

An early 19th-century summerhouse
in Attingham Park, Shropshire:
an interim excavation report



Nigel Baker
October 2018
(2nd edition May 2019)

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SUMMARY

Excavations took place in August 2018 on the site of a previously unrecognised brick building exposed by machine removal of topsoil in June 2018 during a programme of archaeological evaluation.

The core of the building was a five-metre square room with thick brick walls, which may have been of some height, externally clad in stone around at least two sides, possibly all four. Low brick walls built up within the main walls and across the centre of the space would have supported the beams of a suspended wooden ground floor. The doorway in the centre of the north wall was framed by a pair of internal clasping buttresses, and there was fragmentary evidence, observable below a tree-stump, of a corner fireplace in the SW corner. Three-quarters of the interior, the former sub-floor space, was excavated, producing large quantities of demolition debris, including: very thin window glass from windows with leaded lights in the east and west (side) walls, the majority of it clear, a minority painted; pieces of Purbeck Marble from a fireplace with its mantelpiece; thick wall/ceiling plaster with lath impressions on the reverse; pieces of sandstone, possibly Grinshill stone, remaining from the cladding and possibly window jambs or sills. Architectural metalwork included masonry clamps, part of a possible iron window frame, an ornate keyhole cover, shutter fittings and door furniture and nails. Slate had been used in the walls for levelling-up the bedding for stone cladding, and on the roof.

After the building of the main walls of the square room had commenced, one-room wings about four metres square were added either side, butt-jointed against its corners at the back and connected by a portico or corridor across the front (north). Robustly-built in proper foundation trenches, these brick walls, together with two further internal brick walls crossing each wing, were nevertheless not as thick as those of the square room and may have been, or intended to be, of lesser height. After they were built, soil was dumped to raise levels around the new building, probably re-profiling to disguise the brick base under the stone cladding. The character of these wings is unclear. The stone cladding and east and west windows of the square room are difficult to reconcile with the existence of wings either side, unless the windows were at a higher level than the wings, or unless the latter were open, arcaded, structures.

Quite possibly before the wings had even been completed, their walls were demolished and the footings of all except the front (north) wall were thoroughly robbed of their brickwork. The front wall was retained as the base of a new structure represented by a line of long, rectangular, fine sandstone blocks; these returned around the east side of the building, and may formerly have returned around the west side as well, though, vulnerable through being laid on the topsoil, no evidence remained there. They are interpreted as the footing for a lightweight timber wall or open arcade, forming a portico or veranda around the building. The building stood within a brick-walled enclosure measuring at least c.60m east-west by (probably) 40m north-south.

No precise independent archaeological dating evidence is available so far for the accurate dating of the construction or the demolition of this building. Nevertheless, graffiti on a mantelpiece fragment (if correctly identified to the individual) and a button with an identified Birmingham manufacturer's stamp, both amongst the demolition debris, would both be consistent with the disuse of the building in the 1830s-50s. If it is identifiable as 'the summerhouse in the woods' quoted as a potential source of re-usable stone in 1909, this leaves its non-appearance on the 1880 Ordnance Survey plan unexplained, unless the building had already been demolished and the stone salvaged and stored.

Construction may well have taken place in the period c. 1815-20 for the second Lord Berwick, though further work on the documentary evidence, ceramics and clay pipes, window glass and architecture will be needed to confirm this. The building may however be fairly confidently identified as a summerhouse, or as a small lodge re-configured as a summerhouse.

I. Introduction and previous work

In June 2018 a programme of archaeological evaluation took place on the western side of Attingham Park, south-west of the Walled Garden, to determine the archaeological impact of proposed new service roads connecting to Acacia Avenue. Three areas were examined. Trench 1 was located across Acacia Avenue itself and demonstrated that the avenue is of mid-20th-century date, regularising and replacing an earlier gravel track that was found diverging to the south, heading in a south-westerly direction towards Atcham village. Trench 2 was located at the south end of the Western Slip, the pasture immediately west of the Walled Garden. This found a strip of metalling representing a north-south track shown on the 1881 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 first edition plan, and apparent on a recent LiDAR survey. Site 3 was located just north of Acacia Avenue, towards its western end. Machine clearance of topsoil covering a surface depression (also seen on the LiDAR) with traces of in-situ brickwork, revealed a previously-unknown 5 metre-square brick building with evidence of a surrounding portico or veranda and the robbed-out brick walls of further structural elements (Baker 2018). Despite the many estate plans and maps covering the park from the 1790s to the present day, no building had ever been recorded in this location.

The existence of some kind of buried brick structure in this spot had however been known to National Trust staff, but it was assumed to be an unrecorded World War 2 building, one of many in this part of the park (information from Colin Morris). However, the first exposure of its plan suggested a 19th-century date, and initial interpretations were offered that included a dovecot, an ice house, a water tower, a folly and a dwelling. Subsequent surface finds of thin window glass and a fragment of moulded marble suggested, however, a less utilitarian interpretation.

In order to understand this new building and its setting, the writer was commissioned by the National Trust to undertake a two-week excavation in August 2018, staffed by N.T. volunteers. The project was also designed to allow visitor access at the height of the tourist season, to offer archaeological training to the volunteers, and supervised participatory sessions for visiting families.

2. The scope of this report (2nd edition, May 2019)

This report is still an interim statement, revised nine months after the conclusion of the excavation. Specialist work by the National Trust on the artefacts and detailed documentary research is in progress or pending. This second edition of the excavation report has been issued with new reconstruction drawings of the excavated building and the complex design changes it underwent before it was completed. Further on-site excavation is planned for later in the summer of 2019.

3. Excavation methodology

Initial topsoil stripping of the site was undertaken by a JCB under archaeological supervision in June 2018, revealing many elements of the plan of the building and the presence of a sunken area within the 5m-square core building. After further 'tidying-up' by JCB, hand excavation commenced on August 13th in an area roughly 12m east-west and up to 13m north-south, centred on the building, within the larger machine-stripped area.

Work was concentrated on the removal of remaining topsoil deposits obscuring the building's plan, and in particular on the excavation of the interior, which had been predicted to retain the deepest and most significant deposits. The site was partly compromised and obscured by the stumps of recently-felled ash trees that had been planted in the immediate post-War period. A tree-stump superimposed over the building's south-west corner was carefully cleaned to reveal the maximum information about the brickwork beneath; other tree stumps were mostly left with their surrounding soil.

Excavation of the interior was divided into quadrants to give an east-west cross-section and to give an additional control on the location of recovered artefacts; the south-west quadrant, compromised by the tree-stump, was left unexcavated, partly to avoid swamping the finds processing system with too many artefacts, partly as a retained sample for future excavation.

