

The Landmark Trust

ELTON HOUSE History Album



Produced by Alastair Dick-Cleland, 1997

Re-presented in 2015

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KEY FACTS

Built: 1699

Listed: Grade II*

Last owner: Miss Philippa Savery

Donated to Landmark: 1982

Architect: Peter Bird of Caroe & Partners

Main contractors: Landmark's own staff

Foreman: Mike Haycraft

Quantity Surveyors: Bare, Leaning & Bare

Furnished and let: April 1996

This History Album draws heavily on the research and report by Jerry Sampson of Caroe & Partners

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Summary

In 1699 John Hall of Bradford-on-Avon granted to Edward Marchant of the City of Bath, Mason and builder, a lease of the plot of land on Abbey Green now occupied by Elton House. At this time the larger properties that had occupied the site of the Abbey Precinct since the Dissolution were being subdivided and built over, as their owners sought to extract a profit from them. The area to the north of Abbey Green had been a garden, belonging to Charles Swallow, so the house built by Edward Marchant must have been the first to stand here.

This earliest house seems to have been of three floors with a substantial basement, but only one room deep: the rear wall of the north-east basement room has a window in it, showing the room behind to be a secondary addition. In the basement was a kitchen and a second room in which there is a stone niche or Buffet with a fine shell head. This, with other fine masonry detail in the central lobby, led to the theory that this might at one time have been a main floor, but it now appears more likely that all have been moved from elsewhere.

At the back of the first house there was a central wing, probably for a stair. There is good reason to believe that it, in fact, contained the existing very fine staircase, which was later moved to its present position. It still relates to earlier floor levels.

Between about 1710 and 1720, this first house was enlarged by the addition of wings on either side of the stair but extending west beyond it, on all floors. This could have been part of the original plan, since only at basement level do there seem to have been windows in the back wall.

Edward Marchant was a developer as well as a builder, and profited from the early eighteenth-century building booms in Bath. His will, dated 1735, shows that he lived in Elton House himself. His daughter Ann was allowed to stay on there after his death, in the room that had been her lodging for several years, although the house and its furniture were to go to another daughter, Elizabeth Brydges. In 1738, Elizabeth, now a widow, was married a second time, to Jacob Elton, Alderman of the City of Bristol.

Elizabeth and Jacob Elton almost certainly lived in Bristol and not in Elton House. However they made several alterations and improvements to the house after 1749, when they purchased the lease from the Duke of Kingston. It is likely that these were intended to convert the house into sets of lodgings to accommodate the affluent visitors flocking to the city.

The house was re-faced in ashlar and given new windows; the ceilings of the rooms on the first and second floors were raised, and decorated with new cornices, fireplaces and panelling. The staircase was moved into a new stairwell, set further back between the side wings.

Further additions have been made since: an attic storey, window bays to the rear wings, with a block of closets at the southern corner, the cottage and most noticeably the shop front, probably all of around 1800. At the same time, through many changes of owner, and countless different occupiers, Elton House has, in its essential character, survived as it was made by Edward Marchant and his daughter, Elizabeth Elton. It tells of the more humdrum and provincial side of Bath, a side that existed alongside the formal grandeur of the Woods but has now largely disappeared.

UP TO THE PRESENT DAY

Although it is the Eltons' name that has stayed with the house, it was theirs for less than thirty years. In 1765, the year of her husband's death, Elizabeth Elton's trustees sold it to Joseph Terry, Haberdasher. His family owned the house, now called 2 Abbey Street, for 120 years, although they do not seem to have lived there after about 1830. In 1851 it was let to a grocer who later, having risen to the position of Superintendent of the Mineral Water Baths, bought the lease.

In the nineteenth century the area around Abbey Green was no longer fashionable or prosperous, and most of the houses were divided into innumerable tiny dwellings. Elton House was no exception, and it was in this neglected but unaltered condition that it was first seen by Miss Philippa Savery in 1946: home to twelve different tenants and with a cobbler's shop on the ground floor.

She was looking for somewhere to set up a business selling antiques, and was soon the occupier of the front half of the shop, and rent collector for the whole house, on behalf of Miss Dingle, the owner. As Miss Savery worked hard on a Sunday to get ready for opening, one of the tenants sang hymns to make up for her irregular behaviour. But the antiques shop was soon well-known and loved, especially by the people of Bath who recognised it as a symbol of much that was disappearing around them, and they would arrive with artefacts rescued from the debris of demolition.

As rooms fell empty, Miss Savery took on the tenancies, and finally on Miss Dingle's death in 1962 was able to buy the whole house. Miss Savery, herself, died on November 27th 1996. Until then, she and Elton House had been full and equal partners. Much ingenuity and imagination had gone into their survival together, and their skilful evasion of the heavy hand of modernisation. The garden she created at the back of the house is a particular source of pleasure; as is the view of green fields above Bath, still to be enjoyed from the windows at its front.

In 1982 Miss Savery handed on the care of Elton House to the Landmark Trust. Peter Bird, our architect, described his work there as rather like "conserving a cobweb": "We have decorated and mended as gently as possible so that nothing shows", he said. "The roof has been renewed and we had to rebuild the tottering south gable, as well as carrying out some masonry repairs. The antiques shop, sitting room and cottage are now used by a couturier and Miss Savery's kitchen is the housekeeper's linen store. The rest of the house is the Landmark where we have made two bathrooms on the top floor and a kitchen replacing Miss Savery's bathroom. In April 1996 we were able to open Elton House as lodgings for a week or two to a new generation of visitors to Bath."



The hall in 1992

Introduction

Roman Bath

Elton House stands on an irregular plot of ground on the west side of Abbey Street, a little more than half way from the Abbey church to the south wall of the medieval city. The history of the house exemplifies the changes undergone by the city itself, representing a microcosm of Bath from the Roman period to the present. Excavations carried out in 1981-2 showed that beneath the cellars Roman structures are to be found: a well, and a fragment of a tessellated pavement extending north from beneath the Crystal Palace pub next door.

The ground plan of Elton House and the plot on which it stands, have clearly been conditioned by earlier boundaries - it has an almost total lack of right-angles - and these probably relate to the late Saxon church of St. James, which was incorporated into the Bishop's Close in the 12th century. Built in 1699 on open ground within the boundaries of the medieval ecclesiastical precinct, Elton House grew with the city of Bath, expanding in three major phases from a relatively modest beginning, which may have trebled its size by the heyday of Bath in the mid to late 18th century.

There seems to be little detailed continuity in plan between the Roman city and its early medieval successor; discontinuity of occupation seems to have caused a discontinuity in plan as the pattern of ownership of specific plots in the Roman city cannot be carried over to be reflected in the later town. Barry Cunliffe in his book 'The City of Bath' paints a picture of sub-Roman occupation extending into the 6th century, before virtual abandonment by the end of that century;

'By the time the Saxon war-leaders and their followers had penetrated the Cotswolds, Aquae Sulis would have been an enclosure of gaunt ruins inhabited by ghosts and scavenging dogs, perhaps with a few scattered families and their pigs and chickens scratching a living among the crumbling walls while the springs flowed unabated.'

