
HISTORIC BUILDING APPRAISAL

In respect of:
Wotton House
Horton Road
Gloucester

on behalf of:
Redcliffe College

CgMs Ref: SR/HB/12782

Date: May 2011

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Simon Roper-Pressdee, MIHBC, PIFA, Senior Associate Director, of CgMs Ltd, on behalf of The Redcliffe College, Gloucester. The report was requested by Phil Scrafton, Director for Globe Consultants in order to assess the historic and architectural significance of the elements of Wotton House, Horton Road, Gloucester, a Grade II Listed building. The building was included in the Statutory List on 23rd January 1952.
- 1.2 Site visits were conducted by Simon Roper-Pressdee on 12th April 2011. No invasive investigative work undertaken as part of this visit.
- 1.3 The main issues considered in this report are the evolution of the building and its historic and architectural value and significance. The report provides an understanding of the building and its architectural development and also assesses its significance in National terms, due to its Listing.
- 1.4 The building is located on the western side of Horton Road, near the junction with London Road (B4063). The original building fronts onto the Horton Road and has several extensions to the sides and rear, indicative of its changing uses and roles since its original construction.

2.0 HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The first written evidence of Wotton appears in the Domesday Book, where the evidence of an early Norman settlement is given through the entry stating "William Froisseloup holds Wotton of the king. Godric held it.....It was worth 30s; now 60s".
- 2.2 This gives some indication that, whilst the land was in the ownership of the King, it was managed by others. It is also possible that this indicates a pre-Norman settlement in the area, but this is not proven through documentary evidence, merely suggested.

- 2.3 By 1487, Wotton Manor (an estate covering the surrounding area, on the outskirts of Gloucester), is in the ownership of Sir William Nottingham, and by the early sixteenth century, the estate is sub-divided further.
- 2.4 in 1608m, much of the land within the estate, including an early house called "Spencers" was sold off, and by 1683 much of the land was bought by a successful local clothier, John Blanch.
- 2.5 The land was bought as an investment for his daughter, Mary Horton, married to Thomas Horton, who was a land-owner in his own right. Sadly, he was found to be a lunatic, as was his son.
- 2.6 Little further documentary evidence of the building can be found, until the property is held on the open market in 1921, where the sales particulars give good evidence of the original property and its surroundings, prior to the development in the 1930's, covered in more detail later in the report.
- 2.7 The site and buildings were bought in 1925 for the Gloucester Training College of Domestic Science, which soon became associated with Bristol University. In order to fulfil the requirements for the new college, a variety of extensions were applied for, and approved, including for the existing residential blocks still present.
- 2.8 This phase of construction saw the removal of several of the existing buildings, including the stable block, fruit house and other brick built ranges, and their replacement with the single storey dining hall and lecture rooms.
- 2.9 The ownership of the Site changed again during the mid 1970's, with the NHS taking possession of the buildings. No significant alterations to the built fabric have been identified from this period of ownership.
- 2.10 The current owners, Redcliffe College, bought the building, associated outbuildings, and land, in 1994.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section consists of an architectural description of the exterior and interior of the building and its extensions and additional elements. It will start with a description of the exterior of the original building, followed by the various phases of extension, and finally examining the interior of the site.

3.2 Original building

3.2.1 Constructed in a warm red brick with a creamy white mortar, the original building is an example of the period of changing architectural styles typical of the early Eighteenth Century, but appears to be predominantly a very early Palladian-style property, but without many of the elements later associated with such designs.

3.2.2 The front façade is rhythmical, with seven bays formed by the window piercings at both ground and first floor. Originally, at ground floor this facade would have had three 6/6 timber sash windows to each side of the front door, but a later bay has been erected to the left hand side (facing) at ground floor, removing the balance of the façade.

3.2.3 The door is central to the elevation, and set within a stone portico, capped with a segmental pediment supported on two Doric full columns.

3.2.4 The first floor is separated from the ground floor through the use of a simple brick string course, four course high, which wraps around the front elevation, but finishes at the quoins, rather than continuing around the side elevations of the building.