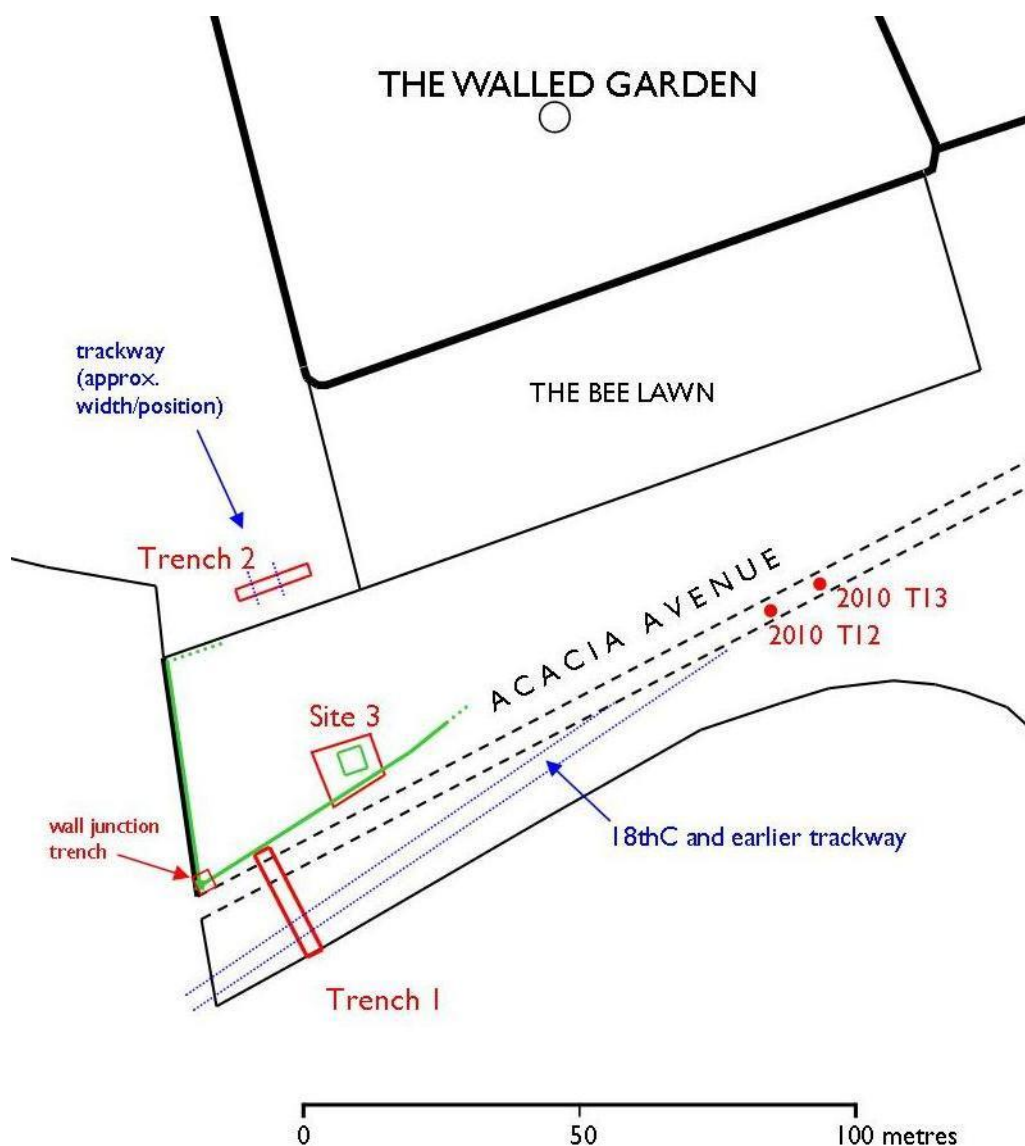
Depositional character

It was initially thought that the square building and its adjuncts were founded within a simple, natural, subsoil-to-topsoil soil sequence. However, excavation of sample slots across the robber trenches of demolished walls either side of the square building showed that this was not the case, and that the walls had been built off a lower level and the ground subsequently raised by the large-scale dumping of soil, to a maximum depth estimated at 0.75m, particularly in the south-western part of the site. The full lateral extent of earth-moving on the site was not determined, though what appeared to be natural sandy subsoil was exposed along the northern side of the machine-stripped area, outside the hand-excavated site.

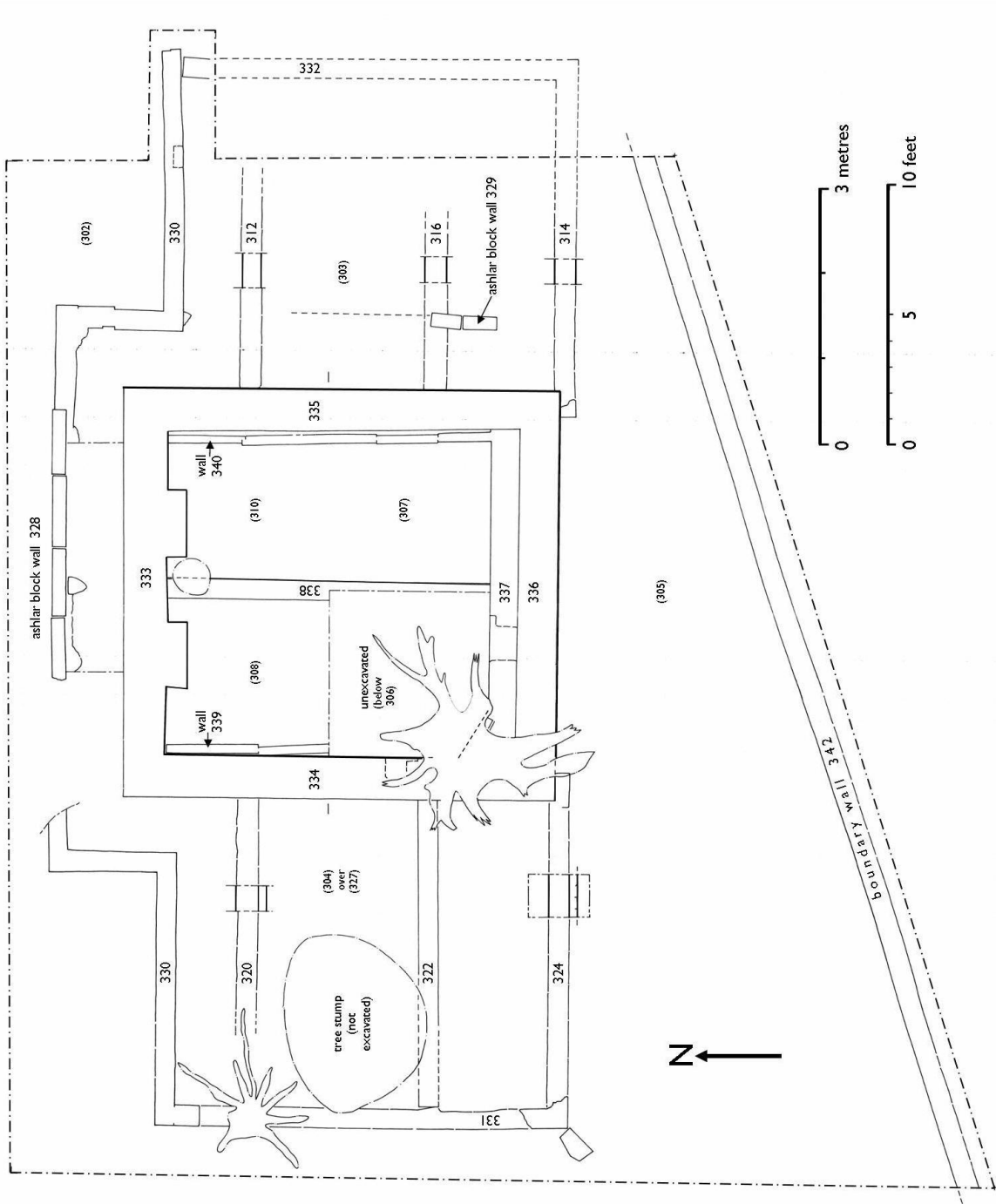
Conservation issues

In the course of the excavation, the fabric of the building was left undamaged, only 'soft deposits', such as soil and demolition rubble, being removed. Where brick walls had been robbed out leaving rubble-filled trenches, short box-sections were cut through them to record their profiles and examine their contents, and the rubble re-deposited in each wall trench at the conclusion of the excavation, in the interests of the long-term conservation of this 'new' historic monument.

Further details of the excavation methodology are contained in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* for the project, written at the request of the National Trust Assistant Archaeologist in July 2018 when the project was commissioned.



