



Harper House Radlett Hertfordshire

Historic Building Recording



Oxford Archaeology

August 2005

Client: Nordstrom Associates

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NGR: TL 172019

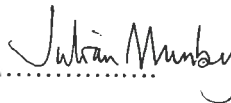
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HARPER HOUSE

HISTORIC BUILDING PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDING

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HARPER HOUSE

RADLETT, HERTFORDSHIRE

HISTORIC BUILDING PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDING

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out photographic recording of a window and secondary staircase at Harper House, Hertfordshire. This work was on behalf of Nordström Associates in accordance with the listed building consent. These features are to be removed during renovation of the structure. Harper House is Grade II Listed, constructed in 1871 and is an early Norman Shaw house.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 LOCATION AND SCOPE OF WORK

- 1.1.1 Harper House is a Grade II listed building which is currently being converted from a hospital building to a residential property; this will return the building to its original use. Harper House is located in the village of Radlett which lies to the south of St Albans in Hertfordshire. As part of these conversion works a staircase is to be removed and a window converted to a doorway. The window is located on the ground floor, front elevation and the staircase extends to the second floor of the house.
- 1.1.2 St Albans City and District Council have granted planning approval and listed building consent with a condition stating that: "*Prior to the commencement of any works on site, all interior and exterior surfaces of the Listed Building which may be affected by the works are to be photographed and negatives and prints are to be deposited with the Local Planning Authority in a form that can be archived*"(Ref. no - 5/05/1045LB).
- 1.1.3 Oxford Archaeology has consequently been commissioned by Nordström Associates to photographically record the window and staircase, that will be impacted as part of the ongoing work. No formal brief has been issued for the works but St Albans District Council, in discussions with Nordström Associates, have indicated that they do not require a detailed report with historical research and a full description of the house. This report is principally intended to accompany the photographs which will be archived.



2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1.1 The photographic recording was undertaken in accordance with the guidance of the former Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. The recording followed IFA Standards and Guidelines using conventions outlined in *Recording Historic Buildings: a descriptive specification* (RCHME 1996).
- 2.1.2 Photographs were taken using 35mm film (black and white prints, colour slides) as well as with a digital camera. The recording was heavily concentrated on the staircase and window but a number of general views of the building were also taken to place the areas specifically impacted in their context. A scale was used as appropriate. All films included a chalk board indicating the film number and site code. Photographic record sheets were used to indicate the location and direction of each view and any further detail.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 Harper House is Grade II Listed, constructed in 1871 and is an early Norman Shaw house (please see appendix 1 for Listed Building description). It was previously known as 'Harperbury House', and constructed for the solicitor John Oddie. No formal historical research has been undertaken for the current project.

4 BRIEF DESCRIPTION

- 4.1.1 A detailed description of the building was not required in the current project. A brief description is included in the listing which is included here as Appendix 1 (taken from Images of England website) and a short summary is also included here together with some description of the impacted areas.
- 4.1.2 The main wing of the house is of two storeys and it has a three storey service wing. It is an asymmetrical design and red brick with a partly tile hung first floor level. There is a pointed arch entrance and sash, transom and mullion windows. The roof is tiled and gabled, there is a bay window to the rear and a recessed bay to the front elevation (*Images of England*, 2005).
- 4.1.3 The window that is to be removed to allow the insertion of a doorway is located on the ground floor, front elevation. It is a four light window with moulded softwood transom and mullion. The transom and mullion are painted white while the frame is painted a burgundy colour. The lintel and sill are both faced in brick with sloped edges.
- 4.1.4 The staircase extends from the ground floor to the second floor and is located within the three storey service wing of the house. It has a series of straight flights with landings and is constructed of white-painted softwood. It has square section balusters, a rounded handrail and plain turned newel posts with button tops. Beneath each flight there are built-in cupboards with panelled boarding.
- 4.1.5 From the location of the stairs it was clearly a servant's stair or 'secondary' in the spatial or organisational hierarchy of the house. Its plain design reflects this use and it contrasts with the more elaborate principal open-well staircase. From its design it appears to be of later 19th-century date and is presumably original to the Norman Shaw house.



