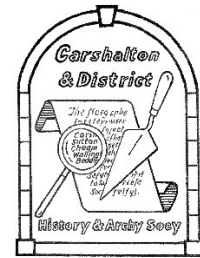


Carshalton & District History & Archaeology Society

Local History Note 20



The history of Sutton Lodge, Brighton Road, Sutton

March 2025

John Phillips

1 THE HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

Sutton Lodge stands on the east side of Brighton Road a short distance north of the junction with the road across the downs to Banstead.

Sometime before 1748 John Wells, maltster of Sutton, bought from Samuel Stoughton several pieces of land totalling 25½ acres within the Manor of Sutton in Sutton and Carshalton. In or about August 1748 John Wells raised a £200 mortgage on the property which included 'all the buildings lately erected and built upon part of the said lands by him the said John Wells and now in his own occupation'. This was paid off in December 1754.¹

The court rolls and 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 outhouses edifices and buildings upon the said [Downs] close lately erected and built by the said John Wells.'²

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.³

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 a hall, butler's pantry, dining room, study, drawing room and kitchen on the ground floor. 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 10.⁴ His mother Jane was appointed guardian and she was licensed to rent the property until her son was 21.

¹ Sutton Court Roll 6/3, 4 April 1749 and 6/4 p. 1-3. The earlier court rolls in Latin have not been checked.

² Sutton Archives 6/4 p. 1-3 and accession 409 bundle 9.

³ Accession number 2004.110. It is not known which windows they were salvaged from.

⁴ The custom of the manor of Sutton was Borough English which meant that the youngest son inherited.

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 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.

2 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.

2.1 The central block

2.1.1 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 and 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).

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.

2.1.2 Back

Here, the central block is a three bay, three storey structure, in soft red brick laid in Flemish bond (figures 3 and 4). 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 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.⁵

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.

⁵ The northern window has been converted into a fire escape door.

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.

2.1.3 The south side

Above the extension the south wall is covered with cement render.

2.1.4 The north side

This is of red brick laid in Flemish bond. There is no bonding break between the front and back halves of the building.

2.1.5 Interior

The front door opens 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.

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 5).

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.

2.1.6 The cellars

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

2.2 The north wing

2.2.1 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.

2.2.2 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.

2.2.3 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.

2.2.4 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 7 and 8).

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 6).

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.

2.3 The south wing

2.3.1 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.

2.3.2 Back

This has a conservatory built against it. The brickwork has been replaced or extensively repaired in the fairly recent past.

2.3.3 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 12 and 15).

A vertical timber has been exposed at the southwest corner of the building behind the red facing brick (figures 13 and 14). 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.

There is a rainwater hopper in the centre of the elevation which appears to have emptied on the roof of the outbuilding. The brick below it has suffered damage and 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. It may date from the 1950s.

2.3.4 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 9 and 10).

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 11).

3 DISCUSSION

The documentary evidence suggests that this house was new built by 1754 and that it was refaced in 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.⁶ 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 1709.⁷ 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 1730.⁸ A date in the 1760s fits uneasily with the architectural details of the central block which seem more appropriate to 1720s or 30s.

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.⁹ The fireplace in the south wing probably dates from the 1820s or 30s into the mid-19th century.

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.

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

4 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

⁶ Howard 2001 p6, 8 and 13. On the doors see Byrne 1986 p136-159 and Lloyd 1975 p313.

⁷ Byrne 1986 p38.

⁸ Byrne 1986 p123.

⁹ Byrne 1986 p192.

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.

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.

If the above interpretation is correct the existing brick outer skin must date from the 19th or perhaps the very early 20th century although the brickwork looks older.

Much of the elevation is now covered with concrete render. This has no architectural merit and from the historical point of view there seems little to be lost by re-facing this section of the wall.

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Byrne, Andrew 1986

London's Georgian Houses. The Georgian Press.

Howard, GE 2001

The smaller brick, stone and weatherboarded houses of Surrey, 17th to mid 19th century: a statistical analysis. Surrey Domestic Buildings Research Group.

Lloyd, Nathaniel 1975

A history of the English House from the earliest times to the Victorian period. Architectural Press.



Figure 1. The front looking north.



Figure 2. The front door.



Figure 3. Central block, back, south end.



Figure 4. The back of the central block looking southwest.



Figure 5. Front window in the central block.



Figure 6. Fireplace in the north wing.



Figure 7. Door between the north wing and the central block.



Figure 8. The north wing.



Figure 9. The south wing south wall.



Figure 10. Detail of the skirting on south wall of the south wing.



Figure 11. Fireplace in the south wing.



Figure 12. The south wall of the south wing.



Figure 13. The western end of the south wall of the south wing.



Figure 14. 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 15. The eastern end of the south wall of the south wing.