

Historical Architectural Survey of a house in Chilswell Road, Oxford, OX1 4PJ



Figure 1: 20 Chilswell Road, East Elevation (Number 20 is to the right-hand side).

Location

The house (Figure 1) is situated in Grandpont, to the south of Oxford, west of the Abingdon Road. The house lies on flat land, the soil being clay and gravel and the subsoil gravel (Kelly's Directory, 1889), at the T-junction between Chilswell Road and Kinton Road, surrounded by Victorian and Edwardian terraced houses (Figure 2).

Description

This semi-detached house is only one room wide, and one-and-a-half-storeys tall, extending to a depth of three rooms on both floors, with a single-storey modern rear extension. It is aligned east-west, with the front façade facing east. The interior is accessed via a 'front door' to the side of the building.

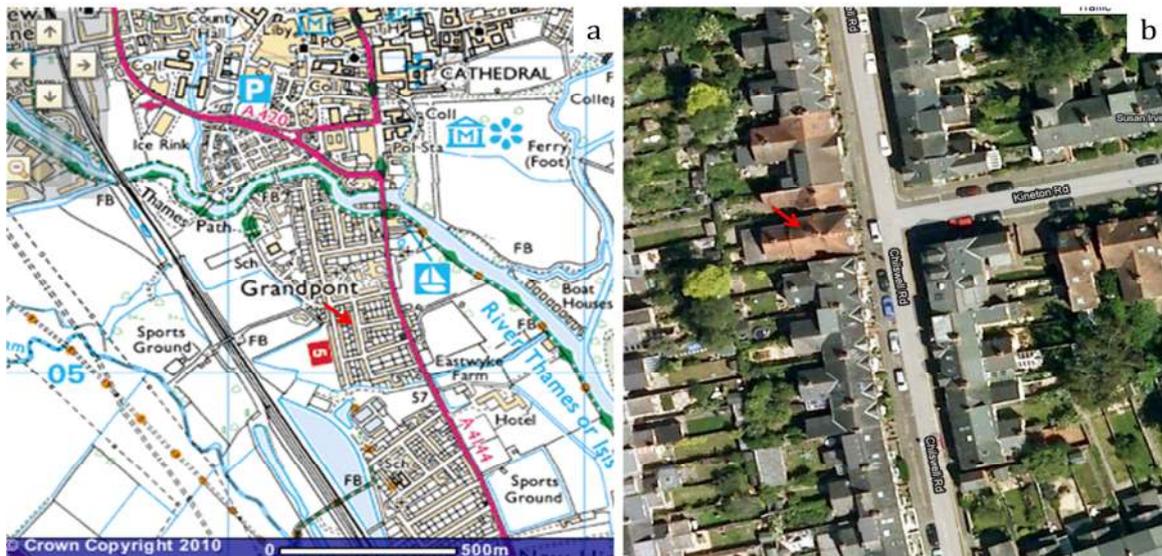


Figure 2: a) Ordnance Survey map of Grandpont, 1:25,000 scale; b) Google Maps street view. No 20 Chilswell Road is arrowed in both.