3.2.5 The first floor follows the original pattern of the ground floor, with seven bays and timber 6/6 sash windows.

- 3.2.6 The front corners of the building are detailed with rendered quoins, chamfered on the edges, giving good shadow lines and definition to the corners of the building.
- 3.2.7 The roof of the building overhangs the facade, with a dentil course present in the deep cornice, continuing the detail already presented through the quoins. Hipped and covered in blue slate, probably of Welsh origin, the roof has a slope of c.55 degrees.
- 3.2.8 The second floor of the building lies within the attic space, and is lit through three equally spaced gabled dormer windows, with side hung casements. These lie symmetrical with the lower floors, sited above every other window.
- 3.2.9 Two separate chimney breasts lie to each side elevation, and further add to the symmetrical design of the original building. However, one breast has been reduced in height, and capped at the meet-point with the roof-line.
- 3.2.10 Both sides of the building have been largely extended upon, obliterating much of the original simplicity of design and detail. These extensions will be covered later in the report.
- 3.2.11 The rear of the building presents a more complex design, split into three bays formed by a central full height half-round bay (suspected to be a later addition), and a squared bay to each side.
- 3.2.12 Basement windows are evident on the left hand side (facing), but it is unclear whether these are original.
- 3.2.13 At ground floor, the windows have been replaced with large plate glass 1/1 sashes to the side bays, whilst the central bay has three full-height windows/french doors: as a result, these piercings are divided into four, with two lights at the top, separated by the main mullion.

- 3.2.14 The string course evident on the front elevation is picked up again here, separating the ground and first floors. However, this string-course is not evident on the central bay, lending further evidence to this being a later addition.
- 3.2.15 At first floor, the windows retain their original style and appearance, presenting 6/6 sashes, with timber surrounds flush with the external face of the building. This element gives some indication of a post-terminus date of 1709 for the initial construction, with the introduction of the 1709 Building Act, requiring the recessing of sash windows from the façade.
- 3.2.16 Again continuing the detailing from the front elevation, the corners of the building are finished with rendered and chamfered quoins, whilst the roof sits on a plinth consisting of a dentilled cornice.
- 3.2.17 The three bays are further defined by the roofscape, where three projecting hips form the bays, each of which has a dormer window in the same style as the front elevation.

3.3 *Late Georgian/ Early Victorian*

- 3.3.1 The first elements of alteration and extension to the property see the start of the unbalancing of the building, its façades, and detriment to its visual appearance. These include the insertion of the central rear bay, the addition of the bay window to the front elevation, and the addition of a servant's quarter, housed in a small two storey extension to the north.
- 3.3.2 The central bay, whilst continuing many of the same details, including the fenestration of the windows, shows clear separation in style and continuity from the flanking bays. Firstly, the window line at both ground and first floor does not follow through from the adjacent bays, and gives further indication that this element is a later extension/ alteration to the original building. The windows are also lintels are also finished in a deep red rubbed brick, contrasting with the simple finishing elsewhere on the original building. Finally, the cornice running around the top of the wall is in a far simpler design than the original, lacking the dentil details, and runs slightly higher than the cornice to the side bays.

- 3.3.3 The front bay is constructed in a similar brick, and again in a white mortar. However, the windows contain different sash windows (2/2), and there is a distinct lack of architectural detailing to the bay, save for the stone coping running around the top of the wall.
- 3.3.4 The brick and slate building tucked to the rear of the house, at the northern end, and is simple both in its construction and in its materials. With minimal architectural detailing, this was clearly constructed as a subservient element to the house.
- 3.3.5 The sales particulars of the 1920's give good indication of the uses of the building, which give further evidence of the historic evolution of the house. As a subservient element of the house, this extension was constructed to house a cool cellar, a boot and knife house, a coal house and a wc.
- 3.3.6 The small single storey extension in front of this building possibly dates to this overall period as well, but post-dates it. Constructed in a similar brick to that of the front bay window, the same cornice detailing runs around the top. However, quoins are evident here, and give clear indication that this element has undergone further transformation during its life.

3.4 *Late Victorian/ Early Twentieth*

- 3.4.1 Two additions still evident are through to be of this period, namely the food hall and the dance hall. Both remain distinct individual elements of the site, and retain much of their original detailing.
- 3.4.2 The sales particulars of the 1920s give further indication and evidence of the buildings which the food hall and dance hall replaced: with stabling, including 2 loose boxes, tack rooms, and a garage, a capital fruit house, a vinery, poultry houses, store houses, and petrol houses it is clear that Wotton House was a substantial country seat, and had developed significantly during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

3.4.3 The dance hall lies to the rear of the group, and is tied in to the roof line of the earlier servant's quarter extension. In a slate roof, with chimney central to the front elevation, the building is constructed in red brick, and deep eaves.