5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 Richard Norman Shaw was the most important late Victorian architect and as such all of his many surviving buildings (including Harper House) are of historical significance.
- 5.1.2 Compared to many of Norman Shaw's work Harper (or Harperbury) House is relatively little known. There is no mention of it in the original (1953) edition of Pevsner's volume on Hertfordshire and very little mention of it can be found by searching on the internet. It is one of Norman Shaw's earlier works, fitting within his 'Old English' phase of building country houses in a traditional, vernacular style. The use of gables, large chimney stacks, tile hung upper floors and mullioned windows are all typical for his work of this period.
- 5.1.3 The window and staircase are both almost certainly features original to the house and recording them prior to their removal has been a valuable exercise in preserving those minor parts of the building's history.

Oxford Archaeology
August 2005

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| RCHME | Recording Historic Buildings: a descriptive specification, 1996 |
| Images of England | <i>Listed Building Description</i> (IoE 471800) 2005
(description completed in 1998) |
| Frampton K | <i>Modern Architecture a Critical History</i> 1980 |
| Girouard M | <i>The Victorian Country House</i> 1979 |
| Pevsner N | <i>The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire</i> 1953 |
| Pevsner N | <i>The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design</i> 1985 |



7 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Harper House, Radlett, Hertfordshire

Site code: RAHHOBS

Type of evaluation: Building Photographic Recording

Date and duration of project: August 2005

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA,
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.

List of Archived Items:

Two films of 35mm photographic negatives (black and white prints)

Two sets of black and white photographic prints (contact sheets)

Two films of 35mm colour slides

A copy of the current report

8 APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Listed building description (from Images of England website)

IoE number:	471800
Location:	HARPER HOUSE, HARPER LANE ST STEPHEN, ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE
Photographer:	Mr Douglas Fairbank LRPS
Date Photographed:	02 March 2004
Date listed:	09 December 1998
Date of last amendment:	09 December 1998
Grade	II

TL 10 SE ST STEPHEN HARPER LANE 270/13/10019 Harper House II Former country house known as Harperbury House. 1871 by Richard Norman Shaw for solicitor, John Oddie; later C20 extension. Red brick, partly tile-hung at 1st floor level. Tiled gabled roofs, those to the main house with heavily moulded, white-painted timber gable pediments. Formerly with tall brick chimney stacks. 2-storey main wing; 3-storey service wing. Irregular fenestration. Asymmetrical design. Pointed arch entrance to recessed doorway; transom and mullion window to right. 4 sashes at 1st floor with dog-tooth brick cill band. Recessed bay to left has 2 sashes at ground floor and set back large stair window. Service block tilehung to 2nd floor with transom and mullion windows to ground floor, sashes to 1st and casements to 2nd. Rear facade with similar gables having 4-light transom and mullion windows with cross top lights beneath. Ground floor has a bay window and 3 similar lights to right. Interior: retains the original open well stair with turned balusters and newel finials; servants stair with column newel. Some original C18 style fireplaces; 2 with overmirrors flanked by glass cases. History: this is an early and unusual Shaw house, anticipating his work at Bedford Park.



Plate 1: General view of front elevation



Plate 2: General view of rear elevation



Plate 3: View of front elevation (showing location of window to be removed)



Plate 4: Window to be removed, front elevation



Plate 5: Window to be removed, front elevation



Plate 6: Window to be removed, front elevation



Plate 7: Staircase, ground floor



Plate 8: Staircase, ground floor



Plate 9: Staircase, first floor



Plate 10: Staircase, first floor



Plate 11: First floor staircase, detailing square balusters, rounded handrail, turned newel post and button top



Plate 12: Staircase, second floor



Plate 13: Staircase, second floor