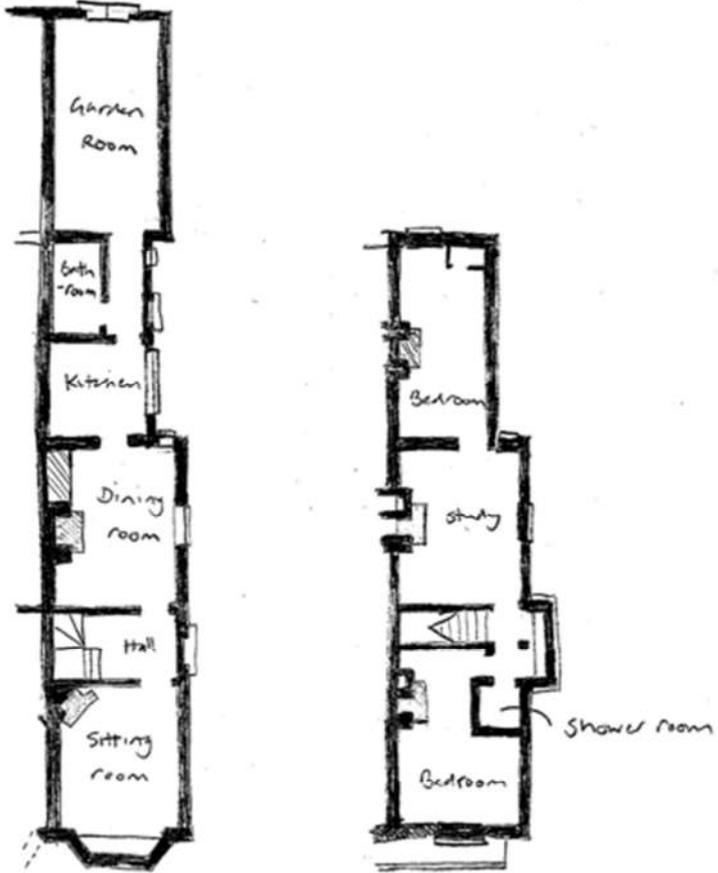


Figure 3: Plan of house in present form (see Appendix A for original plans submitted to City of Oxford Building Department January 1902)

History

This house was built in 1902-03 as one of a pair of cottages, originally named 'Coronation Villas', for a Mr Thomas Bangs (No. 20) and a Mr Bertram Boasten (No. 22), on a plot of land measuring 32 feet wide by 82 feet deep. The plans were deposited in the Oxford City Engineers Department by Messrs Davy and Salter, Architects and Surveyor, 136 High Street Oxford, on January 10th 1902 and subsequently approved (Appendix A).

The Charges Register in the Land Registry title document, states that:

'A conveyance of the land in this title dated 15 May 1902 made between (1) John Henry Salter (Vendor) and (2) Thomas Bangs (Purchaser) contains covenants ...'.

These included:

'The Purchaser doth hereby covenant with the Vendor as follows namely that he the Purchaser will within six Calendar months from the date hereof fence the said piece of land ... and that he will not erect his house or any building except the boundary fence nearer to the fence line of the Road ... and that he the purchaser will not erect more than one house on each Lot ... and that he the Purchaser *will not sell or allow the sale on or from the Lot of Land hereby agreed to be sold of any beer ale porter wine or other fermented or spirituous liquors whatsoever for a period of 25 years ...*'. [There were already several public houses in the area, which may explain this latter statement.]

The Ordnance Survey map of 1876 (Appendix B) shows no buildings or street in this area, although the old railway is marked in what subsequently became the parallel street to the west, Marlborough Road. The Great Western Railway had first opened in Oxford in 1844 with a terminus station in what is now Western Road, Grandpont; this station subsequently closed to passenger services in 1852, and to goods in 1872 (Wikipedia, Oxford railway station, accessed 13 Nov 2010). The Grandpont Building Estate was established when the land was reclaimed from the marshes by the Oxford Building and Investment Company, in 1879 (Newbigging, 1998).

On the 1900 Ordnance Survey map, both Marlborough Road and Chilswell Road are marked, but Chilswell Road is only mapped in its southern half, not including the land where 20 and 22 were built subsequently (Appendix C). In the 1921 edition both 20 and 22 are clearly marked, with the same plan outline as the deposited architectural plans (Figure 4).

The surrounding Victorian and Edwardian terraced houses were built from 1891 to 1906 (Appendix D), many in small groups apparently by speculative builders, which makes 20 and 22 Chilswell Road particularly interesting, as they were architecturally commissioned by their owners, and there is no similar pair of semi-detached houses in the neighbourhood.



Figure 4. Extract from 1921 Ordnance Survey Map (1:2500 scale) with 20 Chilswell Road indicated.

Architectural description

Exterior

Constructed of 9" solid brick, Flemish bond, rendered to front and to side bay. The front has decorative timber panelling and a leaded canopy above the first floor window (see Figure 5 for various features). The 1986 rear extension is brick, stretcher bond, and cavity-walled. The original plan form is a narrow-fronted three-roomed lobby-entrance plan.

Windows are mainly original single-glazed timber windows, with upper lights of stained glass in front ground-floor bay and front first-floor casement window, remaining windows are mainly tall casements, with an overhanging box-bay window above main entrance to side. Two rear sashes with horns are later additions. To rear are uPVC double-glazed units.

Chimneys, two brick-built stacks: four flues to front, and two flues at rear which serve 3rd bedroom and what originally would have been copper in scullery.

Door arches comprise segmental brickwork and mortar. Rear door opens outwards, reflecting previous archway over gap between scullery and outside WC (Appendix A).

Roof

Steep hipped roof covered with clay tiles, over softwood rafters and purlins. Flat felt roof to rear extension.

Interior

Ground floor:

Entrance hall with smaller under-the-stairs cupboard than original. Dog-leg staircase, with square carved newel post and splat balusters, leading to first floor.