3.4.4 Large, decorative timber arched french windows access the rear garden, where the window frames show the detail and depth utilised in their construction. The later addition to the front, including the entrance door, has obliterated two further French windows, which would have given access and egress from the front of the site.

3.4.5 The kitchen and dining hall lies to the northern edge of the site, and is constructed in the same detail as the dance hall. The same style of French windows are present here, but to the front elevation, giving clear views and access to Horton Road.

3.5 *1930's*

3.5.1 The extensions constructed during this period largely follow the design ethic of the original building, retaining architectural details externally, including quoins and sash windows.

3.5.2 However, other additions have removed much of the decorative frontages, and through joining up and covering over earlier elements of the site, the appearance becomes far more severe and institutional.

3.5.3 Constructed over three storeys, including ground floor, the main section of construction was built as an accommodation block, projecting west to the rear of the site, the use of which still remains today.

3.5.4 At ground floor, facing the garden, the principal elevation has a strong character and appearance, with rubbed brick arches to windows, with rendered keystones central to the arch, and projecting forward and above the arch.

3.5.5 The rhythm of these windows is recreated at first floor, where the detailing is similar, but lacking the keystones present below.

- 3.5.6 A concrete string course is present separating the first and second floors, and runs around the entire building, helping to give architectural interest to the building, and through dividing the floor heights up, some unification in height with the principal building.
- 3.5.7 The roof is hipped, and covered in Welsh blue slate, and chimney stacks are evident at both eastern and western gable roofs.
- 3.5.8 The northern elevation is less formal, and whilst retaining many of the architectural features, is clearly in status a secondary elevation. Less balanced than the southern elevation, and clearly more utilitarian with bathroom block projections, this further gives some considerable understanding to the construction style and methodology behind the design.
- 3.5.9 It is thus clear that the principal consideration during the design was that the southern elevation would be the most viewed, and relevant to the workings of the building, whilst the northern elevation would be seen and considered far less.
- 3.5.10 Other alterations included the erection of a new façade to the front of the dance hall. Whilst still retaining the rear façade, the creation of a hallway, linking all elements of the site was seen as necessary. To this end, a new corridor was built to the front of the dance hall, and introducing some elements of design, such as the door frame, from other areas of the same period.

3.6 *Interior*

- 3.6.1 The principal building retains many of its details, and architectural features, as well as largely retaining its original planform.
- 3.6.2 The entrance hall is spacious and light, illuminated by the window to the stairwell, and a large sash window adjacent to the door. The black and white tiled floor remains in situ and is in excellent condition, whilst the mahogany staircase rises from the left hand side of the room (facing entrance).