I. Attingham 2018: all sites location plan (north to top)



2. Attingham 2018 site 3: excavation plan

4.The excavation

The square building (figs. 2-8)

The core of the building and the first structure known to have been built on the site is a brick building 4.8m east-west and 5.05m north-south (roughly 16ft square) externally, with walls varying from 0.46m to 0.52m thick, consisting of four courses of brick laid parallel, using English Bond, bonded with a buff lime mortar. Much of the uppermost surviving surface of the east end of the north wall (333) and the outer 20cms of the north end of the east wall (335) are covered in slates set in a bed of mortar. These are interpreted as levelling-up at the base of stone cladding to the external wall surfaces, a technique applied throughout Attingham's Georgian buildings (with thanks to Graham Sherman for this observation). There is a further patch of this material surviving at the west end of the north wall, leaving a central splayed gap in the position of the doorway. The latter is marked on the inside of the north wall by a pair of rectangular clasp buttress foundations, contemporary with the main fabric; these may have been the base for a pair of engaged columns or pilasters framing the doorway in the room above.

The east and west walls (335 and 334) are robbed to a lower level and mostly featureless brickwork. A one-brick wide gap in the brickwork of the inner face of the west wall near the south-west corner may correspond with a similar gap apparent in the south wall, though whether these were deliberate sockets (e.g. for a diagonal beam across the SW corner) or just an accident of the demolition process, is uncertain. The south wall (336) was otherwise plain, except for a glimpse, between the roots of the tree-stump in the south-west corner, of two bricks, one projecting beyond (north of) the plane of the interior face, laid diagonally to the east-west orientation of the wall, apparently cutting across the corner. Although based on a very small exposure of fabric, this was interpreted as an indication of a probable corner fireplace. It was also noted that, in the centre of the south wall, on the building's axis, the wall top survived one course of bricks higher than elsewhere. While this might well be an accident of the demolition process, it is not impossible that this marks the position of some centrally-placed feature, most likely a window, for which there was no other evidence; although the deposits outside (305) were carefully examined for broken glass, none was found in this area.

Within these four thick walls, four further brick walls were added in a single construction episode. Along the interior faces of the west and east main walls, less substantial, one-brick thick, walls were added (339 and 340); the latter was found partially collapsed into the demolition rubble filling the interior. An additional wall (338) two bricks (9 inches) thick was built down the centre-line of the building. These were interpreted as the supports for the east-west joists of a suspended wooden floor, making sense of the deeper deposits within the interior, which were seen to be filling the former sub-floor space. These support walls were however built at the same time as a fourth wall (337) lining the inside of the south wall; much more substantial than the other walls jointed into it, it cannot be fully explained as a floor support. This question is discussed further below. This added wall was plain, apart from a short lintel-like course of headers on their side, coincident with a void (unexplored in the excavation) observed in the mortar surface (309) covering the interior of the square building; these may relate to an underlying drain.



3. Final excavated view, looking south, of the square building



4. Final excavated view of the square building, looking NE



5, 6 The interior face of the north wall – shots taken either side of the axial wall 338. Single-brick joist-supporting walls 339 and 340 can be seen extreme left and extreme right



7. The axial 'spine wall' 338, looking west



8. The west end of the 'inner' south wall 337 showing diagonal brickwork (? of corner fireplace) visible between tree roots

Deposits within the interior (figs. 9-13)

The original depression in the field surface, picked up by LiDAR and defined by the machine-stripping was, following the exposure of the tops of the supporting walls 338-340, revealed to be a former sub-floor space largely filled with a mixture of soil and demolition rubble. The topmost rubble-filled soil (306) was a more rubble-filled version of the medium grey-brown sandy topsoil (301) characteristic of the whole site. Excavation below the wall tops was divided into four quadrants to provide an east-west section and profile, and to give some control over the distribution of artefacts from within the building: NW quadrant (context 308); NE (310); SE (307); the SW quadrant was left unexcavated below this level. The sequence in each quadrant – and in each half of the building, either side of the dividing support wall 338 – was very similar, with increasing amounts of demolition material with depth. Brick rubble with pieces and fragments of mortar was increasingly supplemented by substantial sheets of thick (up to c.4cms) wall- and/or ceiling-plaster with the impressions of laths on the reverse side; some of this material occurred in c. 30cm-wide sheets.

Removal of the demolition deposits 307, 308 and 310 revealed an uneven buff mortar surface (309) with small brick fragments, interpreted as a 'blinding' layer, sealing off the base of the sub-floor space to prevent weed and rodent penetration from the underlying soil.

The artefactual content of these deposits is described more fully below, and in Appendix I, but the substantial amount of architectural material reflects the character of the superstructure and its exterior and interior finishes.

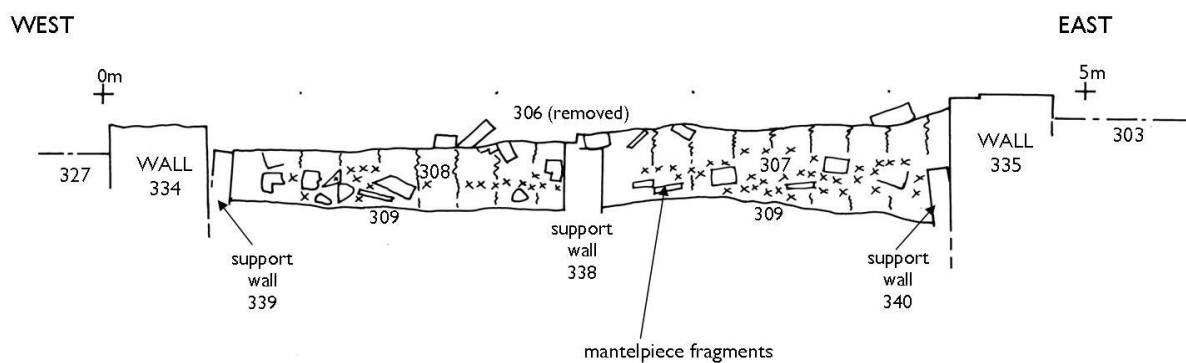
- Pieces of (?) Grinshill grey-buff sandstone slab, c. 6cms thick, interpreted as fragments of external cladding
- Pieces of (?) Grinshill sandstone slabs c. 3cm thick, some with half-round mouldings on their edges, interpreted as pieces of window reveals and/or sills.
- Pieces of black fossiliferous Purbeck marble, including a mantelpiece with curved corners, pilasters and their bases. These are interpreted as the smashed remains of a small marble-clad fireplace; they were found in all three excavated quadrants (either side of the dividing wall) with a concentration in the centre of the east half of the building (context 307, see picture, below).

Large quantities of very thin window glass were also recovered from the interior – mostly plain but with a minority of painted fragments. The distribution of the glass was weighted heavily towards the inside of the west and east walls, which, together with a concentration of glass in the topsoil (303) outside the east wall, seemed indicative of windows having been in these side walls. Small pieces of lead from the NW quadrant (308) and the curved, cut edges of many fragments, suggested that they were from leaded lights whose lead came had been salvaged and recycled. Another discrete concentration of glass fragments, in this case all plain glass including many narrow (2-3mm) strips that looked like off-cuts, was recovered from the centre of the building around the axial wall 338. This was interpreted as glazier's waste from the construction process, abandoned on the base of the sub-floor space, rather than as further demolition material. A number of iron objects were provisionally interpreted as clamps used in the wall construction (e.g. for fixing the stone cladding in place) but will require more definite identification at a later stage. A number of items of door furniture,

including an elaborate key-hole cover, were also recovered, and are itemised in Appendix I. The excavation of the square building concluded with the removal of the demolition deposits within the sub-floor space: no further deposits were investigated below 309, interpreted as the blinding layer forming the bottom of the sub-floor space.



