

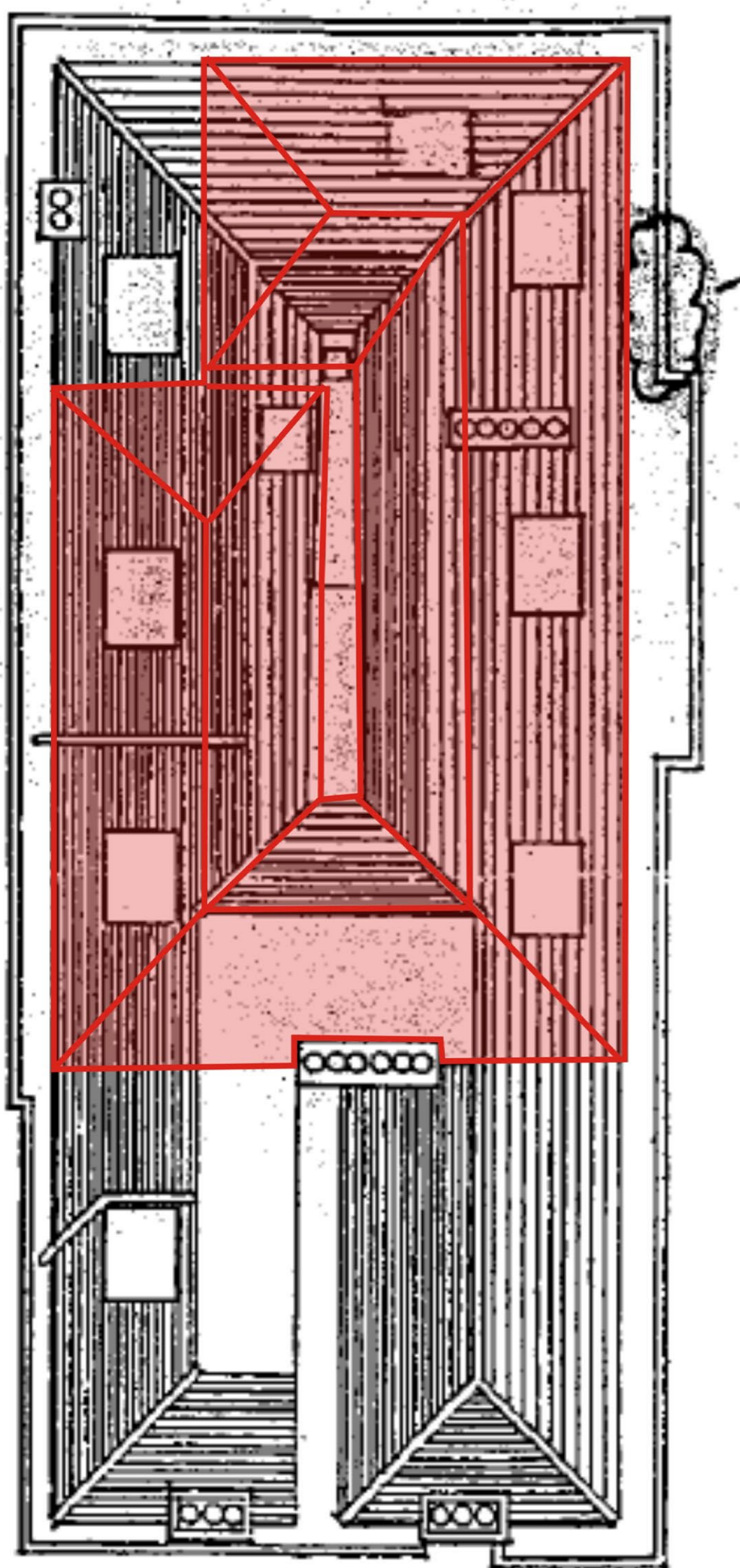
THE CANONS - COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY - CANONS HOUSE

Canons, Mitcham - Opening up works, August 2016

The Roof

The flat and the roof space were examined with Matt Groves of AKS Ward. Some loose floorboards were lifted up and the space beneath examined. The original extent of the roof was confirmed and appears to be a very interesting structure. This particular L-plan is certainly odd, and no wonder that the re-entrant corner was filled in after not too long – a much more sensible house.

There had been some debate about the original form of the Canons mansion house. Clearly the building had been extended and remodelled on a number of occasions but the surviving details of the original house suggested the structure had been of an 'L-plan' or 'T-plan' form. A more systematic survey of the surviving early roof - involving crawling through its loft spaces and peering at every corner of the dusty timberwork - was carried out. This revealed that the structure was mostly intact and of 17th century date in all areas except at the south-east angle, where the roof had been extended. This corresponded to breaks in the brickwork visible on the east exterior of the building. Together the evidence proved that the structure had originally been of L-plan form and that the rooms on the southern side of the house (facing the pond) had been considerably widened. This raises the possibility that the existing stairwell may originally have had a window on its south side. "



Canons - roof analysis. 'Analysis of Canons roof with original roof outlined in red'



The roof valley, looking south



General view of the roof, looking south



Inside the crawl-space of the roof structure, showing evidence of an earlier roof-pitch

The stair

The boarding was taken off the stairwell wall above the upper flight on the north side. This revealed that the stair is in its original position. The stair wall is also confirmed as mostly original above the flight – the balustrade backed against panellled walling that boxed in a loft stair. The main stair is now confirmed as largely intact and is an excellent example of its type. It is suggested that the significance of this chamber be upgraded to 'considerable'.

The stair within the main stairwell is one of the finest surviving features from the 17th century within the Canons. However there had been some uncertainty about the original form of the stairwell and especially the arrangement of the stair itself, which was thought to have undergone modification. In order to investigate this modern panelling was removed on the northern side to reveal an intact balustrade and wall framing below, all of which proved to be in their original positions. Panelling behind the balustrade demonstrated there had been a boxed-in area at the north-east angle of the stairwell at the upper level; this must have contained a steep attic stair (now within the area of the ladies' toilet).



Stairwell with panelling removed



Fire-scorched panelling and fireplace exposed beneath hardboard lining'

The room at the head of the stair

This room was made accessible during the works. This room had been wholly lined out internally with thin hardboard. This boarding was stripped from the south wall and revealed fire-scorched but an otherwise wholly intact scheme of panelling, a fireplace and two presses. Panelling is expected to survive elsewhere beneath the hardboard within this interior. It is suggested that significance should be 'considerable'.

First floor room at the head of the stair

The room at the top of the stairs had been badly damaged by a fire, an arson attack that started at the main entrance on the floor below. Following the fire the interior of the roomed was lined out with boarding. Removal of the boarding during investigations revealed that the room had been fully timber-panelled and that the panelling, though fire-damaged, the timberwork remained almost completely intact.

On the south wall was revealed a well preserved early fireplace and arched two wall-presses (cupboards) with all their ironwork, shelving, etc. remaining. The fire had blistered the paintwork to reveal earlier decorative schemes below the upper layers, including a layer of patterned wall paper.

Because of the extent of survival and the quality of the earlier interior details the room was re-categorised at of considerable architectural significance. It is hoped that this interior can be reinstated to its former grandeur. This will require further investigation of the decorative paint finishes and some reconstruction of missing elements such as the cornice.