- 3.6.3 The rear rooms are accessed from the main hall, through original doorways and frames, and again retain many of their original features, including window box shutters, as do many of the other rooms in this section of the building.
- 3.6.4 The next additions to the house, the kitchen/ dining hall and the dance hall, are still in their original condition, and with original detailing.
- 3.6.5 The dance hall has detailed cornicing and plaster decoration throughout the room, covering walls and ceiling. Large decoratively arched French windows lead out to the rear garden, and provide good lighting and views from within. The floor also retains the original sprung floorboards, further adding to the interest of the room.
- 3.6.6 As with the dance hall, the kitchen and dining hall also retains many original features, and is a clear partner to the dance hall, in terms of design, style and period. The servery is an intricate design in timber, and large French windows give light from the front of the building, and views to Horton Road.
- 3.6.7 Leading through to the 1931 accommodation block, the individual rooms were not available for inspection, due to privacy of occupants. However, access to the public areas, including stairwells, corridors and halls, and toilet blocks, were all possible.
- 3.6.8 Whilst the decoration has tried to lighten the corridors, they immediately give their institutional origins away: central to the building, allowing habitably rooms to be positioned to the sides of the building for window and natural light, these are plain in decoration, and have a clear "tunnelling" effect, similar to hospital corridors.
- 3.6.9 The toilet blocks are also in near original condition, and are immediately recognisable, both from inside and outside the building. Constructed as a series of shared facilities, these continue to serve the accommodation within the block, but have negligible architectural value.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 4.1 Listed during the first years of Statutory Protection, in 1952, it is clear that the dominating reason for inclusion is the principal and original building. Constructed as a gentleman's residence, sitting outside the City boundaries, the building is typical in detail and construction of its period and status as a country house. This element of the site should be considered as the principal element, the significance lying in the initial development of this part of Gloucester, and the architectural style and construction of the house.
- 4.2 Internally, the building remains largely intact, and in good condition, retaining many of its details including staircase, window boxes, skirting and coving, and tiled floors.
- 4.3 The end of the eighteenth century saw the adjacent land, in the ownership of the City Council, become the site of construction for the city lunatic asylum in 1793. This appears to have had an impact on the status of the house, which over the next seventy years saw the alteration of its character and purpose. With the first extension reaching north and west, branching from the northern side of the house, the pattern and purpose of the site was set in brick and mortar, as evidenced in the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884.
- 4.4 The elements of construction still evident today from this period are the bay windows to the front and rear of the building, and the small two-storey building to the north, linking the original house with the twentieth century additions.
- 4.5 In terms of significance, whilst they hold little in relation to the original design of the property, they none-the-less are the only remaining physical elements surviving of this alteration of usage and design. They therefore should be given some degree of consideration as part of the historical development of the house. However, in themselves, they are not of National interest, and are not indicative of national trends. Their architectural construction and style are not of any particularly high quality or standard, and thus their significance, nationally, regionally and locally, are minimal.

- 4.6 Both the kitchen/ dining hall and the dance hall remain as separate entities to the site, but are physically entwined into the fabric of the development, through the addition of later extension.
- 4.7 It is unclear at this stage as to their original purpose, which would have reflected on the changing use of the site and principal building, but they clearly hold significance in understanding the physical development of the site none-the-less.
- 4.8 Furthermore, considering their design, and their originality, these should be considered as important elements to the site, both in terms of historical development of the building, and for their architectural interest.
- 4.9 It is the authors view however, that these would not necessarily be subject of Listing in their own right, but have some interest as part of the development of the original house.
- 4.10 The later construction of the site, which remains today, includes the redevelopment of the northern wing, and the rebuilding of the western wing.
- 4.11 Again, similarly to the extensions and alterations mentioned above, they should be considered as important in the evolution of the site and the building, but should not be considered as of national interest or importance. They do not have any degree of high quality architecture, design or construction, and are immediately recognisable as an institutional form and design, but are clearly indicative of the changing status and meaning of the site.
- 4.12 Assessing this element of the building in terms of importance in the site, one should take into account both the exterior of the building, its interior spaces, and its uses and circulation spaces, assessing each of these in terms of their importance, both relative to each other and to the site as a whole.
- 4.13 The internal spaces of the building have altered little since its construction, and still retain most of the original spaces. Of particular interest are the dining hall and kitchen servery, which give some indication to the consideration of internal period décor during the early to middle twentieth century.

- 4.14 The main block retains its original accommodation use, and has been little altered. The staircases retain their wrought iron balustrading, with geometric design, and the faux-stone (concrete) steps still remain largely uncovered and intact, whilst the corridor on each floor, save for the attic spaces, remains central to the building, with rooms leading off from each side.
- 4.15 The toilets and washrooms remain in the side wings, and have little altered since their original construction.
- 4.16 In terms of significance of the site, the dining room and kitchen/ servery should be considered as of high to medium importance for understanding the layout and use of the building, and its areas. These areas should remain intact, to retain their architectural detailing and their significance for the site.
- 4.17 The internal planform of the main block should not be considered as important: the planform follows that of any institutional building of this period, and indeed even to today, with habitable rooms having access to natural light, whilst common access and egress areas contained within the building, not taking up valuable wall or floor space.
- 4.18 Likewise with the toilet blocks, whilst these are of some interest, in terms of being original for the most part, their significance for the building, in relation to helping to understand the detail of alteration, re-use and change for the site, is negligible.
- 4.19 In its original form, the significance of the site would have been considerable, as an example of fine architecture standing in its own grounds, and forming part of the original habitation of this part of Gloucester. Externally, the original building is well-balanced, and utilises various classical rules and designs.
- 4.20 However, this significance was eroded with the addition of the extensions to the north and west. Whilst the significance of the property was diminished, the significance of the site in its new form was still of some interest, and that the principal building remained clearly separate in form if not physically, helped to retain some of that initial significance.

