with a thin layer of white mortar. The window heads are of good cut and rubbed brick and there are stone window sills.

3.3.2 Back

This has a conservatory built against it. The brickwork has been replaced or extensively repaired in the fairly recent past. On the inside top the wall incorporates a line of reused mathematical tiles (figure 17).

3.3.3 South side

There is a clear bonding break between the yellow brick of the front and the soft red brick of the side. The latter is laid in Flemish bond where it is visible (figures 18 to 20).

A vertical timber has been exposed at the southwest corner of the building behind the red facing brick (figures 19 and 20). This contains a halving for a horizontal timber which is now

missing. A fragment of horizontal timber has been uncovered at the about the height of the halving towards the east end of the elevation.

At the southwest corner there appears to be a brick wall or skin inside the timber, a mass of rough brick work beside it and then the red brick external facing which has bulged outwards.

Most of the wall face is covered with Portland cement rendering which has been lined out in blocks. The line for an eastward sloping roof cuts through it for an outbuilding which has now gone. The cement rendering was removed when the repair work was done exposing soft red brick laid in Flemish bond (figure 22).

There is a rainwater hopper in the centre of the elevation which appeared to have emptied onto the roof of the outbuilding. The brick below it has suffered damage and had been subjected to a recent poor repair.

There is a pillar at the north east corner of the building which is of fairly recent brick and appears to be one with the brickwork on the east elevation.

3.3.4 Interior

This is one large room. It originally had four windows, two at the front and two at the back all about the same size. The back window on the east side has been converted into a door which opens into a modern conservatory. The window bottoms are not recessed into the wall.

The walls have a high skirting and dado rail with decorative panels above (figures 23 and 24).

The floor is covered with narrow wooden boards.

The fireplace is of grey veined white marble. This is probably early to mid-19th century (figure 25).

4 DISCUSSION

The documentary evidence suggests that this house was new built and completed about 1762 – a date supported by the inscriptions on the sash weights. However, some of the details in the central block appear to be old fashioned for the date. The cornice on the front, the bracketed hood over the front door, the segmental headed window on the rear elevation and the rather curious dentilations above them all look earlier in the 18th century.⁵ The wide wooden frames on the square windows at the top of the rear elevation would have been banned by the London Building Act of 1709.⁶ Although this did not apply in Surrey it had a considerable influence on fashion. In London stock brick had become the usual facing material by 1730.⁷

The darker colour of the brick suggests that the third floor of the central block is an addition. However, if it was, there should be a bonding break in the north wall but this is not convincingly present. The floor appears to have existed when the 1812 inventory was made.

The original staircase probably doglegged up through the centre of the house. The existing stair between the ground and first floor is likely to be late Victorian or Edwardian.

⁵ Howard 2001 p6, 8 and 13. On the doors see Byrne 1986 p136-159 and Lloyd 1975 p313.

⁶ Byrne 1986 p38.

⁷ Byrne 1986 p123.

The front façade is clearly an addition to an older building. The area of mathematical tiles on the south gable suggest that the front was extended by around 1 m. This would involve the reconstruction of the front roof and may explain why the front chimney on the north elevation is behind the ridge. It is possible that the front door and frame were reused from the earlier building.

If this is correct the refacing may perhaps date from the 1760s and the older back part may date from the 1720s or 30s. This would be the structure named Little Hell on Roques map of Surrey of about 1760.

The wings are clearly additions and the variations in construction suggest that they are of different dates. The inventory suggests that only one wing existed in 1812. This is likely to have been the northern one as the fire place in it was fashionable from the 1790s into the early 19th century.⁸ The fireplace in the south wing probably dates from the 1820s or 30s into the mid-19th century.

Sutton Lodge is probably the earliest surviving building in the former parish of Sutton apart from a few fragmentary remains and boundary walls.

4.1 The south wall of the south wing

There is a very clear and clean bonding break between the front and side wall of the south wing. The timber post exposed at the western end of the side wall and the small fragment of rail at the eastern end suggest that this wall was originally timber framed and was presumably covered with either peg tiles or mathematical tiles. This timber work appears to be backed by a brick wall which must carry the 19th century decoration on the inside of the wing. It seems that an underlying brick structure was originally faced with tiles. The most likely explanation for this curious arrangement was to increase the water resistance of a wall which was exposed to the southwest winds and not directly visible from the front. If the arrangement dates from the first half of the 19th century, peg tiles are a much more likely covering than mathematical tiles. If so the arrangement cannot have lasted long as the present soft red brick wall looks eighteenth or nineteenth century.