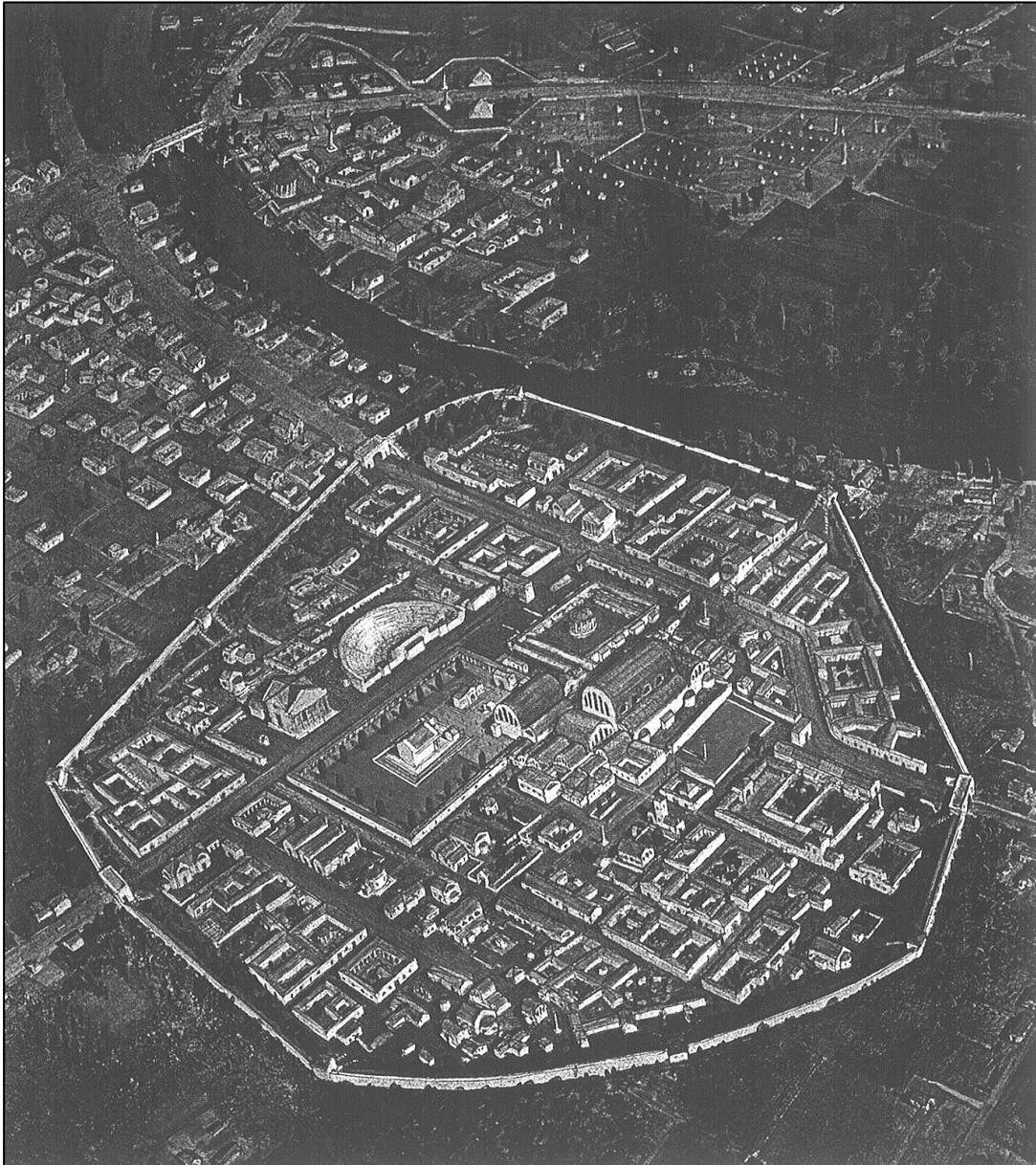


Elton House before work started

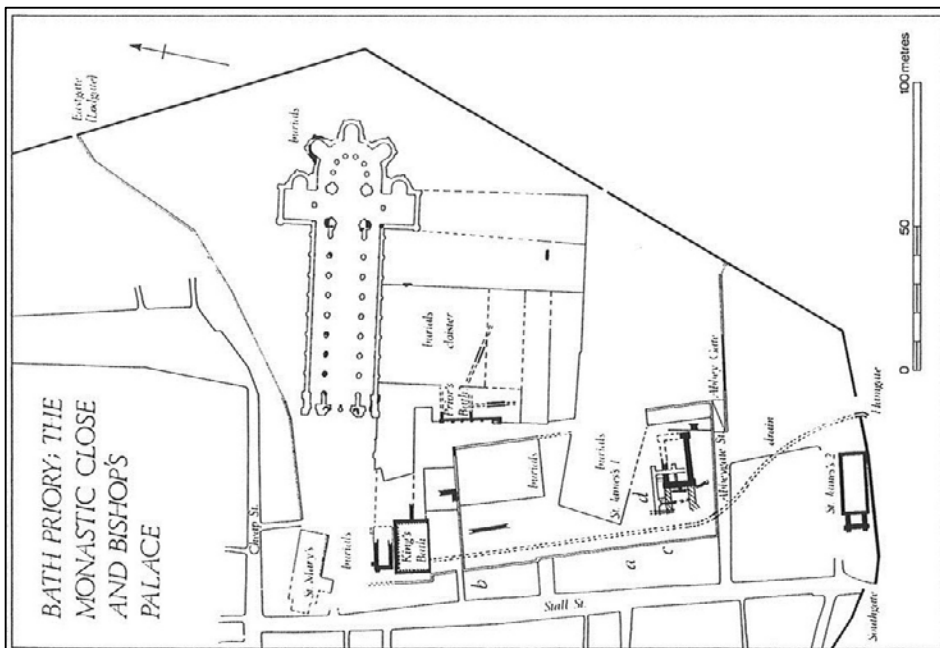
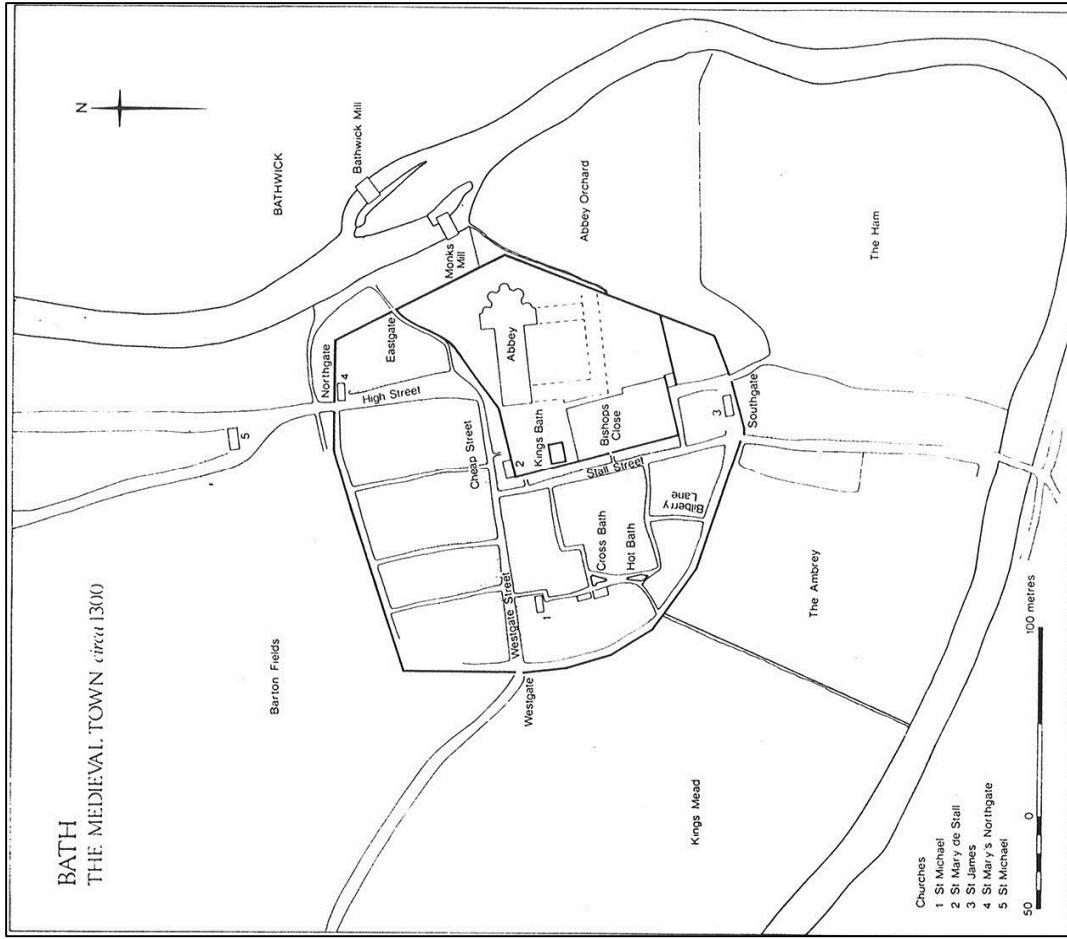


Part of the mosaic floor found in the basement of the Crystal Palace Inn.

In this respect, the site of Elton House seems, as the Roman features found beneath the cellars seem to bear little or no relationship to the orientation or division of the plot.



A reconstruction of the Roman City (*Roman Bath* by Barry Cunliffe)



Bath Priory: the Monastic Close and Bishop's Palace. Elton house sits where the word burials is marked next to St. James I and evidence of burials was found in recent excavations of the basement

The Medieval City

The medieval city of Bath was an irregular pentagon of 24 acres and 15 streets enclosed by the town wall, built in the valley, beneath cliffs to the north and west, and isolated by a loop of the river Avon. Laid out with a grid of streets in the Saxon period, the south-east corner was remodelled in the late 11th and 12th century to accommodate the enlarged precinct of the monastic cathedral. Even following Henry VIII's dissolution of the monastery of St. Peter, the south-eastern quarter of the town remained largely an open space that was only gradually encroached upon by the new secular buildings of the later 16th and 17th centuries. So little building took place in this area in the aftermath of the Dissolution, that Speed's map of 1610 shows what is essentially the same town as existed in the later Middle Ages. But by the time Gilmore drew his map in 1694, the town was beginning to fill up.

The Bishop's Palace and the church of St. James

Between 1088 and 1091, Bishop John de Villula transferred the see of Wells to Bath, and began the rebuilding of St. Peter's Abbey on a grand scale, to match its newly established cathedral status. Following this, most of the south-eastern quarter was occupied by the church of St. James and its associated buildings. In the south-west corner of this ecclesiastical quarter, Bishop John built himself a bishop's palace.

The Palace was seen and briefly described by John Leland in his Itinerary. By that time little remained of it but... one large square tower and some other ruins ...' By 1328 it was already considered ruinous, redundant and too expensive to maintain by the Bishops, and it was rented to the priory. Excavations in 1984-5 at the angle of Swallow Street and Abbeygate Street, revealed a typical Norman upper-halled house of c.1100, that had been substantially altered in the 13th century.

The excavations in the south-eastern cellar of Elton House (undertaken to establish the northern extent of the Roman pavement found in the construction of a cellar at the Crystal palace pub next door) located a series of burials, suggesting that by the 12th century the area where Elton House stands had been at least partly occupied by a graveyard - possibly the one belonging to St. James's church, a Saxon or early medieval foundation which was adapted as a chapel for use by the bishops. It was removed to a site beside the south gate of the city in 1279.

The plan of Elton House has undoubtedly been conditioned by the buildings of the medieval Bishop's Palace precinct. The Swallow Street excavations in 1984-5 states that some of these buildings within the Palace complex seem to have survived as stabling and sheds behind the Three Tuns Inn until the early 19th century. The stables are now demolished, but they lay at the western end of the garden of Elton House. Despite the close proximity of all these medieval buildings, it does not appear that any fabric of that date survives in the 17th and 18th century house.

17th-century Bath

Speed's map of 1610 shows a town which appears to have been none too densely settled, and a survey of 1641 allows an estimate to be made of the population at between 900 and 1500 inhabitants. The town was still very much a walled city. Pepys visited in 1668 and he spent time...'.. walking round the walls of the city, which are good, and the battlements all whole.'

R. S. Neale, in his book *Bath: A Social History*, gives us a description of the city in the 1680s:

'The best of the inns and lodging houses ... were stone-built and tiled and lay in the central and northern part of the town. They were all built in the vernacular style - mostly three storey buildings with casement and mullioned windows set in large decorated bays, attics, and high gables which, year in and year out, much to the discomfort of pedestrians, poured their storm waters on to the streets they fronted. These buildings were all architectural flourish and asymmetrical. Lacking proportion and harmony they were a collection of mere houses. According to reports even those accommodating the visitors were inconvenient and uncomfortable. Doors were slight and thin, windows were incapable of keeping out the least puff of wind, interior walls were rarely wainscotted, chimney pieces and hearths were generally white-washed every day, and the floors were darkstained with a mixture of soot and small beer. Furnishings were equally rustic and spartan. Curtains and hangings were mostly of coarse Kidderminster stuffs while the linen was either corded dimity or a coarse fustian. It was rooms so furnished that let at 10s. a week. In the southern part of the town houses were generally smaller and more slightly built with thatch in place of tiled roofs.'

It is in this milieu that the development of Bath commenced at the beginning of the 18th century, with Elton House being one of the earlier additions to the housing in the town.

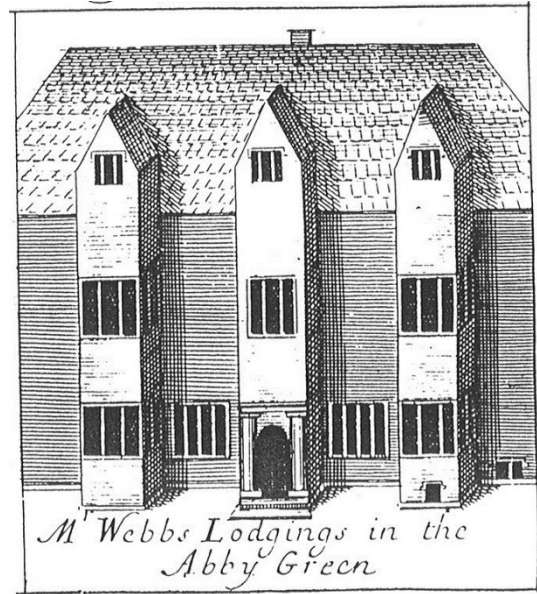
The site

As we have seen above, the site on which Elton House was built, lay within the close of the medieval Bishop's Palace. Following the Dissolution, the Priory lands in the precinct were sold off, and the materials of the buildings were bought by a variety of people, leaving only the west range of the cloisters to survive as Abbey House, until that too was demolished in 1755.

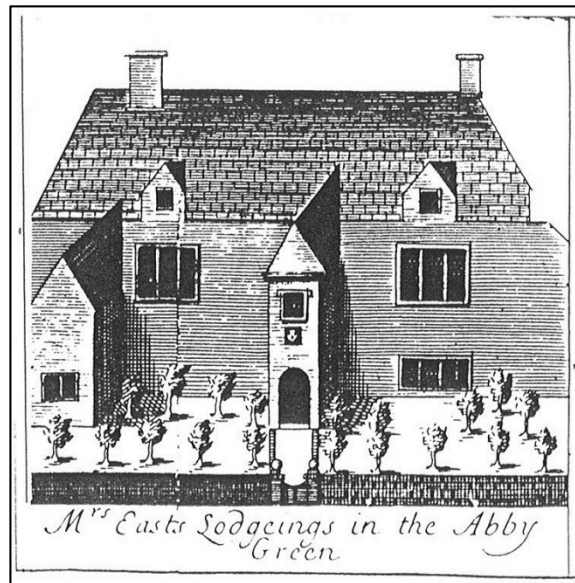
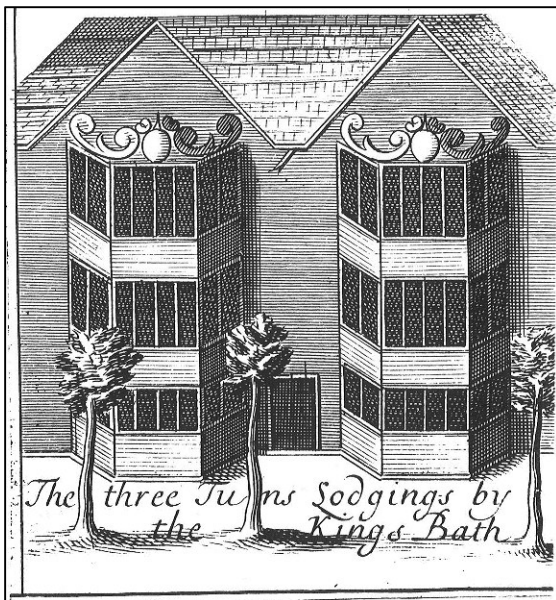
The shell of the abbey church, stripped of anything of value, together with the priory lands, were sold to Humphrey Colles, who resold it to Matthew Colthurst. In 1612 Henry Colthurst sold this quarter of the city to John Hall of Bradford on Avon, who held the mortgage on the property at that time. The Colthurst family do not seem to have developed their land, and Speed's map of 1610 shows almost no new building on the old precinct. In 1616, the plot on which Elton House was to be built, was listed as containing Mr. Hodnett's stables and garden.

A later deed (of 1749) describes the site as having been '... all that piece or parcell of Ground formerly taken out and part of a garden formerly in the possession of Charles Swallow situate in the City of Bath aforesaid in or near the Abbey Green.' A view of the area in which Charles Swallow enjoyed his garden may be had from Gilmore's map of Bath published in 1694. By this time, houses have begun to infill the western side of the monastic precinct; and the north side of the road leading from the Abbey Garden to Abbey Green has been built up. Beyond Abbey House, however, the site of Abbey Street, down as far as what is now the Crystal Palace, is shown as a grassed space with two rows of trees growing down it. The Hall family did start to develop the vicinity, especially in the 1620s and from the later part of the 17th century.