- 4.21 The further extension and development of the site, although of reasonable architectural detailing, further emphasised this erosion of significance of the original building.
- 4.22 The criteria for Listing are that the building should conform to at least one of the following:
- i)* Be of definite quality of architecture;
 - ii)* Be of group value;
 - iii)* Have close historical association with nationally important people or events;
 - iv)* Be an illustration of an important aspect of social, economic, cultural, or military history;
 - v)* Be a good example of planning.
- 4.23 The older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have historic importance. All buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are listed and most buildings built between 1700 and 1840 are listed. Furthermore, there is a greater selection of buildings erected after 1840 and so in order to identify the best examples of particular building types and only buildings of definite quality and character are listed.
- 4.24 The original building clearly falls within the criteria, being of a definite quality of architecture, and through its date and originality.
- 4.25 However, the extensions and later development of the site do not conform to any of the criteria. It is thus proposed that, whilst these elements are considered as being Listed, this is due to the physical connection and relationship of the various elements with the original building, and would not be considered as Nationally important in their own right.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The building is Listed Grade II, and was designated in 1952, in one of the first rounds of Listing. It was Listed primarily for the construction of the Regency country residence of Thomas Horton, for its design and age. It is also important as one of the first properties during the development of this part of Gloucester.
- 5.2 Subsequent additions to the building are also included as Listed Buildings, by virtue of their physical attachment to the original house. This does not however reflect on the importance of their character, appearance or design.
- 5.3 However, even if there were not linked physically, each element of the building pre-dates 1948, and thus they would automatically be considered as Listed curtilage structures.
- 5.4 The first extensions and additions to the building do nothing to enhance the character or appearance of the building, but considerably detract from its natural balance and harmony. Whilst they are important in identifying the historic evolution of the building, architecturally they are of little value.
- 5.5 The author therefore suggests that these elements are of some significance to the building, but are not considered as important as the principal house.
- 5.6 The next additions, the two halls, are of some considerable interest, through their balanced architectural style, and European influence in timber detailing. Whilst it is unclear at this stage who they originally served, they do hold considerable interest architecturally, and in the development of the site.
- 5.7 These elements therefore have considerable significance, in terms of their architecture, but fall second to the principal house, as their construction and date are clearly separate away from the original building. As individual structures, they retain considerable significance and interest.
- 5.8 The twentieth century additions are typical of their period and use. Utilitarian and institutional, they are a common style of building, and whilst are balanced

and of good external design, they hold little national interest. They could not be considered as key buildings due to their location being at the rear of the site, but should be considered with some merit.

- 5.9 It is therefore suggested that this phase of the site holds little architectural value, and none of national interest. At a more local level, however, they are interesting, and help to identify the historic development of Gloucester.
- 5.10 Their internal spaces, whilst retaining the original planform, are of little interest. Many public and publicly owned buildings constructed during this period have similar details, and layouts, and as such the internal spaces are not considered here to be of either national or local interest, the interest lying here with the external appearance, as covered above.
- 5.11 It is therefore suggested that the building has lost its architectural, aesthetic and social significance, but does still retain some interest at local level, in terms of impact and initial visual connectivity within the street-scene.
- 5.12 It can thus be seen that, whilst the whole site does have some architectural merit, and some historic interest, these can be clearly defined, and assessed. Whilst the original building retains its grandeur, this has been watered down through gradual erosion, but predominantly to the north. The additions should not be considered as important or of as much significance as Wotton House itself.

Appendix 1

Listing Description

II

Large house, now a nurses' home. Built for Thomas Horton in early C18 and shown in engraving by Kip dated 1712; mid C19 and C20 alterations and extensions. Brick laid in English bond with stone details, hipped slate roof with gabled dormers, tall brick stacks. C18 double-depth symmetrical block with central bow at rear, C19 canted bay added to front on left and early C20 additions at both ends.