The side wall of 68 The Close, Salisbury is covered with peg tiles despite the fact that it has a fine classical stone front and is of much higher social status than Sutton Lodge.

4.2 Mathematical tiles

These are present on front end of the gables of the main block where they appear to have been used to fill the gap created when the front was extended forward.

Three other examples are known within the London Borough of Sutton: the southwest corner of the Old Rectory in Cheam, on Wallington Old Manor House, and at The Oaks where they have been found among the demolition debris.⁹

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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⁸ Byrne 1986 p192.

⁹ The Cheam Rectory tiles are still in place. Wallington Old Manor House stood on the west side of Manor Road North between Acre Lane and Westcroft Road. For the Oaks see Phillips 2011.

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The Oaks Park Mansion House, Report on an excavation in July 2009. Word processed report, 2011.



Figure 1. The front looking north.



Figure 2. The front door.



Figure 3. The front roof looking north during the repair work.

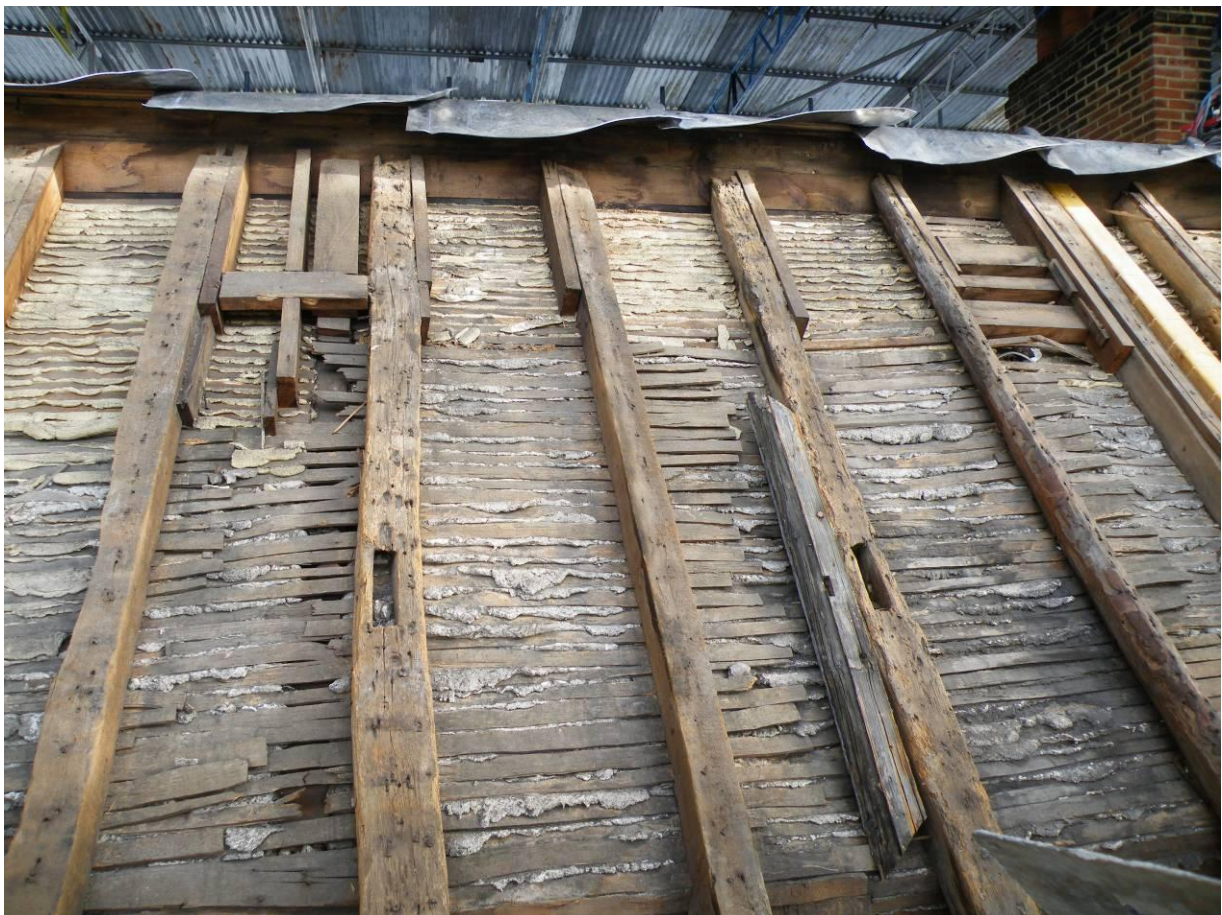


Figure 4. Reused timbers in the south end of the front roof.