Gilmore's map also has individual illustrations of 35 of '... the most remarkable New Buildings and former Lodging Houses....' Amongst these drawings are two houses in Abbey Green. One is Mr. Webb's lodgings, on the west side of the



Lodging houses taken from the border of Gilmore's map



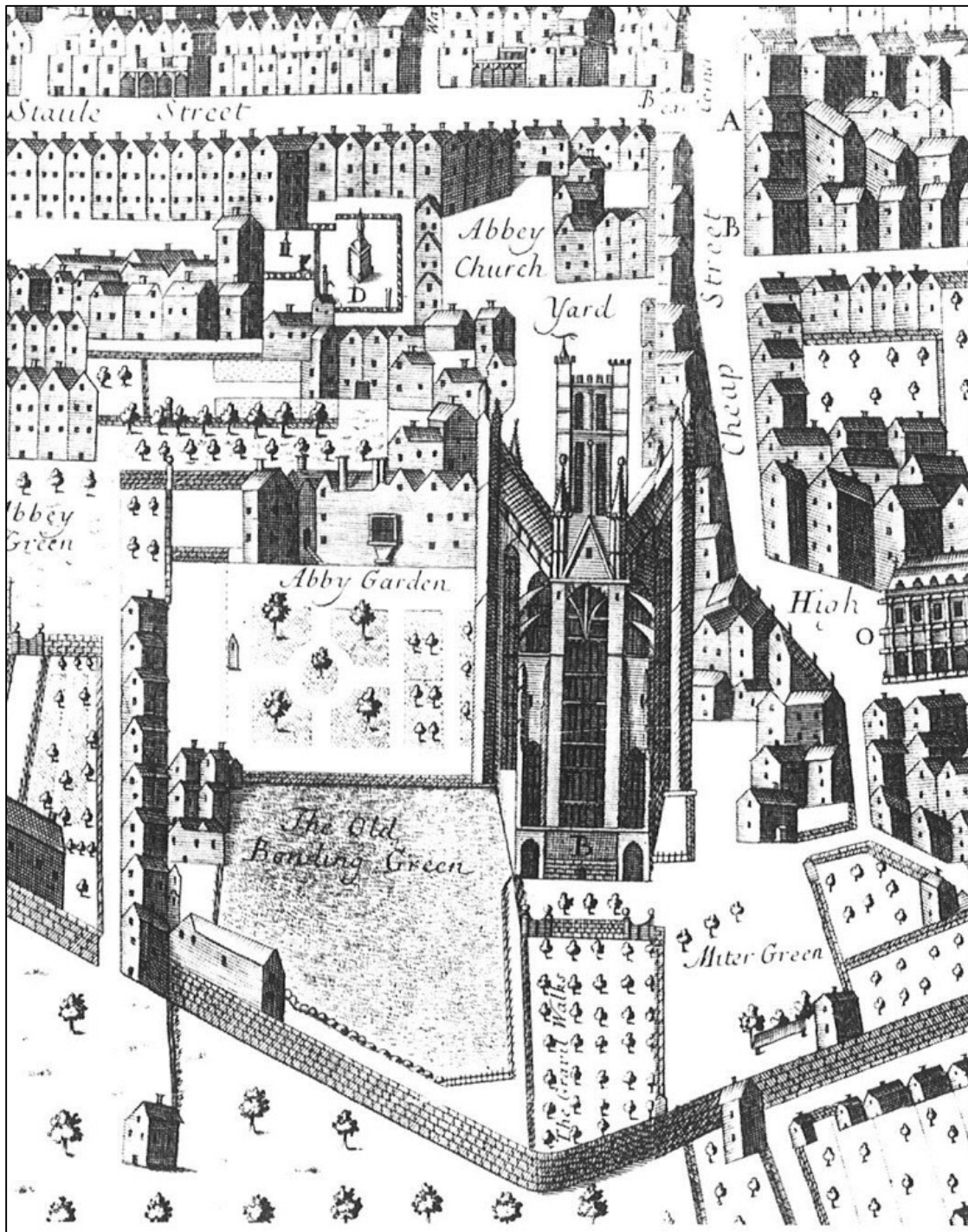
Green, of two storeys with garrets above and having three projecting gables. The other house is Mr. East's lodgings, again of two storeys with dormers lighting the garrets in the roof above and a two storey porch placed off centre. These two houses were presumably the best in the vicinity, and it is likely that the first Elton House would have set out to vie with these in grandeur, probably being, like the others, of two storeys built over a basement with garrets.

Also illustrated by Gilmore is the 17th century Tree Tuns Inn which fronted onto Stall Street and backed onto the plot occupied by Elton House.

Edward Marchant's House

The earliest surviving fabric of Elton House probably belongs to the first post-medieval structure to be erected here, the house of Edward Marchant, mason and building contractor. It was begun in 1699. Marchant leased part of Charles Swallow's garden from John Hall on condition that he built a 'good house.' Also begun in the same year was the house next door to the north. It is likely that the rubble walling in the basements, particularly in the two rooms which front onto the street, dates from this first phase.

As we shall see, these two basement rooms have provided us with a conundrum. They contain a series of features which have been interpreted to suggest that the basement was originally the ground floor, and that the exterior ground level of Abbey Green has been substantially raised at some time during the first two decades of the 18th century. According to this analysis, Elton House could have begun as two tenements - one to the south and the other to the north - running back off the lower street frontage, and having as its ground floor a mason's workshop fronted with Doric columns set back from the street. Sally Lunn's House in North Parade Passage makes a similar claim in its guidebook: 'During the 1700s, the street level was raised, making the original ground floor into a cellar.' We now believe that this interpretation is wrong.



The central area of Bath as depicted by Gilmore in 1694 shortly before Elton House was built. Abbey Green can be seen on the middle left (the site is highlighted). The two open spaces, the Abbey Garden and the Old Bowling green, occupy the site of the cloisters and the east range of the Norman cathedral priory

Edward Marchant, the builder

So in 1699, John Hall of Bradford on Avon granted to Edward Marchant of the City of Bath, Mason, the lease of the plot of ground upon which Elton House stands. He lived in the house and left it to his daughter, Elizabeth, in his will, which also stipulates that another daughter, Ann, was to be allowed to stay on at the house after his death, in the room that had been her lodging for several years, provided she was 'continuing unmarried.'

Edward came from a Quaker family which also included the mercer and building entrepreneur, Richard Marchant. In 1709, Richard also purchased a lease from John Hall, for 19 acres in the Ham (to the south-east of Abbey Green), and proceeded to build several houses and paved streets and courts there in contravention of the rights of common pasture on the land. We do not know if Edward was involved in this dubious development.

Elizabeth Marchant first married George Brydges, a distiller from Bristol, but after his death she remarried Jacob Elton, Alderman of the City of Bristol.

The 17th century ground level

The earliest feature to survive in Elton House is a 17th century window apparently belonging to a house immediately to the south. It was found in the cellar wall during the renovation work. This window, in addition to providing confirmatory evidence for the existence of houses to the south of Elton House in 1699 (as shown in Gilmore's map), also serves to provide evidence about the original ground level.

The present basement contains a series of early stone features which together suggest a use for this floor far superior to that of a cellar. They are the fine shell-headed recess with shelves in the south-east room; the finely finished curved ashlar wall in the passageway; the Doric column in the south wall of the north-east cellar room and the adjacent keystone arch.



The shell niche in the basement

It is these features that have led to the suggestion that what is now the basement, was originally the ground floor of a building which did not possess a basement, and that the exterior ground level has been raised by around 6 feet in the first two decades of the 18th century.

For this hypothesis to be correct, it becomes necessary to show that the 17th century house to the south had no cellar, and that its surviving window is on its ground floor. A map of Bath prepared for the Duke of Kingston in 1725 shows a house to the south of Elton belonging to Robert Webb. Its unusual street elevation corresponds very closely with 'Mr. Webb's Lodgings' drawn by Gilmore back in 1694 and they are almost certainly one and the same. And Gilmore's illustration proves beyond doubt that this house possessed a cellar at its northern end against the south end of Elton House, and thus the window facing into the south-east cellar of Elton House seems certain to have lit a cellar in Mr. Webb's Lodging prior to 1699.

The excavations on Mr. Webb's site, which took place beneath the Crystal Palace pub (which dates from c1825) in 1980, also supported the existence of this 17th century cellar. The rubble that they found was consistent with demolition rubble of the preceding building filling in the cellar of the building.

There is evidence to suggest that at the rear of Elton House, the ground level was originally lower, in that there appears to be a door to the back garden from room B2, and the rear wall of the north-eastern room has a window in it showing that the house was then only one room deep.



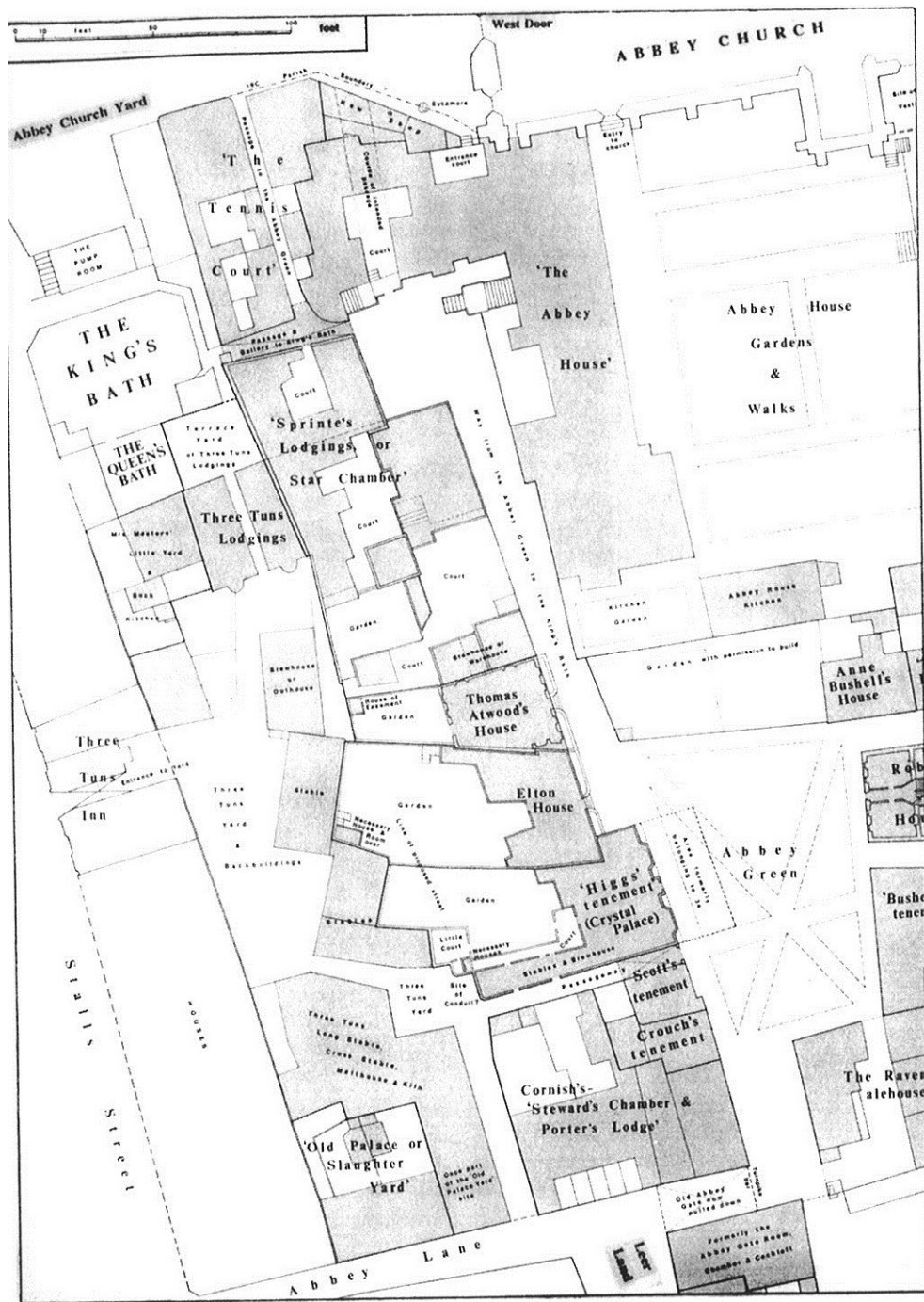
The basement fireplace

The fine stonework of the cellar

If we accept that the present cellar always was the basement of Elton House, we still have to explain the presence of the fine stonework. It could be that Edward Marchant, as a mason, wished to provide finely carved stone fittings in even the least salubrious settings within his house, or that they are reused from another site. Marchant would certainly have been capable of producing work of this quality, and it may be that what has been lost from the upper floors of his house far surpassed the quality of his cellar fittings. Detailed examination of the construction of these features has shown that the arch and the column are almost certainly later insertions reused from another site, either in the house or from elsewhere.

The form of the first house

The blocked window in the west wall of the basement and the vertical break in the stonework on the south elevation at a width that corresponds with the depth of the front block of rooms facing Abbey Street, show that Marchant's house was just one room deep. It is possible that in the centre at the rear, there was a projection to house the stairs of this first house. Again, the south gable suggests that the 1699 house was probably of three floors, or two with garrets above, with a cellar beneath, matching the height of Mr. Webb's house next door. The result must have been an imposing frontage as high as it was wide.



Part of the Kingston estate in the 1740s.
 Note the 'Necessary House & Room Over' in the Garden
 which also shows the line of a proposed street.