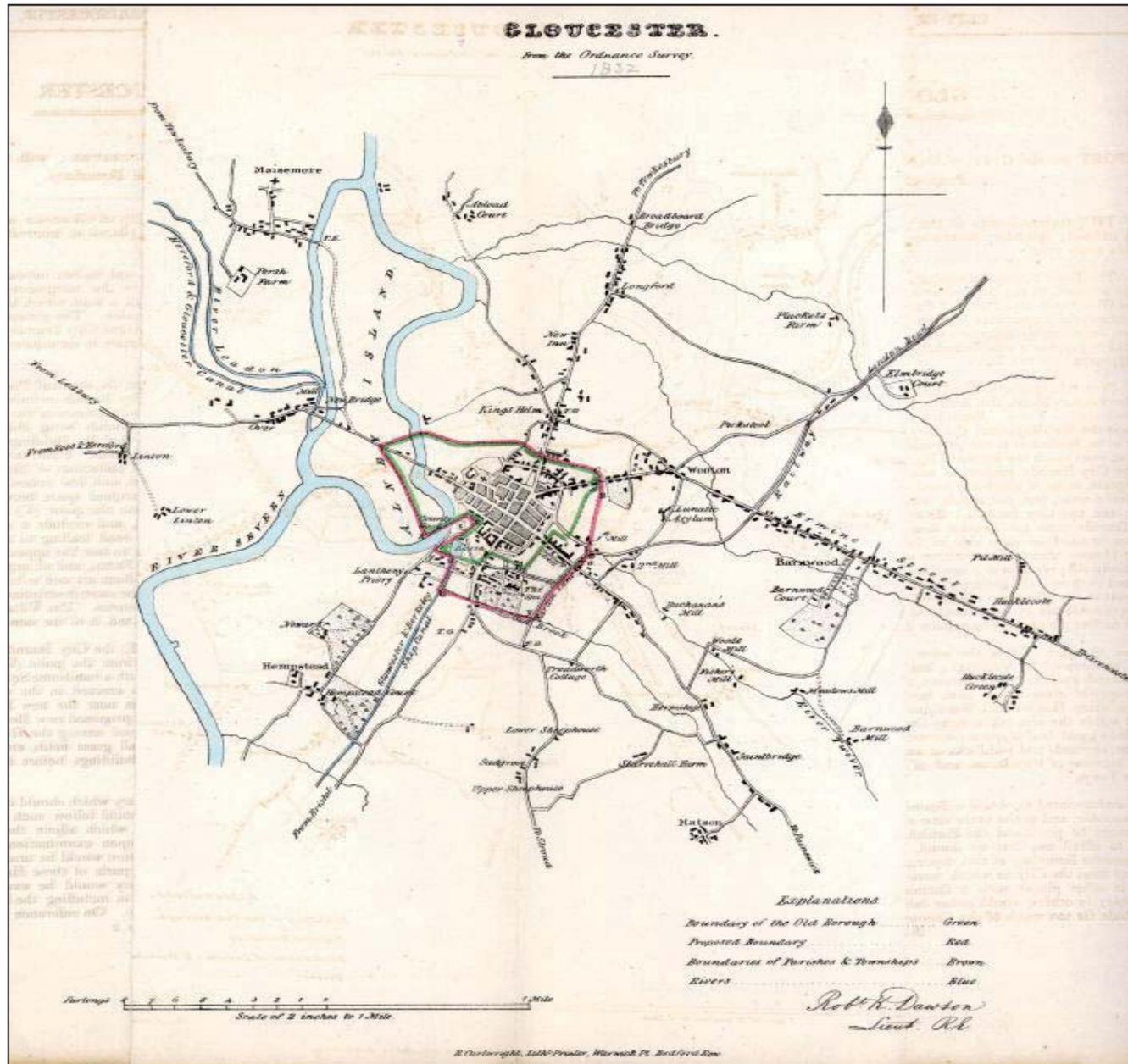
EXTERIOR: main block two storeys and attic. Symmetrical front of seven bays altered by the addition of the canted bay replacing the first and second windows from the left on the ground floor; brick offset plinth, raised brick band at first-floor level and timber crowning modillion cornice, raised and chamfered quoins at the corners. On the ground floor the entrance doorway in the central bay is framed by a shallow stone porch with two fluted Corinthian columns supporting a richly moulded entablature with dossierets at either end and in the centre and a segmental pediment above, fielded six-panel door; on ground and first floors sashes with glazing bars (3x4 panes) in flush timber frames set in openings with rubbed brick flat-arches and projecting stone sills; dormers with double casements; C19 canted bay has stone sill band, crowning stone band and a plain sash in each facet.

