



RECTORY NEWS

FOR THE SUPPORTERS OF CARSHALTON OLD RECTORY

Editor: Sue Horne

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Photo taken 1/04/2024

Landmark News

Not long after our last newsletter, Chris Rhodes from Sutton Council contacted us with the news that representatives from Landmark wanted to visit the Old Rectory. This meeting took place on 27th March with two representatives from Landmark, our Chairman, John Phillips and Chris Rhodes. John thought the visit went reasonably well. The Trust's representatives seemed quite taken with the house but said they would have to consider the wider context. They will reflect on what they have seen and then take their conclusions to the Landmark committee on 24th April. The committee's decision will be reported to the Council.

Everything now depends on this exploratory visit and their impression of the Old Rectory. Will the house fulfil their criteria? If the site visit confirms the building's potential and the committee agrees, the next hurdle is a Project Evaluation by the Trust. This will provide a professional assessment of the project and its challenges as well as a first estimate of the costs. We, meanwhile, can only wait and hope.

NB: John had a good look at the interior (except the basement). There has clearly been water penetration in several areas caused by the gutters overflowing.



An up and coming Architect in Carshalton, 1905 to 1908

Carshalton has often played a temporary home to a number of notable personages who left little impression on their residence, but that cannot be said of a Liverpool-born architect who made the village his home for a mere three years in the first decade of the 20th century. In a profession which forced him to move pillar-to-post, R. Frank Atkinson (1869-1923) and his young family took up occupancy of Bramblehaw, between Westcroft Road and Acre Lane, sometime in 1905.

A successful application to improve the entrance to the estate, submitted in November 1906 to the Urban District Council (U.D.C), made under his name, was

ornamented by two neo-classical urns in an 18th century style which Atkinson favoured, and it would seem likely that he became known to local Councillors and council officials both professionally and socially. One of the officers was the council surveyor/engineer William Willis Gale (1867/8 -



The new entrance and gates to Bramblehaw



Public Offices/Library

1927), who had already designed the Cottage Hospital in Rochester Road, and was preparing designs for the most important public building yet in Carshalton, the Public Offices (later the Library, and now vacant) in the Square.

After the design drawings had been completed, the Councillors decided to consult Atkinson in December 1907. He agreed for a fee to look at them but apparently did quite a bit more on the artistic side, adding historic quotations inspired by the buildings and structures of Old Carshalton. The question is, why did the U.D.C. approach Atkinson? Was there something in particular that he had designed and built which impressed them? The answer to that is unknown, but Atkinson certainly left an 'advertisement' for his professional style at Bramblehaw, which may have been seen by the good people of Carshalton back then and has remarkably survived to this day.

Sitting on the lawn of Bramblehaw Cottage, the Bramblehaw Summer House was aligned to face the mansion (demolished in 1926/7) and catch the afternoon and evening sun as it swept around to the south-west. Built of contrasting plain red and 'broken red' brickwork - a technique advocated by Atkinson to complement what he perceived as the characteristic of Carshalton's 'Classical' Georgian brick architecture - the building has distinct parallels with the former Public Offices with its heavy overhanging eaves and emphasised entranceway.



Whereas the Public Offices – a council building constructed on a tight budget – is sparing in such, the Summer House is packed with architectural details such as the niches and ocular windows, and the heavy porch with its oversized wooden columns and bracketed roof – these latter elements are most likely to have been reused from another building or

buildings, salvaged or imported by Atkinson, whose connections no doubt provided such opportunities.

Through the deeply coved entrance with its striped brickwork the visitor walks into a small room with inbuilt neat shelving units and a dainty cornice ornamented with a dentilled string. The room is lit by a large canted bay window at the rear, mostly blocked when a new boundary wall was built virtually up against it on the subdivision of the estate in the late 1920s. It is a very personal and fun building in the style of the 17th and 18th centuries, a style Atkinson purveyed in his designs for Waring and Gillow on Oxford Street and, nearer to home, Bromley Public Offices.

As noted at the opening ceremony for Carshalton's humbler Public Offices which cost just over £1800,



Partly obscured by a lady's large hat is Frank Atkinson at the opening ceremony of the new Public Offices. He's the chap wearing the bowler hat.

Atkinson usually dealt with budgets stretching into the hundreds of thousands; in all cases his work was applauded and he indeed went on to design other large schemes such as the Adelphi Hotel in his home town, and was the master architect of the idealistic Whitley Village near Cobham.

Although the condition of the former Public Offices leaves much to be desired, we in Carshalton are extremely lucky that we have two buildings of his, and that he had a nature sympathetic enough to appreciate the special built environment that Carshalton had, and still somewhat has today.

Andrew Skelton

Sources: Carshalton UDC minutes; Wallington and Carshalton Times, December 1908; photo: the opening ceremony of the Public Offices/London Borough of Sutton Local Collection, ref SBC 352; photo: Bramblehaw gates/London Borough of Sutton Local Collection, ref SBC 728. For further information about William Willis Gale, see the 'Monument of the Month' for April in the All Saints Carshalton Parish Paper



2024 Annual General Meeting

Saturday 29th June 2.30pm
Carshalton Water Tower

There's much to discuss at this year's AGM and to make it easier for you to attend, we've moved the meeting to a Saturday afternoon.

So please come and meet the committee, find out the current state of play and what CORA intend to do.

After the meeting, we hope you will join us for light refreshments.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We'd like to hear from you. Your comments and suggestions would be very welcome.

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