Early 18th-century Enlargement

The growth of Elton House from a building only one room deep to its present form mirrors the growth of the town itself. Bath almost trebled in size in the first 65 years of the 18th century. The first wave, after 1725, was stimulated by the Avon Navigation, and by the construction of John Allen's two mile tramway from his Coombe Down quarries to the Avon at Dolemeads. These two improvements in transport substantially reduced the cost of building materials in Bath.

Two ground plans of Elton made in 1725 and 1749 show what changes were made to the house. The 1725 map is the first accurate large-scale map of Bath, drawn for the Duke of Kingston. It shows that the north and south wings had been extended to the west. The recess in the central section at the rear probably confirms the position of the stair turret which could not be lit if an extension were built here. It also shows that there was a continuous excavated light-well across the front of the house to light the cellar windows. This period of work may well have marked a new period of prosperity for Marchant, perhaps associated with his growing status as a building contractor, a status sufficient by 1725 for him to be appointed as the chief mason and contractor to the Avon Navigation. The fireplaces in the north wing on the first and second floors bear mouldings of c.1710 - the most likely date for the construction of the wings.

Although originally one room deep, there is evidence that the wings were always intended. Despite us stripping the panelling of rooms 2/2 and 3/2, no clear trace of any west facing windows could be found. Whilst it is to be expected that Marchant would concentrate his fenestration on the front facade, it is unlikely that the rear wall would have had no windows giving onto the garden. Thus Marchant may have built the streetward section rapidly in order to fulfil the agreement to build a 'good house', and then added the west wings, as he had always intended, at his leisure, saving the unnecessary effort and expense of adding windows into the west wall that would only be temporary.

Edward Marchant's will stipulating that Ann should be allowed to continue living in the house, also states that she should have access to the 'Back Kitchen, Brew House, and garden, with free ingress, egress and regress at all times thereto.'

The large fireplaces of the north-east cellar room may represent the front kitchen, and that in the room to the west, the back kitchen. The extension shown in the north-west of the 1749 plan could well be the Brew House, particularly as it has an external entrance approached by a flight of steps which would provide a common entry for the different occupants of the house.

The 'necessary houses' were situated in the south-west corner of the plot, and by 1749 a flight of steps gave access to a room above, whose purpose is not known. Behind the garden wall to the west were the stables of the Three Tuns Inn.

The c1756 Alterations

Around 1756 the front of Elton House was upgraded and a new stairwell formed, doubtless as part of the improvements carried out by Jacob Elton and his wife, following their purchase of the lease from the Duke of Kingston in 1749. Such a period of refurbishment would also fit within the second of the great waves of building in Bath, from 1753-8.

When Elton House and its neighbour to the north were remodelled, the immediate environment was relatively refined, with the west side of Abbey Street and Abbey Green evidently providing quality accommodation, at a time when much of the best building was concentrated in the newly-built part of the city in areas such as Queen Square and King's Circus.

This modernisation of the old family home was in order to reap some of the profits to be had from the affluent and fashionable visitors to the city. Elizabeth and Jacob Elton lived in Bristol rather than Bath, and so the building was available for letting as apartments for the seasonal visits of the gentry and nobility.

The Stairwell

It seems that both from the style of the existing staircase and from the way it relates to the different floor levels, that the original stairs from Edward Marchant's house were reused when a new stairwell was erected further to the west between the north and south wings. The spacious apse may have been constructed to permit the passage of Bath Chairmen. The heavy mouldings on the sashes of the windows of the stairwell suggest that these may also have been reused from the original stair turret.

The frontage

The most obvious change to the house built by Edward Marchant is the renewed ashlar face of the east frontage. The form of this earlier facade is lost, the only possible fragment of it being at the south end, where an area of plain ashlar, which does not course with the rest of the elevation, survives above the flat roof of the Crystal Palace, where part of the early facade may have been concealed beneath the pitched roof of Mr. Webb's lodging, when the rest was rebuilt.

Later alterations have obscured the form of the ground floor in the mid-18th century, but above this there is a regular series of windows on the first and second floors, all with plain surrounds of a type generally more common towards the end of the 18th century. The southernmost window of the second floor is omitted, probably because this area was obscured by the next door property.

The alterations to the facade are reflected in the interior by alterations to the arrangement of the floors, all related to the increasing height of the major rooms. The ceilings of the rooms on the first and second floors were raised, and decorated with new cornices, fireplaces and panelling. Hence, from the second floor landing two steps are required to the front rooms and on the floor above, four steps have been introduced.

Bath's Role as a Spa

The word spa comes from the Walloon word 'espa', a fountain, and the word is taken from Spa, the Belgian town 16 miles from Liege, which was a resort founded in 1326 by Collin le Loup, an ironmaster. It first appears in English at the end of the 16th century spelt 'spaw.' Britain at the time had only two hot springs - Buxton, Derbyshire and Bath.

We have seen how important bath (Aqua Sulis) was to the Romans, and although it entered a period of disrepair when the Saxons invaded, it was rescued and rebuilt by the Benedictines. Its medicinal virtues were well established - John Leland writing in the 1540s that Bath was 'much frequentid of people deseasid with lepre, pokkes, scabbes and great aches'

At the Reformation many holy wells and baths were closed - a complete contrast to the Continent where a revival of baths was taking place, particularly in Renaissance Italy. Dr William Turner deplored the sorry state of Bath and Buxton - 'He that had been in Italye and Germany and had seen how costly and well favoredly the baths are trimmed and appointed there in divers and sundrye places, would be ashamed that anye stranger whyche had seene the bathes in foren landes should look upon our baths.'

By 1600 a revival was beginning, starting with Tunbridge Wells in 1606 and followed by others such as Epsom in 1618 and Scarborough in 1626. After the Restoration, Charles II was keen to introduce the relaxed spa life that he had experienced in exile, and after the years of Puritan rule, the English were ready for this. Health provided the excuse and spas became frequented by all classes. Samuel Pepys visited Bath with his wife and friends on the 22nd June 1668. The lack of hygiene bothered him - 'methinks it cannot be clean to go so many bodies together in the same water' but he was taken by the 'very fine ladies.' John Wood, writing many years later, said 'The baths were like so many Bear Gardens,

and Modesty was entirely shut out of them; People of both sexes bathing by Day and Night Naked; and Dogs, Cats, and even human creatures were hurl'd over the rails into the water, while people were bathing in it.' At that time the Baths were unenclosed and could be viewed from the surrounding streets.

The Methuen Treaty with Portugal of 1703 changed English drinking habits - port was now preferred to French claret and the consequence was a rapid increase in gout. Queen Anne and her consort, Prince George of Denmark visited Bath in 1702 and 1703 because of this affliction, and this helped re-establish the town enabling it to overtake its key rival, Tunbridge Wells. There was a gradual change from bathing to drinking the waters and in 1707 Dr William Oliver published his 'Practical Dissertation on Bath Water.'

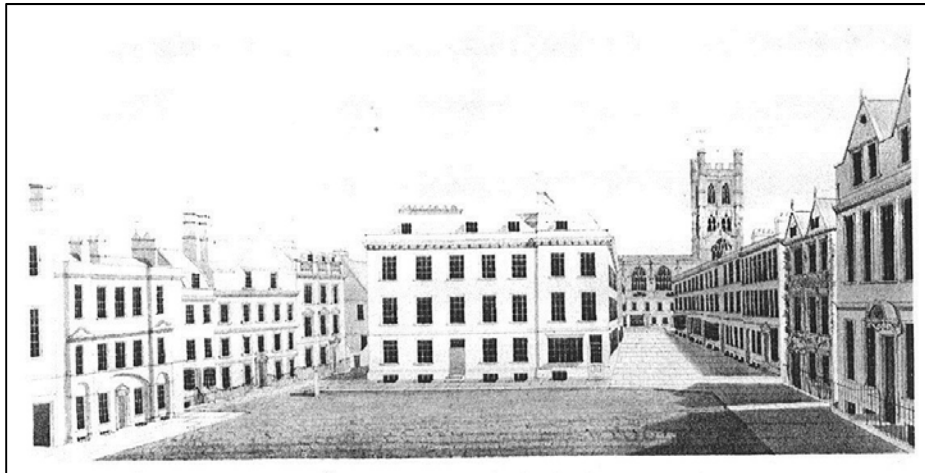
Richard, 'Beau' Nash settled in Bath in 1705 and soon set about organising the social life of its visitors as the self-appointed 'Master of Ceremonies.' John Harvey built the first Pump Room in 1706 and 1708 saw the first Assembly Room.

Not everyone was taken with Bath. Daniel Defoe, in his 'Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain,' wrote 'We may now say it is the resort of the sound as well as the sick and a place that helps the indolent and gay to commit the worst of all murders - to kill time.' Warming to his theme, he thought Bath 'more like a prison than a place of diversion, scarce gives the company room to converse out of the smell of their own excrements, and where the very city itself may be said to stink like a common shore.'

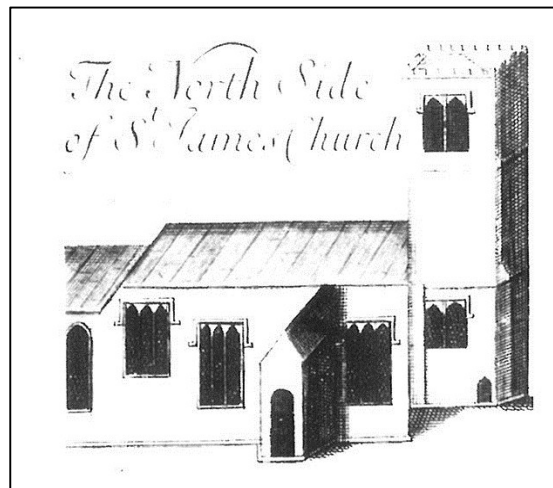
Despite his opinion Bath flourished through the reigns of the Georges, with large numbers of visitors arriving and leaving each week from all over the country. Spas allowed people of different social rank to mix, horizontally as well as vertically, and as a result English society became less provincial and inbred, and less divided into rigid county cliques. Spas enabled women to enjoy more

freedom that at home and generally encouraged greater emancipation. Much of the elegance and refinement associated with late 18th century life was acquired at Bath, Tunbridge Wells and Scarborough where the mixing between the sexes encouraged a general increase in the efforts put into dress and manners. The 18th century was indeed 'the age of watering places' with many people coming for entertainment and leisure rather than for a cure. Popular opinion served to reinforce this trend towards good living - even the studious Rev. John Penrose wrote that 'it is a Maxim universally received, that any Degree of Study prevents the Efficacy of the Waters.' Shopping was an added attraction, and many services, such as portrait painting, arose to meet the needs of such visitors.

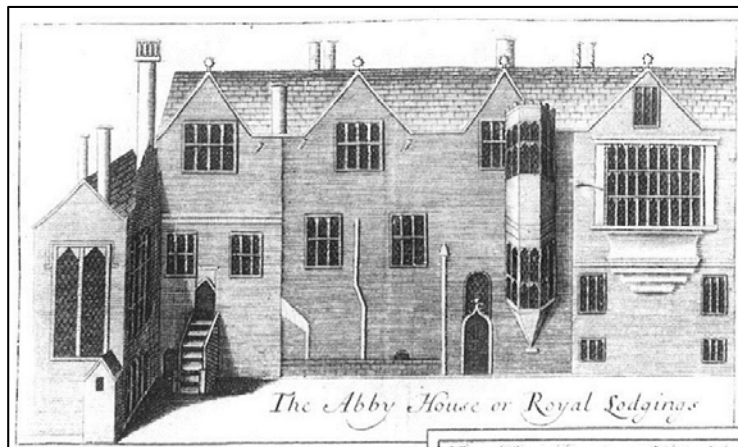
But if a cure was what was needed, the Waters of Bath claimed an impressive record. The Original Bath Guide offers them as a remedy for 'Rheumatism, chronic and muscular; Fibrositis, Rheumatoid and Arthritic; Myalgia (muscular pains); Gout in all its forms; Gouty and Rheumatic Laryngitis; certain diseases of the nose and nasopharynx; Sciatica and Lumbago; Disorders of the Digestive Organs; Tropical Diseases; Muco Membraneous Colitis; Diseases of the Skin; Anaemia; Metallic Poisoning; Arterio-sclerosis; restoring tone in paralysed muscles; restoring movement and muscular tone after gunshot and other wounds and accidents.'



Abbey Green as painted by Benjamin Morris c.1785
The house in the middle on the left (highlighted) is Elton House
The Penrose family took lodgings in the house before it in 1766



St. James' Church



Abbey House

The Rev. John Penrose

We have seen that the alterations to Elton House c.1756 were to enable Elizabeth and John Elton to make money from Bath visitors, by letting lodgings in their house, and it was to just such an apartment in Abbey Green in the house next door to Elton House that the Rev. John Penrose, a Cornish parson, came in 1766 with his wife and daughter, to take the waters to seek relief from his gout. (The book, 'Letters from Bath 1766-1767 by the Rev. John Penrose' is in the bookshelf). Good quality accommodation was an important constituent of Bath's success, and a scarcity of lodgings was often a problem in other spas. He gives a sharply observed account of life in such lodgings as well as in the city itself.