INTERIOR: not inspected.

Appendix 2



Sketch of Gloucester, 1712, Johannes Kipp. Wotton House visible as detached residence on right hand side of map, half way down.



Map of Gloucester, Dawson 1835



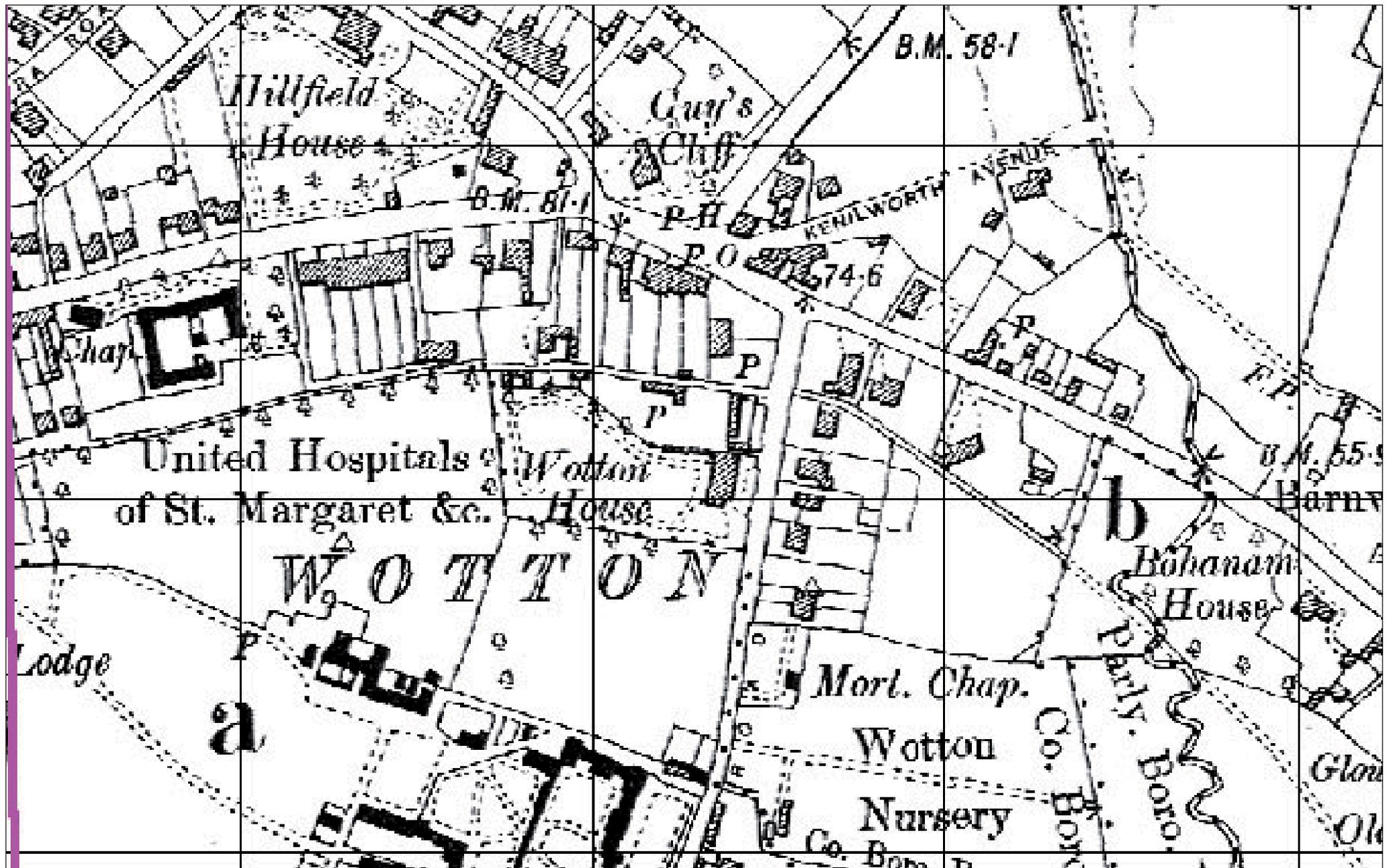
Detail of Wotton, showing Wotton House above Lunatic Asylum: Dawson, 1835