To left of entrance, sitting room, formerly the parlour, with corner fireplace with tiles to both sides, original picture rail and cornicing. To right of entrance, dining room, formerly living room, with evidence of range where fireplace now located.



Figure 5: Selected architectural features. Top row: Leaded canopy over upper stained glass window lights in casement window; view from interior of stained glass. Middle row: Back door and old WC window with segmental arches of brickwork; lath and plaster in under

the stairs cupboard; 9½" joists; clay roof tiles. Bottom row: parlour fireplace with ceramic tiles; dog-leg staircase with splat balusters and square newel post; replacement fireplace in living room with plaster repairs showing extent of original range.

Through dining room one step down to kitchen, formerly scullery containing the copper for heating water, with no original features remaining. Through original back door to corridor and to left the bathroom, formerly the coal shed. At end of corridor, the garden room, a 1986 extension, originally built with small window on western aspect, replaced in 2000 with a French window allowing access to garden.

Floors are of wooden construction throughout on 9½-inch joists, except to rear, including scullery, bathroom, corridor and garden room, where floors are concrete.

First floor:

To right at top of stairs, the front bedroom and shower room, the most altered part of the first floor. The original bedroom occupied half the landing.

To left at top of stairs, the second bedroom, currently used as a study. The third bedroom is accessed one step down from second bedroom.

Discussion

The main Edwardian features of this house (Yorke, 2008) are the pebbledash rendering to the front, the casement windows with top divided stained-glass sections, and the roof over the front bay continuous with next door.

The plan form of this house is reminiscent of earlier lobby-entrance houses. The frontage of the building plot was 16 feet but the house itself is only 12' 3" wide. It seems unusual for a semi-detached house to have been built in this way, particularly with the inconvenience and reduction in privacy caused by accessing the third bedroom via the second. This was obviously considered odd by Mr Charles Crapper (see below) but perhaps the clue lies with *Mrs* Bangs. The Bangs had lived in the parallel, arguably less well appointed Marlborough Road, to the west of Chilswell Road, initially at No. 123 from 1894-98, and then at No. 77, from 1899-1902 (Kelly's Directories). Perhaps Mrs Bangs had her heart set on 'going up in the world' from a terraced to a semi-detached house; she changed her name from Violet to Martha between 1901-11, perhaps to reflect this elevation in status (Appendix E).

Mr Charles Crapper (Appendix F) was an important local figure, a coal merchant who also owned a grocer's shop and bakery in Western Road (Newbigging, 1998). In 1904 he submitted plans (which were approved), to convert the cottages into a baker's shop and cottage, with a completely different plan form and altered drainage (see Appendix G). This however did not happen.

Perhaps this was because this house was the Bangs' "forever house"; she outlived him and remained there till 1949. This may also explain the very few structural alterations, although in the 1980s and 90s it became a 'House in Multiple Occupation' (HMO) and a toilet was installed in the first-floor bay window area! Also, being a one-and-a-half-storey house, the roof space is too small to be usefully converted.

Conclusion

This house, although just at the borderline for the vernacular period, is interesting nonetheless, due to its available history and unusual layout. A 1902 semi-detached

house, it later had installed two sash windows to the rear to let in more light, a bathroom in the coal shed, a 1986 extension to the rear and an upstairs shower room, but is otherwise little altered.

Bibliography

Kelly's Directory of Oxford, various editions.

Carole Newbigging, *The changing faces of South Oxford and South Hinskey, Book 1* (Robert Boyd Publications, 1998).

Trevor Yorke, *British architectural styles: An easy reference guide* (Countryside Books, 2008)

Maps

Map of Grandpont (Figure 2a) Ordnance Survey map of Grandpont, 1:25,000 scale, on-line edition, accessed 21 Nov 2010;

Map of Grandpont (Figure 2b) Google Maps street view, accessed 21 Nov 2010. No 20 Chilswell Road is arrowed in both.

Map of Grandpont (Figure 4) Ordnance Survey, 1:2500, 1921 edition.

Photographs

Photographs of Charles Crapper (Appendix F) taken from Newbigging, 1998 above.

Plans

Obtained from microfilm in Oxfordshire Studies Department, Oxford Central Library.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the librarians in the Oxfordshire Studies section of Oxford Central library, for their help in providing me with copies of the relevant maps and plans and for steering me in the right direction.

All photographs, illustrations and graphs are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

27 Nov 2010.