As he was so ill and had to be carried in a Chair, Fanny, his daughter, writes the first of the letters home - 'Our Lodgings are excessive handsome, we have a Parlor and two lodging rooms all down stairs, which is very convenient, as Papa is not able to walk. This place is call'd Abby Green at the house of one Mr. Grant a Clergyman. ... Mrs Grant was surprised to find we had not brought a servant with us and said we must take one for it was a thing impossible to do without...'

Mrs Grant explains to the Penrose family that 'the Servants of the House clean the Rooms, make the Beds, light the Fires, dress the Victuals; But, who, mem shall go off Errands, lay the cloth, wait on you at Table, at tea and do the many other little Things which necessarily occur?.' Having resolved the servant issue by taking a girl of about 15 ('we are to give her meat and 2s. per week'), Penrose describes what they have in their lodgings:-

'a Tea-kettle and Saucepan, 2 tea-pots, milk pot, Butter-dish, Pint and half-pint Mugs, Bason to keep Salt in, (a Three shilling Barrell of Small-Beer, a doz. of Wine) a thumb-bottle for Ink, a Pint Bottle for Bath Water, and a small Phial for Vinegar. All these our own Property. Of the Colonel's, half dozen plates, a slop-Bason, two Tea-Waiters. The Mistress of the House has lent us, a Pair of salts, 4 wine glasses, a Tumbler, 2 silver spoons, and Tea - Things... Our apartments consist of three rooms, a Parlour and Two-Bed-chambers, the Parlour and our Bed-chamber handsomely cieled, and Fanny's

papered.- The Parlour hath in it a Beaufet, 6 Mahogany Chairs with Hair-Bottoms, an Easy-Chair, a Dining Table, and a Pillar and Claw Table both of Mahogany, Chimney Looking Glass, and Looking-glass against a broad Mullion between the Window Frames. Handsome Chimney-Furniture with Marble Hearth. All the Houses here are sashed.'

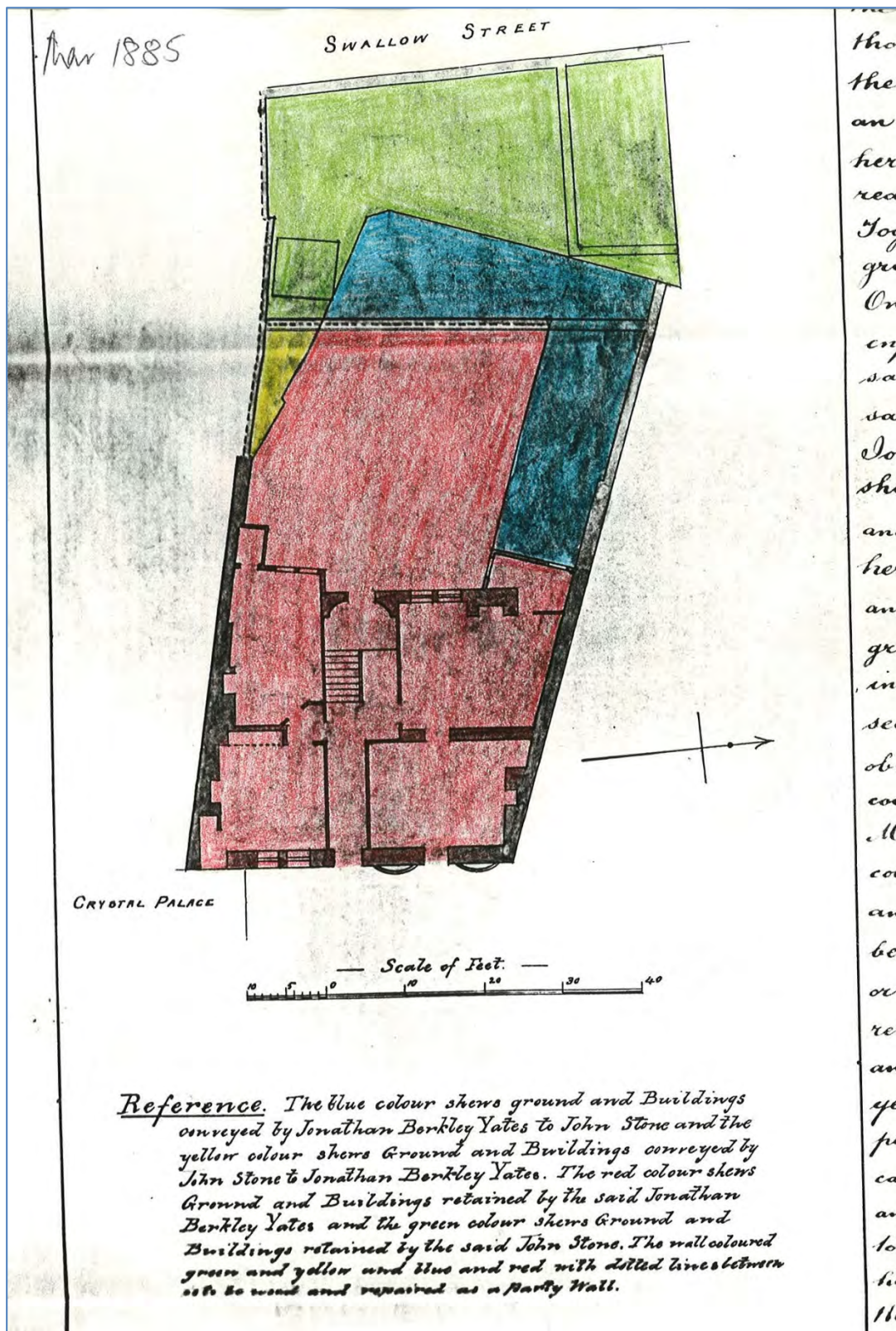
'Our Lodging Room has a blew and white flowered Linen Bed, Window Curtains the same, Walnut Chairs with blew bottoms, Chest of drawers, Dressing Table, Looking Glass: Inside, a closet with hanging Press and Shelves. Fanny's Bed white, with all conveniences, and a closet. The House we live in, is on the west side of Abby Green, fronting East and West: but Fanny's Room has a window, which looks up a long Lane towards the Church-yard.' This must put it on the site of the Crystal Palace pub, 'Higgs' tenement as shown on the Duke of Kingston's map.

'In the Entry of our Lodgings, and of every House (I suppose) where there are Lodgers, there is a Lanthorn lighted with a Candle ... which is Furnished by the several Lodgers in their Turn.'

The Westward Extensions

To return to the house, the late 18th or early 19th century saw various westward and upward extensions. The stairwell and north wing were extended to form a two room fourth floor. The Cottage was constructed to the north-west of the main house; possibly at the same time, the north and south wings were extended to their present extent, together with the closet tower at the south-west angle. Circa 1800 a new shop front was inserted in the northern half of the east frontage of the ground floor.

Following this fourth phase of alterations, little or no major work took place in the building. The area around Elton House ceased to be fashionable in the 19th century - at least one doss-house was located on Abbey Green - and 19th century Bath itself became less the 'Valley of Pleasure' it had been, and, as the Bath Preservation Trust put it, more '... a pleasant place to pass a respectable retirement, a sedate city of military officers, and naval men, clergy, widows and the occasional literary luminary. They had less money to spend on 'improvements' to the historic city than their Georgian predecessors...'



Elton House in 1885

The Later History of the Building

In 1765 Elizabeth Elton negotiated the sale of the building to Joseph Terry, a haberdasher. Ann Marchant was still alive and still 'continuing unmarried' at this time, and presumably had already moved out (or was about to do so), since no provision for her accommodation is mentioned in the conveyance. During the negotiations, her husband Jacob died, since notes on the back explain that 'wife' has had to be changed to 'widow.' Once again, Elton became a family home, and when Joseph Terry died twenty years later in 1785, he left the house to his wife Mary. The Terry family owned the house for 120 years, but they do not seem to have lived there after about 1830.

Joseph's elder son, Joseph Terry II, died in 1828 without issue, and so the house passed to his younger brother Daniel, who seems to have enjoyed the property for only a year before he himself died. Daniel had two sons, Walter and Frederick, and in 1846 the latter was the owner. But having moved from London to Sydney, Australia, Frederick granted power of attorney to manage and let the house for him to his two sisters, Jane and Elizabeth, spinsters of London.

In 1851 the sisters let the house to Jonathan Berkeley Yates, a grocer. Further leases were granted until Yates bought the property from the sisters in 1884. By then he had risen from merely a grocer to become Superintendent of the Mineral Water Baths. Yates sold the cottage 'and other buildings' in 1885 to John Stone acting as an agent for the Mayor and Aldermen of Bath, and in 1910 he sold the house to Madeline Dingle.



Miss Phillippa Savery in the year she left Elton House



Dr 'Doc' Smith with his beloved engine

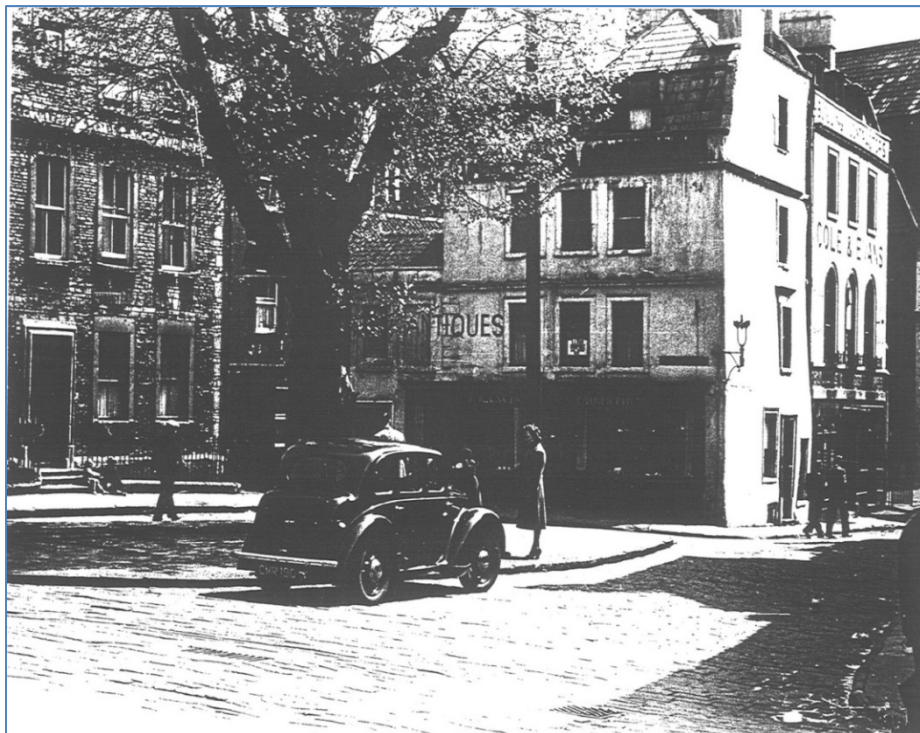
Miss Philippa Savery

In common with other properties in the area around Abbey Green, which was no longer prosperous or fashionable, Elton House was divided up into small apartments and it was in this neglected but unaltered condition when Miss Philippa Savery first saw it in 1946 - home to twelve different tenants and with a cobbler's shop on the ground floor. Miss Savery was looking for somewhere to set up a business selling antiques, and was soon the occupier of the front half of the shop, and rent collector for the whole house on behalf of Miss Dingle, the owner. (Miss Dingle had been given the house by her father, at which time, it had only two taps and no loos). As Miss Savery worked hard on a Sunday to get ready for opening, one of the tenants sang hymns to make up for her irregular behaviour. But the antiques shop was soon well-known and loved, especially by the people of Bath who recognised it as a symbol of much that was disappearing around them, and they would arrive with artefacts rescued from the debris of demolition.

As rooms fell empty, Miss Savery took on the tenancies, and finally, on Miss Dingle's death in 1962, was able to buy the whole house. As Charlotte Haslam put it ' For the next twenty years, she and Elton House were full and equal partners. Much ingenuity and imagination had gone into their survival together, and their skilful evasion of the heavy hand of modernisation.' The garden she created at the back of the house was a particular source of pleasure; as was the view of the green fields above Bath, still to be enjoyed from the windows at the front. She continued to have lodgers in the house, most notably Dr 'Doc' Smith, a retired naval surgeon, and somewhat like Miss Savery, a magpie collector. She modernised as necessary, using baths from the demolished Pump Room Hotel. Her principal was never to erect a solid partition, and so rooms were simply divided with wardrobes and screens. The museum room on the ground floor is intended to give a flavour of the collecting interests of Doc Smith and Philippa Savery. A description of all the items is at the back of this album.



The shop front when occupied by Mr Scott Angus Wallace had been another cobbler.