9. An early stage of the excavation of the NE quadrant (310)



10. Main east-west section across the square building (looking north)



11. A later stage in the excavation of the NE quadrant (310) showing sheets of lath-backed plaster and the collapsed top of joist-supporting wall 335 (left)



12. A late stage in the excavation of the NW quadrant (308) showing sheets of fallen plaster



13. The excavation of the SE quadrant (307) in progress showing a concentration of Purbeck marble fireplace (mantlepiece) fragments

The uncompleted wings (figs.2, 14-23)

The square building described above was flanked on the north, west and east sides by a series of further, less substantial, brick walls, nine inches (two bricks) thick. On the north side, the north wall (330) survived up to a level a little below that of the main walls of the square building and in places was capped with slate pieces, suggestive of levelling-up immediately below a change in fabric. This wall extended across the whole north frontage of the building, its central section projecting northwards by 0.7m where it enclosed the square building, continuing c.4m east and west of the square building. Return walls were found at the west end (331) and east end (332), the latter only glimpsed in a sondage extended from the north-east corner of the excavation to locate it. The west wall (331) retained some intact brickwork (at the level investigated – more may have survived at greater depth) only at its south-west corner, most of the remainder of the brickwork having been displaced by tree roots.

The south wall (324) of the west wing was mostly seen and recorded only as a rubble-filled robber trench, brickwork surviving at its junction with the west wall (331) and – crucially – at its junction with the main walls (334/336) of the square building. This showed that the wall was butted up to, and later than, the walls of the square building, partly wrapped around its corner, presumably for extra support. Exactly the same relationship was recorded where fragmentary surviving brickwork of the south wall of the east wing (314) butted against the south-east corner of the square building. In short, in a second phase (perhaps a second phase of construction rather than a second phase of use) the primary

square building was flanked by added wings, each roughly 4m square, connected by a narrow corridor or portico across the north front.

Each 'wing' had evidence of two east-west internal walls or floor supports. On the west side, the northern internal wall footing (320) had been robbed out and was represented by a rubble-filled trench the same width as the wall had been. The southern internal wall footing (322) retained some intact brickwork (2-3 courses visible) at the excavated level. On the east side both the northern and southern internal walls (312, 316) had been robbed down to their base courses and were recorded in plan as rubble-filled trenches. It should be noted that, during the preliminary machine stripping and subsequent hand-excavation, these lines of rubble were seen, and then defined by the lowering of the topsoil-like deposits around them, with the result that they appear as positive (standing) rather than negative (cut) features in the excavation photographs. Where the wall robber-trenches ran up to the main walls there was no visible sign of a junction or scar in the standing brickwork, suggesting that, like the back/south walls, these internal walls had also butted against the earlier build and had been subsequently removed from it without leaving a scar.

Where these walls had been robbed out leaving rubble-filled trenches, a section was excavated across each to record its profile and any information that could be gleaned on the former superstructure of the wings from the rubble contained in the backfilled trenches. In the east wing, wall 312 was represented by a robber trench surviving to a depth of 40cms down to a flat mortar bottom; wall 316 was robbed to its flat base at a depth of 45cms though an additional 20cm-depth of the robber-trench stood above the surrounding machined level; the trench on the line of wall 314 survived to a depth of 35cms. All of these test-sections produced well broken-up brick rubble and mortar, together with pieces of mortar or plaster much whiter in colour than the standard buff lime mortar seen throughout the building. Some of the mortar or plaster had brick impressions, suggesting that it had been applied direct to brickwork rather than laid over battens and laths as was the case in the primary square building. The character of this white material (sampled) requires further investigation.

In the west wing, a section across the 'back' (south) wall 324 showed that the wall had been built with a wider, three parallel bricks-wide, base course, for which there was no cut from above: this had evidently been covered over by the subsequent deposition of soil on both sides. This was recorded in the east-facing section and confirmed by the west-facing section which showed the level off which the wall was built, marked by a trail of mortar, clearly buried under the surrounding soil (327). As walls 330 and 322 had surviving brickwork, these were not sectioned, but as wall 320 had been robbed out, this was sectioned: it again showed an extra base course buried by the surrounding soil (327). The implication is clearly that, on the west side of the square building, the walls or wall-footings of the west wing or west room had been built, and then soil dumped on that part of the site to raise the level. Assuming this was done to cover the base of the stone cladding on its slate bedding, this implies a depth of around 0.75m of re-deposited soil.

At the south-west corner of the west wing, a mortared brick footing was revealed at 45-degrees to the corner, not quite joined to it. It could not be determined whether this was the (not very good) footing for a corner-buttress, or the beginning of an additional wall joining the building to its enclosure/perimeter wall to the south (see below).

No other evidence was recorded for the form or the function of these wings or flanking rooms. The topsoil-like deposits west and east of the square building (304 and 303 respectively) contained no architectural fragments or any other material, apart from the very white mortar or plaster, not consistent with the use and demolition of the square building. The walls, uniformly two bricks thick in a tough mortar, were robust and properly founded, but only half the thickness of the main walls. It seems reasonable to suggest that they were not intended to be of equal height to the main walls, quite possibly a single storey only, but they were certainly capable of bearing a load greater than a lightweight timber structure, though whether this was intended to brick or stone is unknown.



14. General view, looking west, of the building at its maximum extent with the robber trenches and surviving footings of the east wing (foreground) and the west wing (background). Note the enclosure wall 342 at a divergent angle on the left (south)



15. The excavation of the west wing at an early stage with wall 324 robber trench foreground



16. Detail of the surviving brickwork at the east end of the wall 324 robber-trench butted against the corner of the square building



17, 18: The north wall (330) of the east wing with the junction with the east wall (332) exposed



19, 20: East wing wall-trench sections: south/external wall 314 left, wall 316, right



21. West wing: south/external wall 324, section looking east, showing extra external base-course of brick on the right, half buried by soils (305), and trail of mortar at the same level, left, inside, buried by soil (327). Note very white mortar between bricks and as rubble in the robber-trench fill



22. West wing, south/external wall 324, under excavation, showing part-buried external base course and the character of the rubble retrieved from the robber trench. Looking east.



23. West wing, south-west corner, junction of walls 331 (centre), 324 (top) and abutting diagonal foundation 341

The veranda or portico (figs. 2, 24-27)

Two walls or wall-footings composed of a single course of long, grey (probably Grinshill) sandstone blocks, 16cms square in section by up to 43cms long, were recorded around the north and east sides of the square building. On the north side, this wall (328) was founded on the outside edge of the brick wall footing 330 at a distance of 0.7m out from the main north wall (333). On the east side, two identical in-situ blocks formed wall 329, also 0.7m out from the main east wall (335). These blocks, however, were not founded on underlying brickwork but were placed, without footings, on the unexcavated subsoil-like deposit cut by the robber-trench for the southern internal wall of the east 'wing', 316. The blocks of this wall were clearly stratified over the robber trench 316, showing that the latter wall had been dismantled and its brickwork grubbed out before the new sandstone-block footing was put in place across it. Two further blocks of wall 329 were observed further north on the same line during the initial machine clearance of the site in June. However, these were displaced by the JCB before they could be recorded (they can be seen in their displaced positions on the June photographs of site 3 – Baker 2018) but there is no doubt that they continued the line of wall 329 northwards, across and stratified over the east-west robber trench 312, to make a junction with the north-side wall 328.

There was no sign of mortar bedding or scarring on the upper faces of these sandstone blocks – they do not seem to have formed a base course for a solid masonry wall. Instead, they are interpreted as sills supporting horizontal timbers – either the sole-plates for a timber-framed wall or, arguably more likely, the base for an open-sided, floored, timber structure such as a portico or veranda. The contrast between the solidly-founded brick

walls of the primary square building and its added, flanking, 'wings', and the complete absence of any footings to the sandstone-block wall on the east side, is extreme. It is highly suggestive of a very lightweight timber structure above, little more perhaps than a roof covering a narrow veranda supported by timber posts at intervals, morticed into a horizontal beam that would distribute the load evenly along a footing that was variously built off solid brickwork, or just topsoil, or backfilled robber-trenches. No trace was seen of a similar wall on the west side of the square building but, given the complete absence of foundations on the east side, one could easily have been removed without trace at any period. Given the evidence for symmetry in the design of the building, it seems highly probable that there was a matching portico or veranda on the west side to match that on the east, but the evidence simply wasn't there.