Figure 5. Central block, back, south end.



Figure 6. The back of the central block looking southwest.



Figure 7. The south side of the main block and the roof of the south wing during building work, 3 November 2010.



Figure 8. The north gable of the main block from the east.



Figure 9. The western (front) end of the north gable of the main block. Note the bonding break and mathematical tiles to the right.



Figure 10. Detail of the mathematical tiles on the western end of the north gable of the main block.



Figure 11. The staircase from the ground floor.



Figure 12. The staircase to the caretakers flat in the attic.



Figure 13. Front window in the central block.



Figure 14. Fireplace in the north wing.



Figure 15. Door between the north wing and the central block.



Figure 16. The north wing.



Figure 17. The wall top at southeast corner of the south extension looking east. Note the line of broken mathematical tiles.

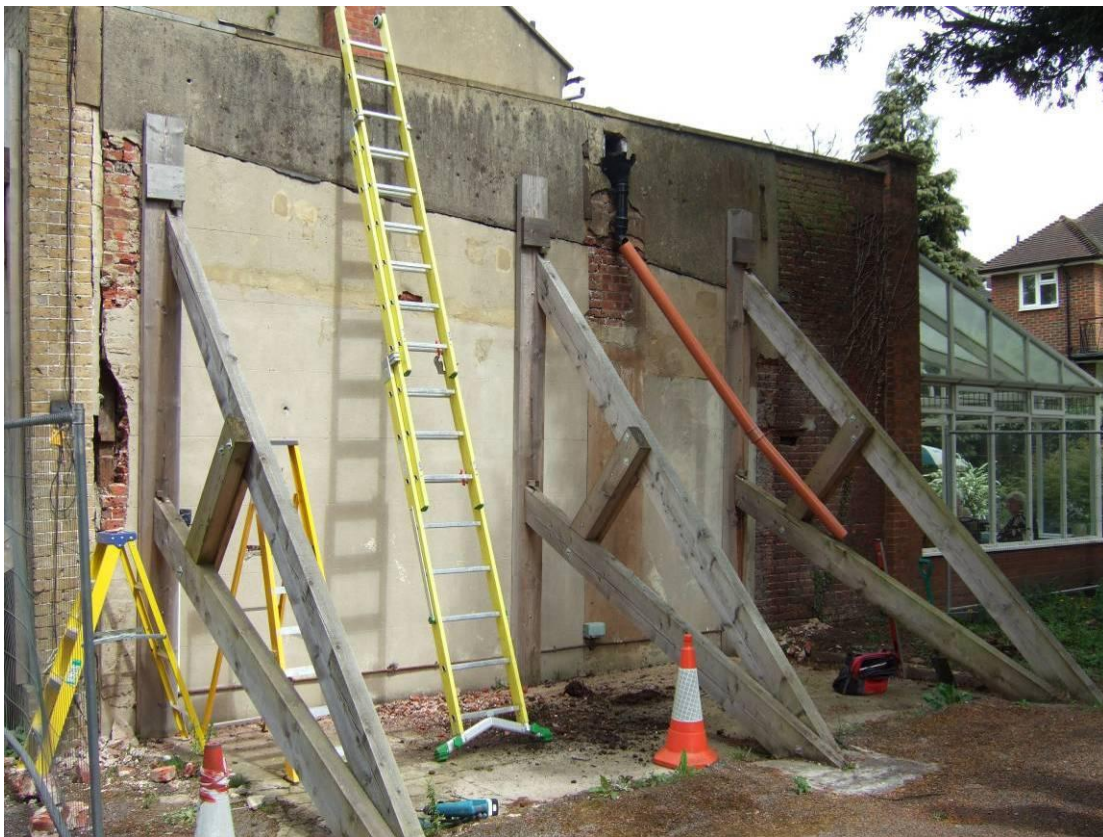


Figure 18. The south wall of the south wing.



Figure 19. The western end of the south wall of the south wing.