Abbey Green from outside Elton House



Miss Savery's antique shop

In 1982 Miss Savery handed on the care of Elton House to us. She feared that, if sold, her home would simply become another office and felt this would be a great loss. An unaltered house of this period is such a rarity in Bath that she wanted it to be lived in and ideally enjoyed by more than just one owner. The Landmark Trust seemed a happy solution. She continued to live on at Elton for many more years, continuing her filling of the rooms with furniture and other artefacts. She finally left in 1992 at the age of 90. She died on November 27th 1996.



**“My beloved old car Y0412 bought in 1930 for £20, was still going strong
44 years after! My only car in my life!”**

The following photographs taken in 1988 show a selection of rooms in Elton House



Miss Savery's room now the Museum room.



Miss Savery's kitchen now the Housekeeper's room.



The shop



Ground floor - back



First floor - front



Ground floor - back



First floor – front. Doc's room













The south side wall was found to be unsafe and had to be rebuilt

The Repair of Elton House

Our architect for the repair work was Peter Bird of Caroe & Partners, a particularly happy choice as Peter had once been a lodger at Elton House. He described his work there as rather like 'conserving a cobweb' - the aim being to decorate and mend as gently as possible so that nothing should show.

The roof was renewed, which showed that a variety of coverings had been used. Stone tiles of Cotswold stone were in general use up to the second half of the 18th century, usually fixed with wooden pegs. Cornish slate - 'peggies' - became available after the opening of the Avon Navigation in 1727, and would certainly have been available to Edward Marchant as the main contractor for the company. It is likely, therefore, that the first two phases of the house were roofed with stone tiles, and that Cornish slate was used after that, until the introduction of Welsh slates towards the end of the 18th century.

In the north-west bedroom on the second floor, some early painted wall decoration was discovered behind the dado panelling. This has been preserved behind a hinged panel.

The staircase and windows were repaired as were the plaster walls and ceilings. The entire house was rewired and a new central heating system installed. New bathrooms were put in and a new kitchen on the first floor. Miss Savery's kitchen on the ground floor is now the housekeeper's room. In the attic rooms minimal repairs were carried out and they have been left largely as found.

One of the most important tasks was the rebuilding of the upper part of the south wall. This was found to be extremely vulnerable and had to be taken down to below the level of the second floor. With advice from John Mann, an engineer from Mann Williams, steel reinforcement was added to tie this wall back to the rest of the house. The stonework repairs were carried out by Cole Brothers.