24, 25: The east side of the square building. Two views of sandstone 'veranda' wall 329 overlying the robber-trench of wall 316, running up to the main east wall 335





26, 27: The north (front) stone-block 'veranda' wall 328 overlying a bed of mortar above wall 330: left, looking east; right, looking west.

The enclosure wall (figs. 1, 2, 28-29)

To the south of the summerhouse, on an ENE-WSW alignment, and diverging by an angle of about 17 degrees from it, was a two-brick thick boundary wall (342), composed of bricks of the same dimensions as the summerhouse. It was exposed and excavated along the southern edge of the hand-excavated site. It was also contacted in a sondage 16.4m east of the excavated site, 7.2m north of Acacia Avenue, on a slightly more northerly alignment. To the west it was found by slightly extending the north end of the June 2018 trench 1 (fig.1).

It had previously been noted that the standing north-south brick boundary wall at the west end of the strip of cleared woodland was composed of the same size bricks. A trench (ATT 18 T4) was therefore opened immediately north of the gate at the end of Acacia Avenue, at the predicted junction of the excavated boundary wall and the standing wall to examine their relationship. Although the junction had been disturbed by the insertion of the gate, enough survived to show that the two walls were indeed contemporary, their courses running through and properly bonded. The excavation also showed that the present field boundary wall had originally terminated with a very short return wall at an acute angle, on the line of the excavated boundary wall. This feature had later been removed to below present ground level, either when the enclosure wall was demolished and robbed, or when the present gateway was inserted in the field wall for Acacia Avenue in the mid-20th century.

The enclosure around the summerhouse must therefore have measured in excess of 60m east-west, by 40m north-south – the length of the standing boundary wall. Whether there is a similar short return, and a junction with the north side of the summerhouse enclosure, at the north end of the boundary wall, is unknown but could easily be established by excavation. The orientation of the southern boundary wall directly reflected that of the 18th-century and earlier path further south, diverging off the line of (the 20th-century) Acacia Avenue, found at the south end of the June 2018 trench 1, ultimately heading towards Atcham village. The summerhouse is curiously placed within the enclosure wall, close enough to it such that its divergent angle would have brought the projected south-east corner of the east 'wing' to a distance of only 27cms from the boundary. It is not known whether the soil dumping detected around the summerhouse was confined and retained by this boundary, there was however no surface trace (like a mini-lynchet) of a difference in level either side of this line.



28. The wall junction trench (T4), north to left. The summerhouse enclosure wall ending at a (demolished) acute-angled return wall terminating the standing field boundary wall



29. The brickwork at the junction of the summerhouse enclosure wall (left) with the angled return to the field boundary wall (right): the two walls have continuous coursing and appear to be contemporary

5. The Artefacts

A comprehensive inventory (by Viviana Culshaw) of the artefacts is presented as Appendix I.

Building materials

Building materials in the demolition deposits (306, 307, 308, 310) occupying the former sub-floor space within the square building accounted for the most numerous category of artefact. These included bricks (uniform size: 9 ins x 4 ins x 2.75ins), grey roof slate pieces, some with nail holes, and wall/ceiling plaster, some in large pieces, bearing lath impressions (roughly 1 inch wide) on the reverse side with a white/cream/buff surface on the smooth side, with no other trace of decoration.

Pieces of a grey to buff sandstone, very probably Grinshill stone, were present. Plain fragments, roughly tooled on the reverse, were measured at 7.5cms and 8.5cms thick and most probably represented fragments of the building's external cladding. Some thinner fragments also bore a half-round moulding or beads for half the depth of their thin edge and

may have been pieces of window sills or reveals. Painted and plain window glass and decorative stone or 'marble' were also present.

Decorative stone ('marble')

Many pieces of black fossiliferous, white- or red-veined, polished, Purbeck marble were present, and these represented the remains of a destroyed fireplace. The mantelpiece was reconstructed, and was found to be about 95% complete. It was about an inch thick with curved corners, straight unmoulded edges, and was 1.457m long (4ft 9.25 ins) and would have projected 18cms from the wall face above. The left-hand end of the mantelpiece bore a graffiti inscription '*I Thomas Truman*' in a cursive script, lightly scratched with a sharp point. This is discussed further below (see fig.49).

About 25% of the pilasters, either side of the fireplace opening, were present and consisted of recessed, moulded, Purbeck marble panels. A piece of plain Grinshill stone What appeared to be their bases, also moulded, cut with a 45-degree angle to accommodate the splayed fireplace opening, were also present. One square panel and fragments of another with central recessed roundels would have been at the angle of the pilasters and the lintel.

It was at first thought that two types of 'marble' stone were present – the Purbeck marble described above and some other type, much lighter in colour and having no surface polish. However, it was realised when reconstructing the fireplace that all the decorative stone was of one type (Purbeck), but that where pieces had been exposed to weathering on the surface, they had not only lost their polish but had been eroded and bleached out. This was evident from joining fragments from the pilasters.



30. The mantelpiece reconstructed in front of a not entirely dissimilar fireplace in the Hub



31, 32: Purbeck marble fireplace fragments. Top: the front panels of the pilasters. Bottom: pilaster bases, top and side cladding fragments



33. The fireplace reconstructed

Window glass

Small pieces of broken window glass were found in the topsoil deposits over and around the square building and in all the underlying demolition deposits (307, 308, 310). All fragments were extremely thin, varying from around one to two millimetres. While most edges were broken, some had been cut to curved shapes, others were rounded and appeared to come from the edge of a sheet of glass. The vast majority were clear, plain, uncoloured glass but a substantial minority were hand-painted.

The glass was recovered in distinct concentrations. The largest mass of fragments, plain and painted, came from the inside of the east wall of the square building in contexts 307 and 310 with a smaller quantity outside the same wall in context 303. A smaller concentration of plain and painted glass was found against the west wall in context 308 and doubtless more would have been recovered if the south-west quadrant had been excavated. In addition, a large quantity of plain glass, mostly in the form of narrow strips, was recovered from the centre of the building either side of the axial floor-support wall 338. The different character of the latter group was striking, and it is interpreted as glaziers' off-cuts from the construction process, abandoned on the base of the sub-floor space under the floorboards, whereas the concentrations against the east and west walls are interpreted as the products of the demolition process – specifically, glass broken and discarded when lead from the comes of leaded lights in the west and east walls was being salvaged and melted down. A number of small pieces of lead, melted and/or broken were recovered from context 308.

No attempt has been made to reconstruct the overall scheme in the windows but some aspects were apparent from a preliminary examination of the painted glass. The windows

were mostly of clear glass with painted glass forming narrow rectilinear panels with grey borders reproducing the effect of decorated etched or ground glass. The painted decoration was similar in the west and east windows. In the east window the decoration was a mixture of foliage including oak leaves, acorns and haws, possible vines and larger leaves or petals. The much smaller glass assemblage from the west side of the building was dominated by larger leaves. The colours are generally autumnal yellows and browns. The only indication of the architectural form of the windows comes from an iron object that may be part of a window frame with a curved head, though whether this had a semi-circular head of neoclassical form, or a pointed Gothic head, is uncertain.



34. Possible window-frame fragment (context 310 – NE quadrant of square building)



35. Decorated glass from the east side of the building: contexts 303, 306, 310 left; 307 right



36. Detail of glass from context 307



37. Glass from the west side of the building (context 308)

Ironwork

Ironwork from the site was dominated by hand-made iron nails of varying length but included a shutter-latch, a pair of hinge pintels from a heavy door and a number of objects that need identification but appear to be clamps for securing the external stone cladding.