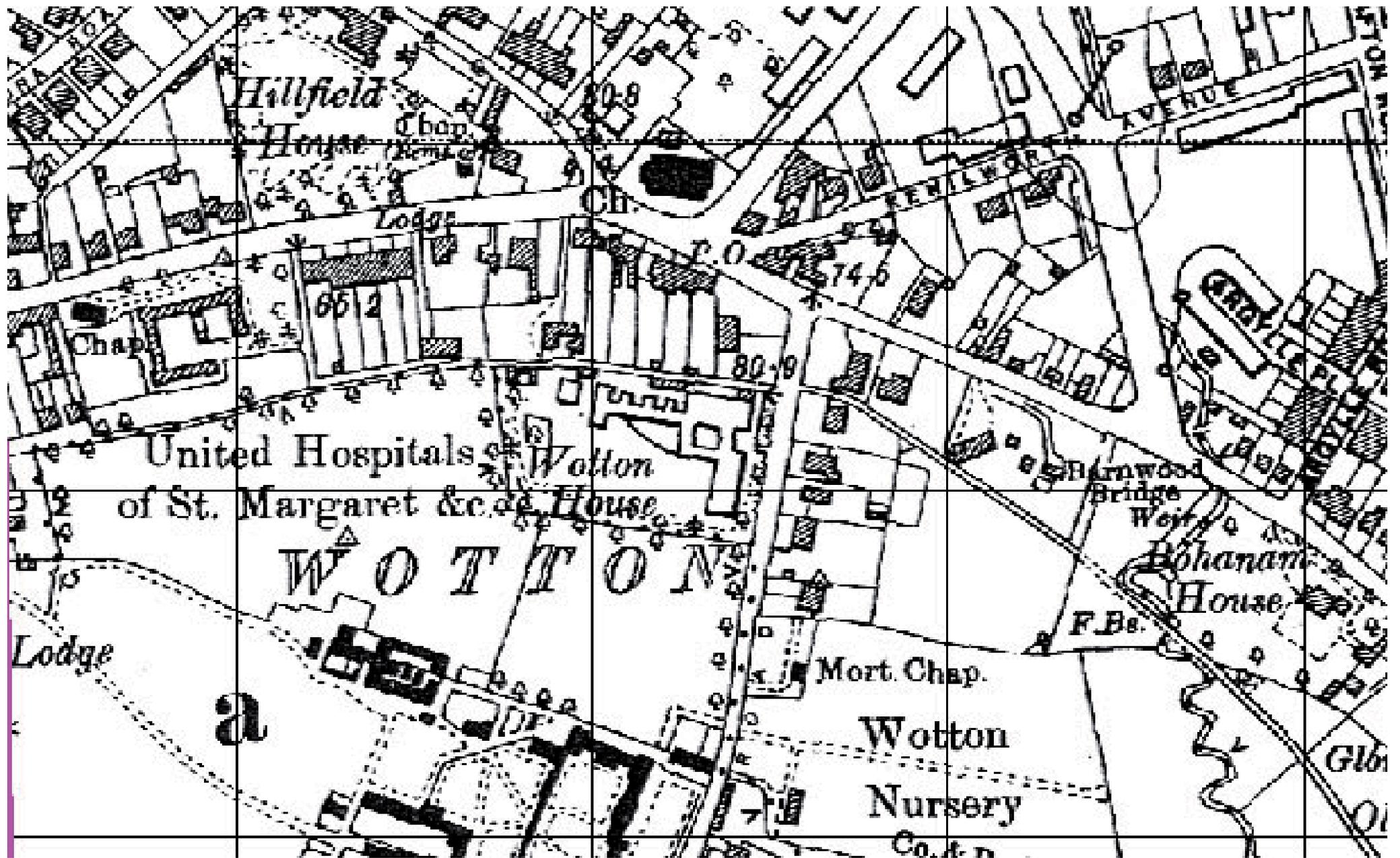
1877 Plan of Wotton House, Charles Walker (courtesy of Gloucester City Record Office)



First Edition Ordnance Survey: 1884



Ordnance Survey, 1903



Ordnance Survey, 1938

Appendix 3



Interior Photo, 1925, Drawing Room (Courtesy Gloucester City Record Office)



Interior Photo, 1925, Drawing Room (Courtesy Gloucester City Record Office)



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