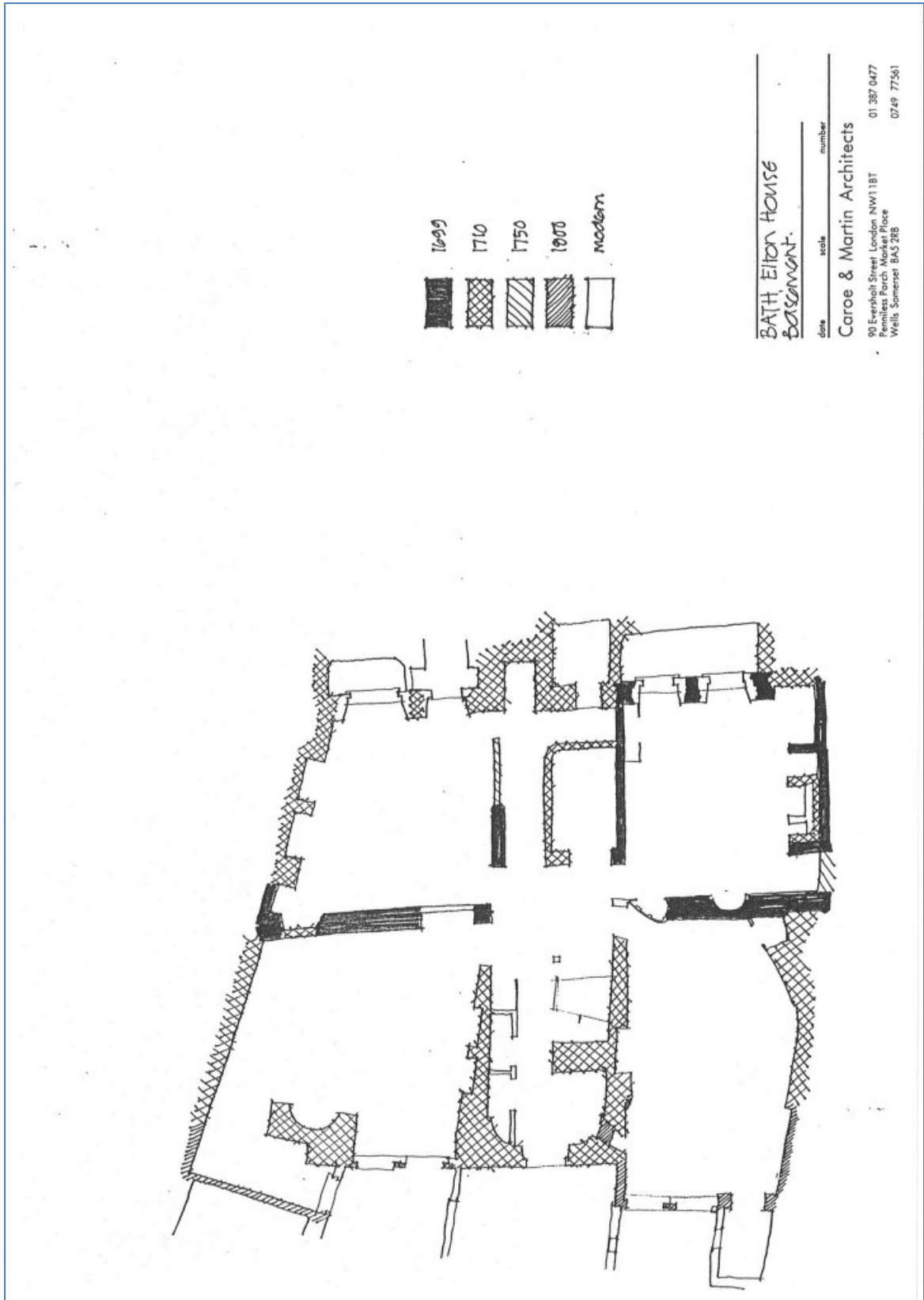
Structural repairs to the side walls

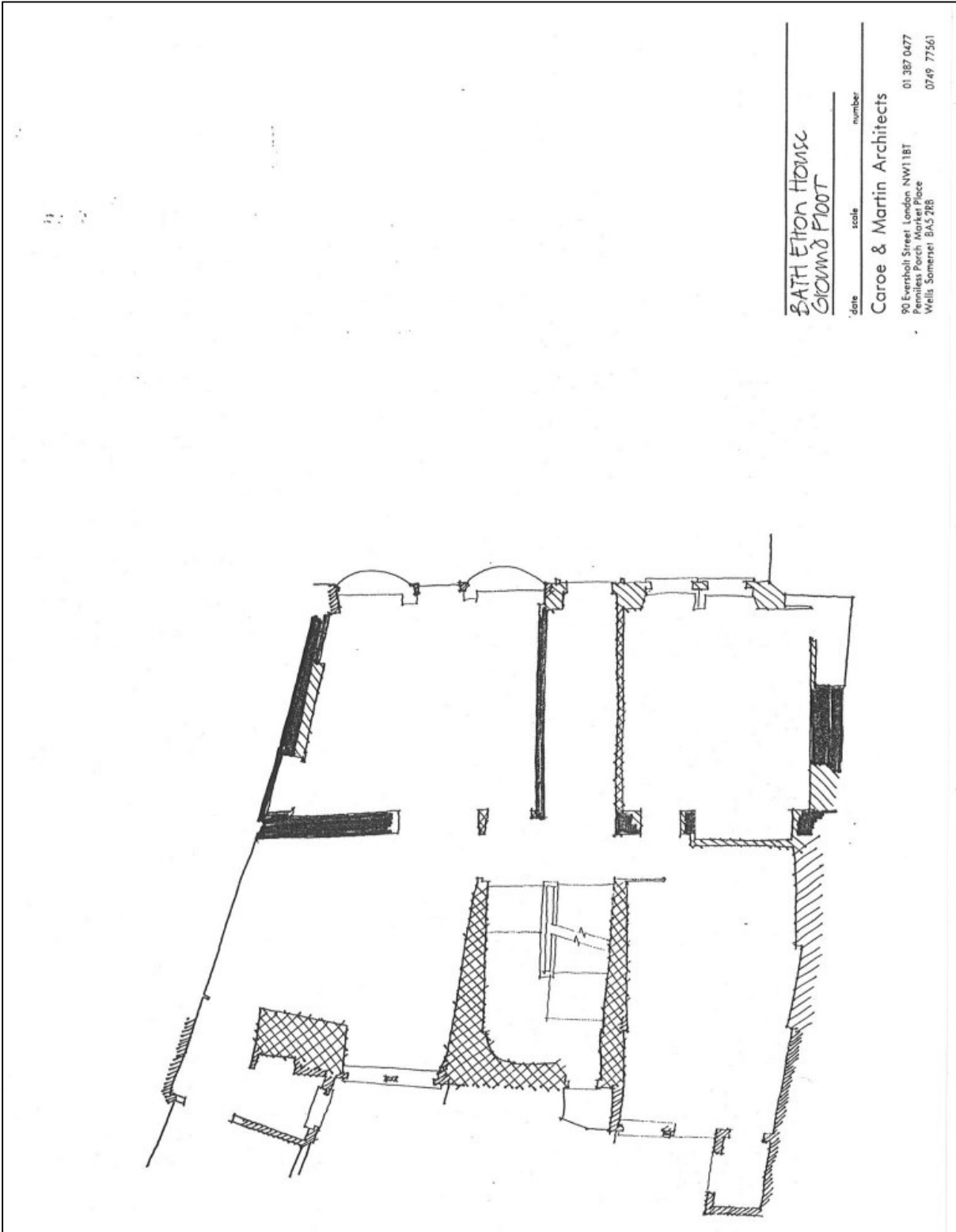


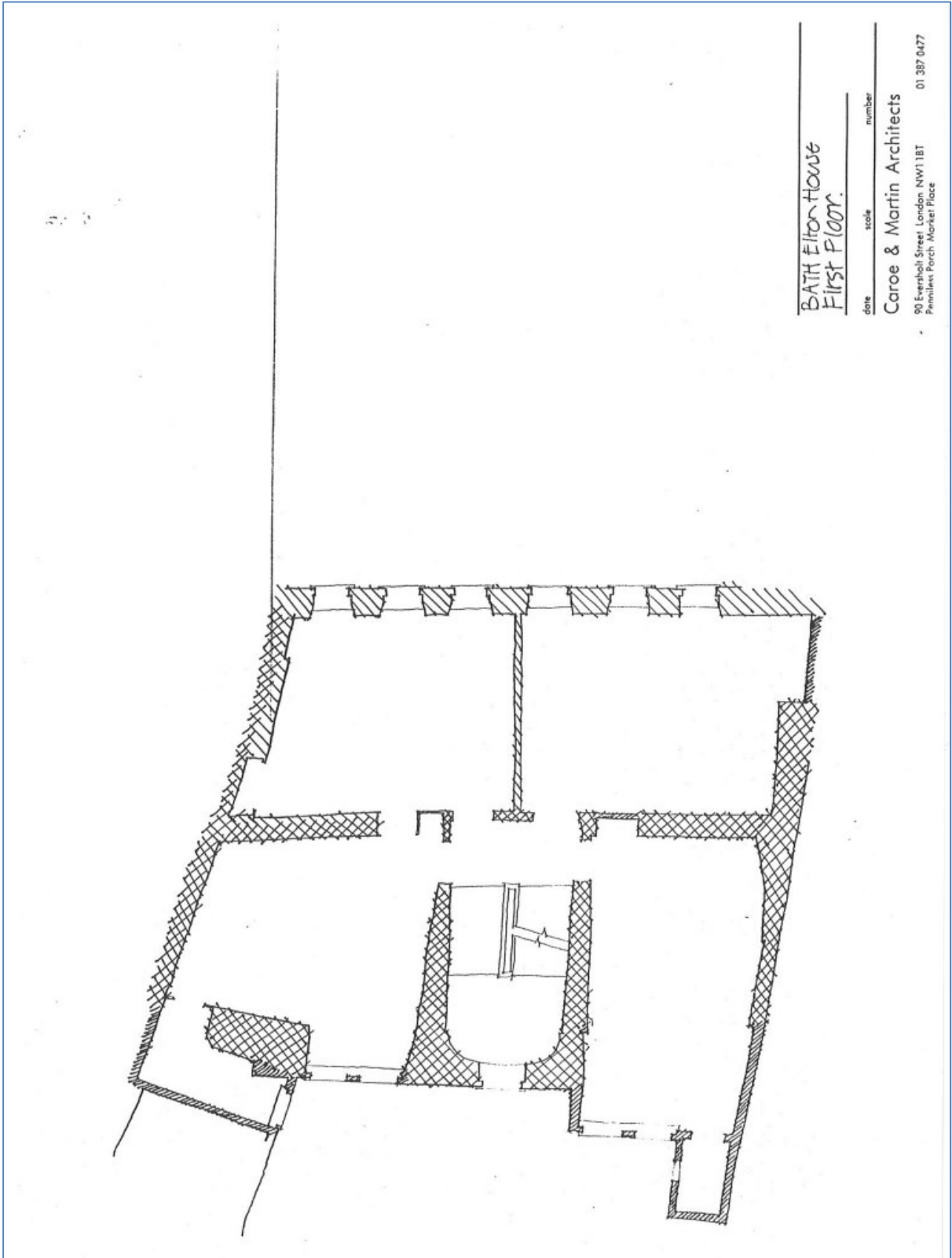
One of the attic rooms

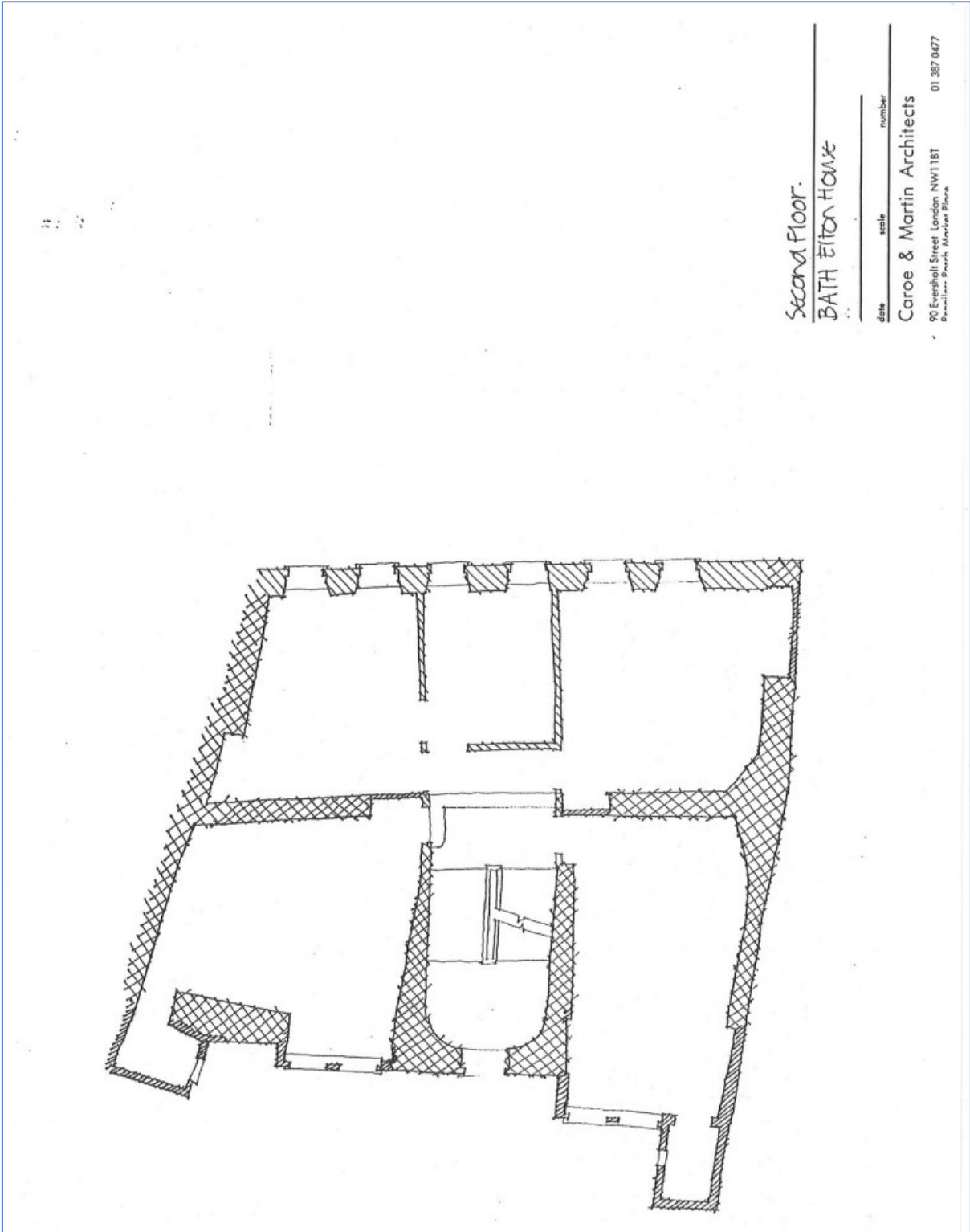


The ornate laundry chimney at the back









THE TIMES SATURDAY DECEMBER 7 1996

Elton House

PHILIPPA SAVERY

Philippa Savery, campaigner for the conservation of Bath, died on November 27 aged 93. She was born on January 31, 1903.

PHILIPPA SAVERY was a diminutive but doughty front-line fighter in the battle for Bath in the 1960s and early 1970s. In those bonanza years, although masterpieces such as the Royal Crescent and Circus were safe, bulldozers cut swaths through row upon row of lesser Georgian gems.

Almost single-handedly at first, Savery took on a city council committed to comprehensive development and which, guided by an industrial psychologist, had hired a chief planner from Hemel Hempstead who felt that the 20th century should leave its own mark on the Woods' achievement. So 18th-century terraces were swept away for the inevitable shopping mall, multistorey car parks and high-rise flats. Why, argued the man from the New Town, should residents of Bath be denied the up-to-date delights of Birmingham?

Savery campaigned against the planners from a Georgian house in the shadow of Bath Abbey, where her cobwebbed devotion to the past, including a preference for candles and oil-lamps, would have made Miss Havisham feel at home. It was also home to hundreds of pigeons.

She carried her battle-cry to save Bath beyond its boundaries, enlisting Sir John Betjeman among her allies, and by 1972 the destruction of a heritage city became a national issue through Adam Fergusson's articles in *The Times*, followed by his book *The Sack of Bath*, with alarming photographic evidence supplied by Snowden.

Philippa Katherine Savery was born of Somerset parents and brought up in Vienna and Paris, where her father was an actuary. She was a WAAF officer in the Second World War and afterwards set up as an antiques dealer in Bath, where her grandfather had lived in the house once occupied by Beau Nash.

She herself followed in the



rich tradition of Bath's eccentrics. Like a Mrs Tiggy-Winkle in tweeds and brogues she bustled about the city, briskly bullying supporters, buttonholing councillors and developers, organising petitions and distributing propaganda, often at the wheel of a Bullnose Morris she had bought in 1929.

She eventually acquired the whole of the house where she had rented a room in 1946, and finally gave it to the Landmark Trust. Here she stored artefacts rescued from the demolition gangs, took in paying guests and still dabbled in antiques until she rebelled against VAT.

Ironically, the cost of crusading left little cash for maintaining a Grade II listed building. Undaunted, she kept up Georgian appearances by ingenious DIY. Metal coat-hangers could be bent to resemble the scalloped glazing-bars of a fanlight; a rubber ball painted black replaced the missing part of a finial on wrought-iron railings.

When not locked in combat with planners, Savery would berate owners whose dogs fouled Abbey Green, pursuing them with paper bags and sometimes a shovel. Or she would crusade against culling the city's pigeon population, pleading for birth-control instead. She devised a feed

formula which she claimed had contraceptive properties.

But most of her half-century in Bath was spent trying to stop the erosion of a complete Georgian city. If necessary, she fought conservationists themselves — as when Bath Preservation Trust endorsed the Buchanan plan for a traffic tunnel under the city. This was a bitter battle, but under a fresh chairman, Sir Christopher Chancellor, the trust managed a painful U-turn.

Miss Philippa, as she was known — she never married — was regarded as affectionately by her foes as by the down-and-outs whom she regularly fed and cared for in Abbey Churchyard; her compassion embraced lame ducks as well as pigeons.

She lived to see the local climate change in favour of preserving what remained of Bath's architectural uniqueness and whole areas at one time destined for destruction were spared for posterity. It was her determination to turn the tide that inspired others to join the fight and bring victory.

But to Savery the battle for Bath was never over. Six months before she died, in a residential home after suffering several paralysing strokes, she told her niece: "We need a national effort to save Bath. I really should be doing more."

Elton House Museum Room

Above the door:

Copper coaching horn

Hall side wall:

1. Stuart gentleman – silk work picture
2. Adam and Eve silk work picture
3. Stumpwork picture – female lutenist
4. Act of Parliament or Tavern clock
5. Small table and lamp
6. 17th C English bridle gauntlet
7. English bridle gauntlet
8. Wooden handled battle axe
9. Pen wash drawing – Charles I
10. Brass panel – Gunpowder plot
11. Oil painting on canvas – Horseman
12. **Painted corner cupboard**
 - On top: Blue and white dish
2 bronze mortar, 1 pestle
 - Containing: Small pottery jug painted with chickens
Liverpool/Manchester Railway souvenir jug
Jug with ship transfer hand coloured
Large jug with cranberry transfer
3 18th C wine glasses
2 rummers
Glass jug

Window wall:

1. Repoussé panelled lantern mirror
2. Leather pistol holster and pike support
3. **Glass case**
 - Containing: Ship model
5 Scrimshaw items and horn mug
2 Scrimshaw tusks and spoon
4. **Hanging mahogany wall shelf**
 - Displaying: 6 Pewter tankards
2 small jugs
5. Egyptian style mahogany lamp stand
6. Oriental lamp
7. Correction chair
8. Woolwork picture of a ship – gilt frame

Fireplace wall:

1. Copy portrait of Miss Savery
2. Oil painting of island with windmill and ship atr. Dommersen
3. Black and white plate ship portrait
4. **Bench left of fireplace**
 - Displaying: Cylindrical wooden hat box
 - White earthenware jug
 - Wig stand
 - Carved oak bible box
5. 2 silhouette portrait miniatures
6. Brass and iron warming pan
7. Chained singeing and scraping tool
8. 3 Brass oil lamps
9. Oval embroidery of figures
10. Dutch school oil painting of putti and dog
11. Gilt finial and ball Mansell Bennet clock
12. Oval oil painting – Amigoni nymphs
13. Delft tile
14. Mei Ping flask
15. Carved oriental figure and stand
16. Bronze clock striker Indian
17. Oil painting – ships offshore (atr. Dommerson)
18. **Hanging shelf**
 - Displaying: Pigeon lamp
 - 2 bronze mortars
 - Railway lamp
 - Spotted dog jug
 - Mug
 - Small china cup
 - Small bronze foal

Fireplace/hearth:

Wood and leather bellow
Leather fire bucket dated 1758
Iron and brass spit jack mechanism
Brass horse ornament
Painted wooden truncheon – William III insignia

19. Railway poster
20. Plaster Gothic wall stand with ivory figurine
21. Tripod stand with lamp

Alcove wall:

1. Barometer

2. **Victorian hanging mirror back shelves – left**
 Displaying: Coaching scene jug
 : Milch glass portrait mug
 2 Commemorative china railway disaster
 2 small blue and white mugs
 2 flasks
 Small blue and white charger
 Large blue and white mug
3. Brass candle stick
4. Glass rolling pin – Buxton type
5. Carved Florentine gilt mirror
6. Marine Oil Painting – Van de Velde
7. Panelled coffer
8. Steam engine – type 4-2-2
9. Willow pattern charger
10. Small table and brass box signed Mackenzie
11. Victorian hanging mirror backed shelves – right
 Displaying: White porcelain figure
 Cottage shaped Staffordshire pastille burners
 Leeds oval teapot
 Coaching scene jug
 Blue and white tureen
12. Iron cut work rush light
13. 2 Ring handle scrapers

Room centre:

1. Hanging on beam – Brass railway lamp
2. Oval gate leg table
3. George III walnut carver chair
4. **Glass case - left**
 Displaying: Copper hunting horn
 3 large tipstoffs
 2 small tipstoffs
 George III truncheon
 2 Georgettes
5. **Glass case – right**
 Displaying: 4 Powder flasks
 2 small silver filigree pistols
 2 Miniature model swords
 Dutch tobacco box
6. Bronze figure of musician signed Pradier

and West Evening Chronicle, Thursday, February 3, 1983

Savery the battler for Bath enters the eighties



● Philippa Savery in the home she has given to the Landmark Trust: "I was determined it would not go on the market."

IT IS perhaps appropriate that Philippa Savery was one of the first plotters for Fighter Command in the last war.

For she was also one of the early plotters in the rearguard action to save Bath from the planners in the 'Sixties' and early Seventies.

"I learnt that if you want to fight, don't tell anyone what you are doing," said Miss Savery, who celebrated her 80th birthday earlier this week. "It was a very tough lesson to learn."

In one battle to build a Dallas-style glass house overlooking the Roman Baths, the Bath Preservation Trust committee, the Bath group of architects, London, the rector and the bishop were all ranged against Miss Savery's side. But she did have the likes

of John Betjeman and Yehudi Menuhin with her. "I was torn strips off by the opposing barrister," said Miss Savery, who spoke against the project at the public inquiry — and who was known as a trouble-maker in the corridors of the Guildhall. "The important thing was — and is — saving Bath."