38, 39: Ironwork from the main demolition deposits

Pottery and clay pipes

The pottery found is enumerated in Appendix I (the finds inventory) which lists a smallish assemblage of c.88 sherds. In the course of the excavation one probable Roman sherd and two probable medieval sherds were recognised. The main bulk of the pottery appeared to be consistent with a late 18th-century to early 19th-century date-range, but this needs to be established and detailed by a qualified specialist. Many of the sherds appeared to be from flower pots – unglazed red earthenwares with a much smaller quantity of glazed domestic wares. The bulk of this material came from topsoil deposits (e.g. 303, 305) outside and around the building though there were numerous flower-pot sherds from demolition deposit 310. There was some material that appeared to be of later (20th-century) date as well, so it is perfectly possible that there is a range of pottery present representing: residual material; material from the lifetime and occupation of the building; material post-dating its disuse and demolition.

Two clay pipe bowls were found but require expert identification. One bears a moulded decoration of a sailor and a ship's wheel and appears to be early 19th-century. A second bowl with a spur again appears (to a non-specialist) to be late 18th or 19th-century. Both were recovered from the sub-floor space.



40, 41: the excavated clay-pipe bowls

Miscellaneous finds

A few non-ceramic non-ferrous objects of significance were found. A button found on the base of the sub-floor space (context 307) could have been deposited either when the building was first built, or when the floor had been taken up on its demolition. This was of copper alloy (brass), silver-plated or gilded on the front, with a maker's name stamped on the back. This was identified during the excavation by Simon Walker, who found the manufacturer's name, Richard Mason, in a trade directory of 1830, listed as a button-maker at 110 Lionel Street (West, M, 1830, *The history, topography and directory of Warwickshire*, p.363). A gun-flint, identifiable from its smaller size as a pistol flint (with thanks to Peter Wright), was found in topsoil context 303 outside the east wall of the square building, and presumably pre-dates the 1840s when percussion weapons entered general military and sporting use. A brass key-hole cover is of a type found throughout the mansion.



42-45 Left and centre: button from 307; centre-right pistol-flint from 303 (outside east wall); right: key-hole cover (laquered brass?)

6. Discussion and interim conclusions

What was the excavated building?

A single free-standing room, heated by a decorative fireplace, lit by decorative windows and floored with a suspended wooden floor, with no signs of a water supply, is unlikely to have been any of the utilitarian structures guessed at before excavation commenced: it was not a water-tower, a dairy, a dovecot or even a dwelling. From its form and its location it can be reasonably identified as a summerhouse, in other words, a comfortable, private, daytime retreat within the parkland. Its setting was secluded but not distant from the hall – but this aspect of the building, its landscape setting, is not yet fully understood. It was certainly not designed to be viewed from afar, being dug into a south-facing wooded slope, below the crest, and not on any great eminence. Its access was from the north side and indeed this direction offers the least promising views out, in fact no views at all.



46. Looking north: the view out; the south wall of the Walled Garden is just visible

The view out to the south is more promising, but underestimated by virtue of the density of today's woodland cover. However, from just beyond the belt of trees, the vista does offer views over the parkland and the hills (Caer Caradoc, the Long Mynd) beyond it. On this account alone it seems inconceivable that the south wall would not have had a centrally-placed grand window to take advantage of the view and admit light to the building.



47. The view out to the south from the summerhouse site

As completed, the summerhouse was a single-room structure with a veranda, probably on three sides. However, as the excavation conclusively demonstrated, there was a phase of construction during which it was conceived as a more complex building with west and east wings and a minimum of three rooms. The limited evidence suggests that this phase of work was abandoned after the initial brickwork was in place and probably after the cladding had been completed on the primary building. However, the total absence of any extraneous demolition debris on the site, including finishes, fittings or roofing materials, other than in the sub-floor space of the square building, makes it hard to believe that these wings were ever completed. Archaeologically, they existed solely as partly-robbed footings.

How might these wings have been intended to function? It seems probable that the north wall, extending right across the frontage but only 70cms out from the central square building, was designed to carry some kind of arcaded portico which would have given access to all parts of the building. In the wings, there were two further parallel internal wall footings. These were not evenly spaced and seem unlikely to have been mere sub-floor joist supports, like the axial wall 338. It seems more likely that their spacing reflects room-divisions and partition walls in the superstructure above, in other words, that the building was at one stage conceived with a minimum of five rooms. This level of complexity takes the building away from the idea of a 'summerhouse' – basically a private picnic room – and much closer to the idea of a 'lodge', perhaps in the earlier 18th-century sense of a building dedicated to private pleasures, traditionally hunting, or shooting, or fishing, ultimately derived from the medieval idea of the hunting lodge (Mowl and Earnshaw 1985). An aspect of such buildings would have been the provision of service functions, in other words, accommodation for staff to provide food and drink, and in this respect the 'winged' plan of the excavated building bears a close resemblance to a pattern-book plan of 1823 for a 'hunting or shooting lodge'. While this was a two-storey building with bedrooms on the first floor, its ground floor consisted of a large central chamber or 'best parlour' flanked by a 'common parlour' in one wing and a kitchen and scullery in the other, inter-communication being managed via a corridor around the front such that servants could move between their rooms without entering the best parlour (Plaw 1823 plate XVIII).


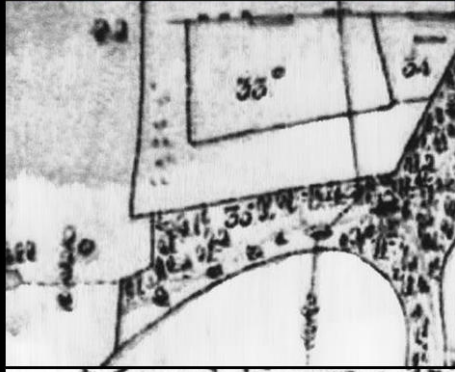
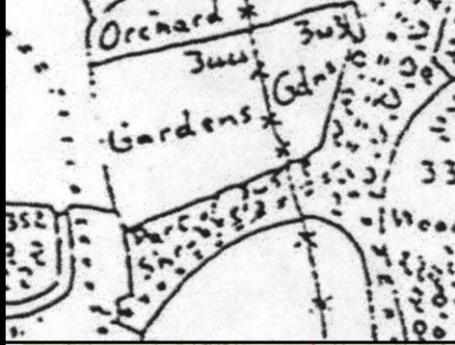
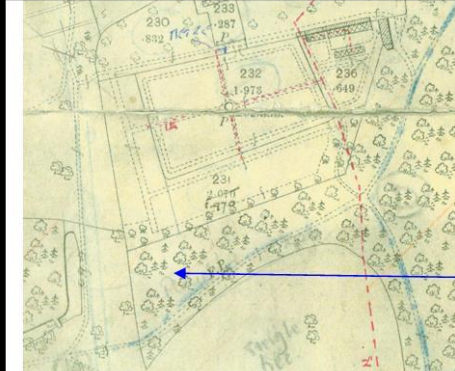
The (arguably short-lived) re-design of the building as a lodge might account for the thickening of the south wall by the addition of wall 337 built within/alongside the original south wall 336. If it was desired to light the primary square building from windows in its side walls as well as, as argued, via its south wall, it may have been necessary to add to the height of the central square building such that the windows in the sides were placed above the intended roofs of the wings. It may have been felt necessary to strengthen at least one of the gable walls, particularly if it was intended to carry a heavy classical pediment (see below).

The date and origins of the building (fig.48)

At the time of writing (October 2018) there is no known documentary reference to the construction of the summerhouse, and it does not appear on any known map or estate plan.