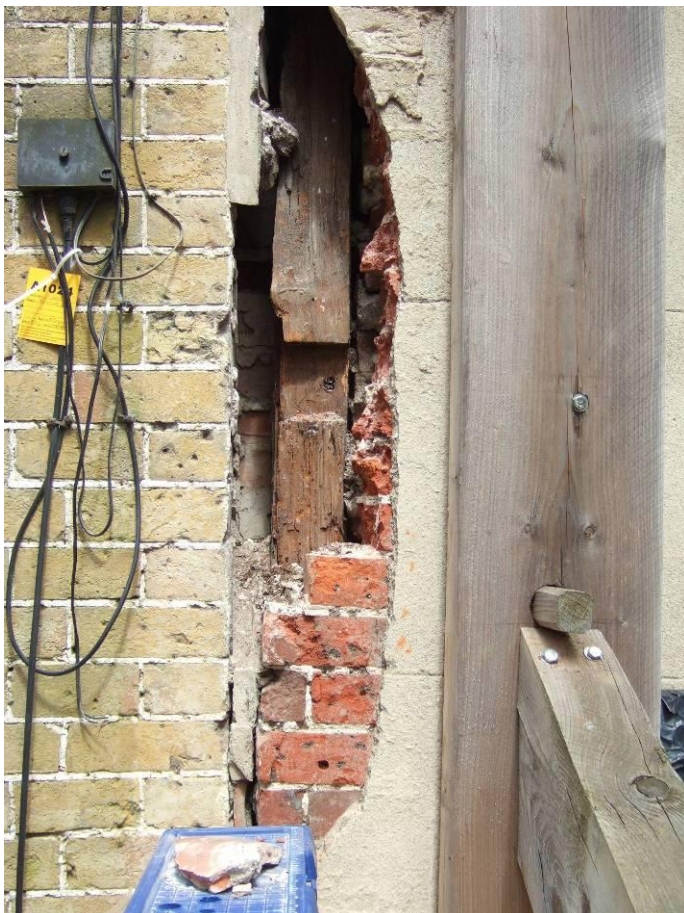


Figure 20. Detail of the western end of the south wall of the south wing showing the timber post with the halving and the brickwork behind it.



Figure 21. The eastern end of the south wall of the south wing.

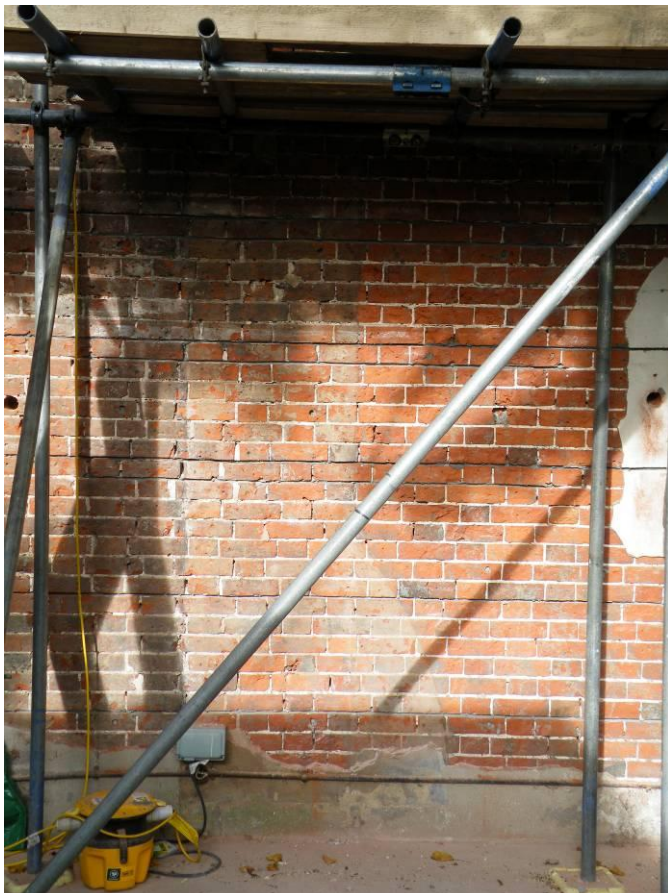


Figure 22. The brickwork in the centre of the south wall of the south wing after the removal of the render.



Figure 23. The south wing south wall.



Figure 24. Detail of the skirting on south wall of the south wing.



Figure 25. Fireplace in the south wing.