Although she knew the city she didn't move here until after the war, first of

all renting the two rooms behind the bow windows of 2 Abbey Street in Abbey Green where she opened an antiques shop.

Eventually, she bought the whole house which she has recently given to the Landmark Trust in order to ensure not only its future but that it will be restored properly. The trust, which also bought and did up General Wade's House in Abbey Churchyard, has



DAY BY DAY

by Jasmine Profit

started essential repairs already.

"I felt like rushing out and putting a great big ribbon round the house on my birthday," said Miss Savery. "I can't do it up, my nephew and niece couldn't afford to do it up, so I decided to hand it on to someone who could — I think it is the right thing to do. I was determined it would not go on the market."

The Landmark Trust is complementary to the National Trust and saves the smaller houses — they have about 80. Eventually, Miss Savery's home will be let out as holiday flats, so that it pays its way — a scheme which appeals to Miss Savery who is, meanwhile, staying on. At present, she lets part of the house to students.

Before Miss Savery took over the shop it was a shoe shop run by Angus Wallace. It was he who introduced her to the landlady, who initially turned down her proposition to take over the shop.

"She was a very precise little old maid," she said. "But I mustn't run down old maids because I'm one!"

When Mr Wallace pointed out Miss Savery would be paying twice as much, the landlady soon changed her tune. But part of the bargain was that Miss Savery had to collect the rents from the other 12 families who lived in the house, even though it didn't have any mod cons. For that, her commission was one shilling a week.

She may not have collected rents before, but she'd certainly done some strange things. Like the time she went to Germany in a Lancaster after the war. The RAF wanted to take some WRAF's over to see the results of their labours — they'd been working on the Lancs.

First, they needed a guinea pig to see the women would make the trip without recourse to a loo. And Miss Savery was the tester.

"They went over," she said. "But why anyone wanted to see it I don't know. Cologne was just two spires — the rest was rubble."

After her stint with Fighter Command, she was commissioned and put in charge of 18 balloon sites in Sheffield. Then she went on to the East End of

London where she had been during the blitz and the days of the doodiebugs.

Later she moved on to Rutland which was almost a rest cure after her stint in the East End. Though that, too, had its grimmer moments.

"If a pilot didn't come back, it was the WRAF officer's job to throw a party at once to send him on his way happily," she said.

In her early days in Bath she was busy learning how to make a living as a businesswoman. She gave up selling antiques with the introduction of VAT.

She no longer remembers which was her first fight over conservation. Many she and her colleagues won — like the battle over 2 and 2A Abbey Green and the Bath and Portland office block to the south of the Abbey. It's probably no exaggeration to say that the Abbey Green wouldn't be the haven it is now if it weren't for her efforts.

They didn't, of course, win every time. Balance Street is the one Miss Savery regrets most. She treasures Peter Coard's drawings, originally done in Biro and published in book form, of the houses that were swept away in the zeal of post-war development.

She put many people's backs up. Equally, she made many friends, many of whom remembered her last Monday.

"I think I must be the most spoiled person in Bath," said Miss Savery, who is now keeping a beady eye on the Bath spa plans.



■ TIME WARP: former owner Philippa Savery cared deeply about Elton House and understood that its beauty was best left alone

Elton's finery welcomes the outside world

ONE of the most beautiful and almost completely untouched Georgian houses bang in the middle of Bath is about to be fully restored by the Landmark Trust. Elton House, dating from the early 1700s, is that much-loved creeper-covered building at 2 Abbey Street, Abbey Green which was given to the Trust by former antiques dealer Miss Philippa Savery more than ten years ago.

Now in her nineties, she recently moved out of the house, allowing the Trust to begin their painstaking conservation work.

The Landmark Trust is a charity which saves good buildings from neglect or maltreatment and gives them a new life and a new purpose.

So far the Trust has rescued over 200 buildings, many of which are let as holiday accommodation which in turn provides money for more buildings to be purchased.

In fact Elton House is the second building taken over by the Trust in Bath. The first was the Marshal Wade's House in Abbey Churchyard where the National Trust has the shop on the ground floor and the Trust a holiday flat above.

Having just got into the house, the Landmark Trust is now carrying out detailed investigations to see just how much conservation work needs to be done. A conservative estimate is that it will need £250,000 spent on it and that it will be some two years before the work is actually completed.

When it is, it will provide a large holiday

The Landmark Trust has recently taken possession of a second Bath house. An exhibition of its plans for the building are now on show. Christopher Hansford went along to take a look

flat on the upper floors with a shop, possibly selling antiques or books, on the ground floor.

The Trust is currently holding an exhibition on the ground floor of the building which is open to the public and which explains what it does in general and what its plans are for the historic Bath house. The exhibition is open 11.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. The Trust also wants to open up on Saturday but so far has not found a volunteer to man the building until the end of September. If anyone is interested in helping out, they should call Christopher Crook on 0934 512723.

Elton House was first seen by Miss Savery — one of the prime movers in the sixties' campaign to save Bath — just after the war when it was home to a dozen different families. The house has some 28 rooms on half a dozen different floors.

As each of the rooms became vacant, she bought it up until at last she owned the whole house sometime in the early sixties. She kept the ground floor as an antiques shop until the mid seventies and rented out rooms upstairs. Callers to her premises during those post war years were people like astronomer Patrick Moore and poet John Betjeman.

What is so important about the house is that it remains largely as it was when it was first built, although some additions were made during the mid 18th century.

At you go into the building on the ground floor all the original panelling is there. Although right in the centre of Bath, it is incredibly quiet even when the front door is open. Upstairs you get wonderful views over the city including one to Sham Castle. The enormous cellars, which you won't see, contain many interesting details and reveal that at one time they must have provided an entrance out onto the street.

At the rear of the house are several courtyards on different levels.

The staircase, with some repairs, is entirely original and provides several beautifully curved landings which look out over the courtyards and then the rooftops.

■ Hundreds of homes for sale and rent will be featured in the Promote Chronicle an



■ LIVE WALLS: the creeper-lined exterior of Elton House at 2 Abbey Street, Abbey Green, which is to

A VILLAGE church could be forced to close this winter because it is too cold for parishioners.

Residents at Staverton are being asked to support the church, St Peter's, which needs new heating.

Churchwarden Pete Lavis, of Elm Close, said: "In December the old gas heating in the church finally packed up and was condemned by British Gas."

West Today
Every day we highlight facts about the region in which we live

Fundraisers gave £19,000 to the Theatre Royal last year
Theatre Royal BATH

Source: Theatre Royal Fundraisers

"To replace the system with a modern equivalent would cost about £2,500, but we have decided to install an electric quartz halogen heating system at a cost of about £2,200.

"However, church finances are very limited.

"It costs about £100 a week just to run the church. This year's insurance premium will cost £700.

"The annual contribution to help pay the vicar's and deacon's salary is currently £3,300 a year.

"And over £4,000 has had to be paid out over the last three years on essential repairs."

Mr Lavis said St Peter's had served the village for 170 years.

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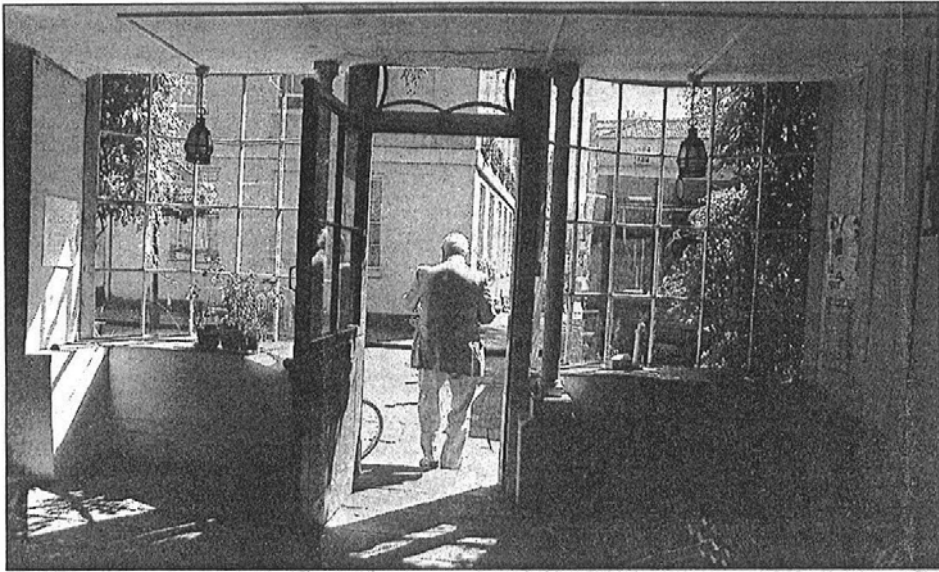
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OPEN INVITE: visitors get chance to view historic property



■ **BRIGHT OUTLOOK:** the front of the property will be refitted as a shop

Trust puts its faith in restored building

ELTON HOUSE in Abbey Street enjoyed a brief day in the public spotlight before the front is refitted as a dress shop.

The Landmark Trust, which owns the house, yesterday invited the public to inspect the 17th century building.

The trust is engaged in the delicate work of restoring the house to the condition it was in in 1749. But it will not be used as a museum. Instead, behind the shop at the front, the rest of the building will be let to visitors to stay in as it was in the 18th century.

The trust's policy is that by letting its buildings for holidays the maximum number of people can derive the most benefit from them and profit far more from a place than

Jessica Townsend delves inside Elton House, which is being restored as a holiday home

by just looking at it.

Charlotte Haslam, the historian of the Landmark Trust, was at the house to talk to visitors about the project.

She described the trust's methods: "We are doing it with three or four men as slowly and carefully as possible so it will be as if it had not been disturbed."

Some rebuilding has been carried out on the side nearest the Crystal Palace pub.

She said: "Most of the history has been worked out but there is evidence that the

present staircase is not the original one. But we have not yet established if another was used or where it was located."

The house was left to the trust by Phillipa Savery who ran it as an antiques shop.

A stalwart campaigner for the preservation of Bath she was reluctant to make any structural alterations to the house.

Some of her improvisations were rather eccentric — she had a bathroom built in one half of a room which she divided in two with wardrobes so she could use the other half as a separate room.

Visitor Richard Pickett, from Swainswick said of the trust's work: "I think it is a wonderful idea. The trust's approach is much better than a museum which can become sterile."



■ **UNDER THE ARCH:** left, historian Charlotte Haslam
 ■ **ON THE UP:** right, craftsman Mike Hayeraft on the stairway



In brief

Festival time

Charlcombe: A festival of music and flowers has been arranged by the Friends of St Mary's at Charlcombe on June 25-26 to raise money for the Charlcombe Appeal Fund and for repairs to the roof of the church.

St Mary's will be open between 10.30am and 4.30pm on the Saturday and Sunday. Although no admission is being charged, donations will be greatly appreciated. The church, the porch and the grass outside will be covered with flowers. Light refreshments will be available.

On the Saturday afternoon between 3-4pm the Beckford Singers will give a free concert; and in the evening at 7pm Richard Frewer will sing a selection of Irish Folk Songs, accompanied by Elizabeth Tetley on the flute. Later, there will be a picnic supper in the garden.

Anyone wishing to reserve a ticket for this occasion should telephone Bath 420547. The price is £12.50 for the concert, a gourmet supper basket and a glass of wine.

At 5pm on Sunday there will be choral evensong led by the Beckford Choir and at 6.30pm compline, with the Confraters of St Alphege.

Keep in touch

Anna Harper is a Lansdown correspondent. Contact her with your local news at 21 The Circus, Bath ☎336804



Funny lines

Bath: The first exhibition of some watercolours with a difference takes place at the Holburne Museum, Bath, on June 24.

A selection of humorous works by artist John Nixon (1750-1818) depicting life in Bath, the West Country and London will go on show on June 24, from 6-7pm at the Great Pulteney Street museum. Witty and perceptive, but never vicious, Nixon's watercolours and drawings give a fascinating glimpse of a wide cross-section of 18th-century life and manners.

A play entitled Byron in Hell: His Life and Loves, will be performed at 7.45pm by Bill Studdiford and Ian Frost after the opening of the exhibition.

Tickets at £5 each can be obtained from the vice-chairman of the Friends of the Holburne, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

Keep in touch

Jillian Tempo is a Bathampton correspondent. Contact her with your local news at 35 Warmminster Road, Bathampton ☎463239



Crime down

Wiltshire: Crime figures in Wiltshire have tumbled by nearly a fifth in one area, according to figures issued today.

Last year, police were informed of 12,782 criminal offences in the county, down 9.8 per cent overall on the previous year's total of 1,385. Chief Constable Walter Girven said 1993 was the first year in the past six that crime had fallen.

He told the Police Committee, however, that the detection rate had remained static at 85 per cent.

Mower theft

Combe Down: A petrol lawnmower was stolen from a shed in Summer Lane in Combe Down. The burglary happened between June 12 and 14.