While the lack of documentation for the construction of the building (such as a contract, a bill, or payments to a designer or builder) is easily explained by incomplete research on incompletely-catalogued archives, its non-appearance on any of the long sequence of maps of Attingham Park is much more surprising. It does not appear on either of Humphrey Repton's *Red Book* plans of 1798, it is not on the *Plan of Attingham House and Demesne of 1800* (Shropshire Archives mic191) nor on the Attingham estate plan of 1807. The building is not on the Atcham tithe map of 1849, though this source is not consistently inclusive. It is said to omit some estate buildings and does not show the walls of the Walled Garden; the field boundaries surrounding and including the Walled Garden appear accurate. The building does not appear on the Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2500 plan of 1880 (see fig. below). The only clue from the maps to the building's existence lies in the line of the present western boundary wall, which continues to the north as the boundary to the Western Slip, the pasture at the west end of the Walled Garden; further on it curves around to include the orchard to the north. In 1798 it was, as it is today, continuous, but by 1800 (*Plan of Attingham House and demesne, 1800*) had been interrupted by the inclusion of a small parcel of land on its east side in with the pasture around the Berwick Maviston moat: this feature is confirmed by the 1807 estate map. The continuous north-south line had however been restored by 1849 and appears just as it does today, and again in the first really accurate survey of 1880. The standing north-south boundary wall has been shown archaeologically to have been built with the summerhouse, so must be later than 1807 (at which date it still was truncated short of the Western Slip). The wall need not necessarily have been built before 1849 (what was mapped could have been some other boundary structure, such as a fence), though by far the most likely option is that the wall, together with the summerhouse enclosure, had indeed by then been built. The tithe surveyors' principal interests were field parcels, land-use and acreages, so their omission of the summerhouse need not be taken as evidence of its absence.

There is at present no precise archaeological dating evidence for the construction of the building. The bricks used in its construction, and for its boundary walls, have not been matched – so far – with any others in Attingham Park, including the Walled Garden, so it does not appear to originate in any known episode of widespread construction activity. Nevertheless, its general mode of construction is consistent with that of the principal late Georgian buildings. The artefacts as a group are broadly indicative of an early 19th-century date, though the limited nature of the stratification made particular associations difficult: the

	<p>1798 Repton's Red Book 'as extant' map</p>
	<p>1807 Attingham estate plan</p>
	<p>1849 Atcham Tithe Map</p>
	<p>1880 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500</p> <p>Summerhouse site location</p>

48. The local historic map sequence

only deeply stratified deposits lay in the square building interior, and here objects from its construction (like the glaziers' waste) lay next to material from its demolition (such as the

fallen plaster), and the nature of the structure – a sub-floor space – would have excluded objects from the building's use. The pottery appeared to the excavators to be broadly consistent with an 18th or early 19th century date. The button from the demolition deposit 307 was identified as being of broadly c.1830 from its maker's appearance in a directory of that year, but could of course have been made well before that date, or after, or could have been old when dropped. The pistol gun flint from the topsoil east on the east side of the building is indicative of the period before the 1840s. The clay pipes await identification but appear broadly to belong to this period too.

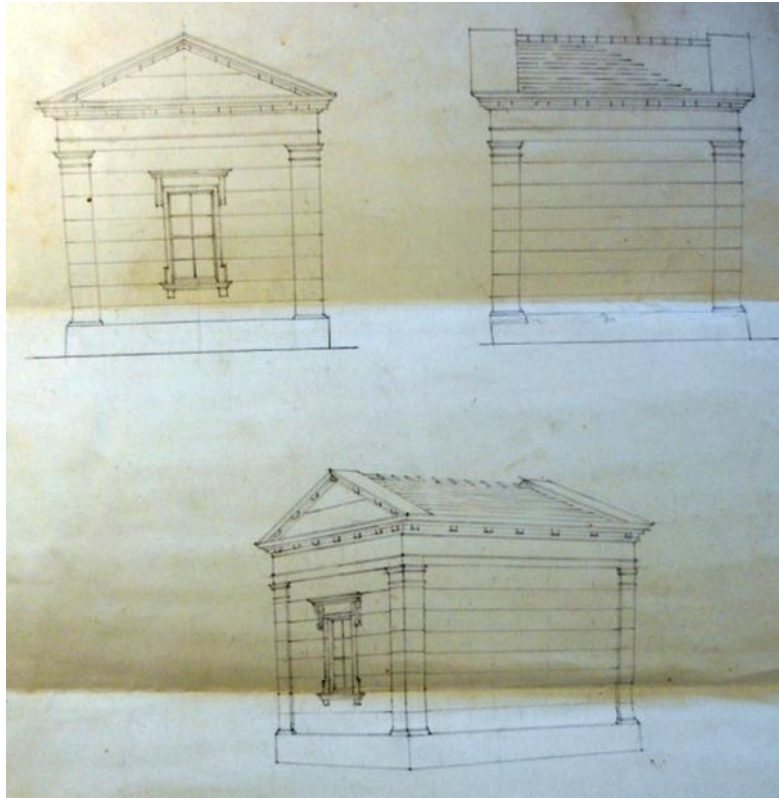
The graffiti on the mantelpiece, the scratched name Thomas Truman, may, unless its author was from outside the county, be attributed to one of two known individuals of that name in Shropshire before the Great War, either the Thomas Truman baptised in Wombridge, just east of Wellington, in 1800, or the Thomas Truman baptised at All Saints, Wellington, in 1813 (English Births & Baptisms, listed on the *findmypast* website). Further simple documentary research (for example, on census returns) would probably yield more definitive evidence, perhaps of occupation as well as date: what was he doing in Attingham Park?



49. Graffiti on the mantelpiece reading 'I Thomas Truman'

The only documentary reference known at present that may relate to the excavated summerhouse occurs in a letter of 1909, with drawings, written to the land agents Burd & Evans of Shrewsbury by builders G & W Edwards. They give an estimate for the cost of the erection of a new pump house (which was never built): 'as per specification drawn up using the masonry from the Summer House in the woods as far as possible with new stone to make up will be one hundred and forty pounds (£140). Or if the cornice and pediments be executed in stone using up the old cornice as far as possible with new to make out but deducting the lead covering as on wood the cost will be £153. (Kevin Triggs *Attingham*

Water 1898-1945, p.2, quoting SA 112/7b3/2/3/5). The letter was accompanied by two drawings, one of a simple square, masonry, pyramidal-roofed building, the other of a more elaborate building in neoclassical form with pedimented gables and an overhanging cornice. This appears to represent the more expensive option being quoted for 'using up the old cornice'. (fig.50)



50. 1909 drawing of the (more expensive) proposed pump house using the cornice and masonry recycled from the 'summerhouse in the woods' (original: Shropshire Archives; reproduction taken from Kevin Triggs' *Attingham Water 1898-1945*)

Is the excavated building the 'summerhouse in the woods'? This must be a distinct possibility, there being no other known candidates in Attingham Park, though it implies either that the building had been missed by the Ordnance surveyors in c.1880 and again in the 1901 revision – again, a possibility, especially if it was an overgrown ruin surrounded by shrubbery – or that in 1910 the stone from the summerhouse in the woods had been stored somewhere, for a long time, rather than still being *in situ* on a standing building. Only further documentary research seems likely to resolve this issue, but we are left with the tantalising possibility that the proposed pedimented pump-house may have been intended to be built with second-hand masonry from the excavated summerhouse: the small square pump-house in the drawing may just possibly be a half-sized replica of the excavated building. Is the window in the drawing the missing, but hypothesised, window in the south wall? To add marginally to the mystery, in December 1914 a large-scale (1:500) plan was made of the 'Garden Plantation', the name then given to the strip of woodland either side of the present Acacia Avenue. It gives the location and species of the trees there, but absolutely no indication of any building, or ruins, or the old enclosure (N.T. Hub library, Attingham, Archives, folder 1).

Finally, in 1920, the tenant then occupying Attingham, Suzanne van Bergen, wrote to Teresa, Lady Berwick (resident at Cronkhill), to say 'I have packed up all the marble I found near the

garden and had it put in the cellar at Attingham, unless you want it at Cronkhill, there is almost a whole panel and if you felt energetic there must be some more left. I have found two more pieces of glass which I will give you the first time I see you as I dare not send it by post' (information from Jean Davis, quoting N.T. ref. 9/14/16). It seems very likely that a spot near 'the garden' that was producing pieces of marble panel and noteworthy pieces of glass (that were small enough to put in the post) was the site of the excavated building – of which no other trace, and perhaps no memory, then survived. The cellars of the mansion have been searched (September 2018) but nothing relevant to the issue was found (with thanks to Mary Freeman and Laura Turner). The last Lord Berwick is said to have referred verbally to the woodland as 'Styria', but the meaning of this (other than it being a forested district of Austria) is lost (pers. comm. Bob Thurston).

Although incomplete, the archaeological, architectural and cartographic evidence available to date is all tentatively pointing to a date of construction, use and disuse in the first half of the 19th century, presumed to be after 1807 (the estate map) and most likely before 1849 – the earliest map on which the presence of the summerhouse enclosure is implied. In the history of Attingham Park, its owners and its changing fortunes, one episode stands out as the most likely genesis of the excavated building. This is the time of the second Lord Berwick, in particular the years after his return from the Grand Tour in 1794 and the beginnings of the collapse of his economic fortunes, around 1815. From c.1797 he employed the landscape designer Humphrey Repton and the architect John Nash to carry out a series of improvements at Attingham Hall (c.1797-1808) and around the park, the latter in particular being responsible for the main entrance to the park, for Tern Lodge, for the re-planning of Atcham village and some of its houses, for the Attingham Back Lodge on the Berwick Road, for Cronkhill (1802) and possibly for the Bee House on the Bee Lawn, within a few metres of the excavated building (Mansbridge 1991, 80-81, 101-103, 106-7; Nock 2011). Lord Berwick also used Nash in 1812 to improve his Grosvenor Square town house after his marriage that year to Sophia Dubochet. This was the last known commission for Nash from Lord Berwick, by 1816-17 he was using John Soane (Smith 2015, 69-71).

In a letter of 1810 to his brother, Lord Berwick admitted 'not having resolution to abstain from Building and Picture buying' and his marriage and his fond indulgence of his new, young, wife made his financial affairs worse. In 1815 his trustee Richard Burton wrote to express his anxiety at the couple's expenditure. In 1817 Sotheby's auctioned part of Lord Berwick's library and in 1821 the estate's mining interests in Wrockwardine Wood were sold off. Nevertheless, in 1822 Lord Berwick's brother William could still write that he still 'makes no attempt to retrieve himself'. In 1824 the Berwicks left England to live more cheaply abroad but the process culminated in the sales of the contents of the hall in 1827 and 1829 (Smith 2015, 69-87). After the death of Lord Berwick in 1832, his brother William returned to Attingham but 'the estate never fully recovered from the 2nd Baron's excessive expenditure, and after his brother's death in 1842, the house was shut up or tenanted for long periods. A visitor to Attingham in the 1860s found the stable yard deserted and overrun with rats, while only a single light burned dimly in the basement of the main house' (National Trust 1985, 37).

From this history, if an 18th-century origin for the summerhouse can be ruled out from its absence from the estate plans of 1798, 1800 and 1807, the period between 1807 and 1824-27 seems the most likely one in which the summerhouse was built. If, as suggested by the archaeology, the construction process was complicated by design changes – particularly the

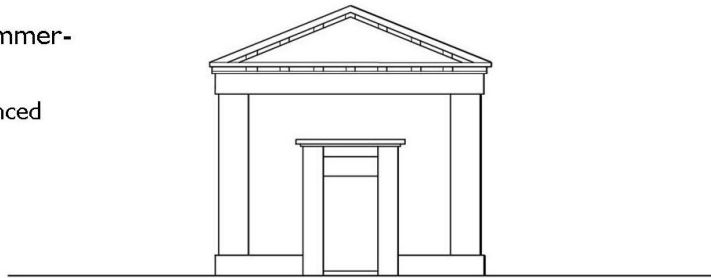
abandonment of the west and east wings and their replacement by a lightweight veranda – it may be that the building was actually being built when needs for economy were beginning to be experienced, perhaps around 1815-1820. There is however little doubt that the building was indeed finished: it was roofed, plastered, fitted with a fireplace and door-furniture, and its windows were glazed.

Who built it? The strongest contender has to be the architect John Nash, who was responsible for the Attingham and Longner Hall lodges and other buildings in the vicinity. There is little doubt from its accurately laid-out and symmetrical plan that the excavated building was a 'designed' structure, presumably built to a design drawing. The other contender has to be Humphrey Repton, who himself had a track record designing park lodges and in 1803 wrote condemning the use of pairs of single-room dwellings at park gates (Mowl & Earnshaw 1985, 55).

Is this, then, a lost John Nash building, a summerhouse built by the infatuated second Lord Berwick to please his wife Sophia? The answer lies in the pottery, the clay pipes and the painted glass fragments, and perhaps in unread bills awaiting discovery in a box of Attingham estate papers.

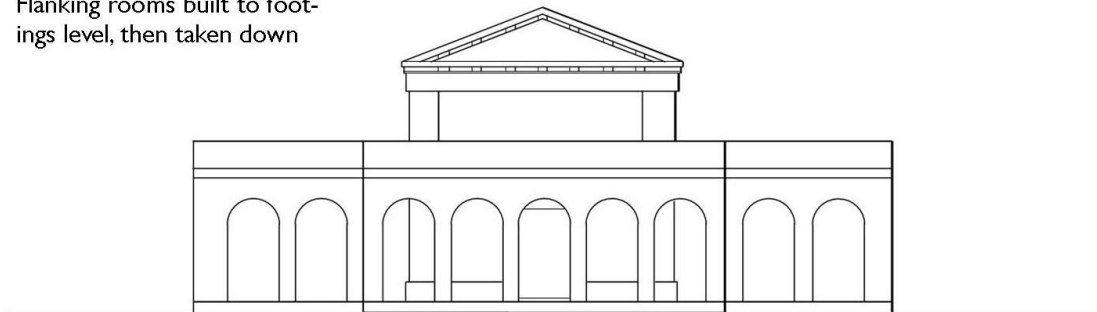
1. The first summer-house

Building commenced



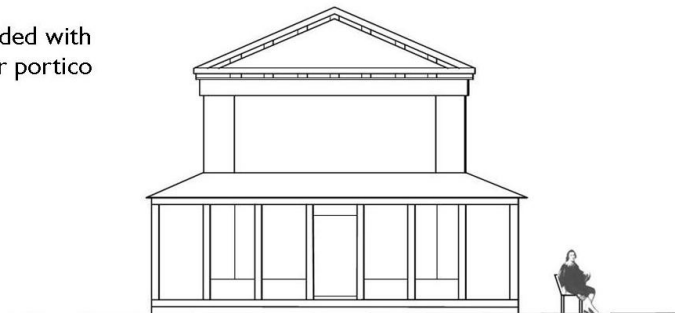
2. 'The Lodge'

Redesigned with flanking rooms and raised in height. Flanking rooms built to footings level, then taken down



3. The second summer-house

Completed. Provided with lightweight timber portico



0 5 10 metres

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51. Reconstruction of the summerhouse north elevation, based on the assumption that the masonry identified for re-use in 1909 derived from this building

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8. Acknowledgements

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