



JONATHAN LEES ARCHITECTS LLP

Statement for Brick Development Association Awards

HARPSDEN WOOD HOUSE

Harpsden Wood House was originally designed by an Architect, M. Maberley Smith who was a contemporary of the great Sir Edwin Lutyens, for use as his own home. The Original house was built at the turn of 20th Century and was described by Lawrence Weaver in his book 'Small Country Houses of to-day' published 1911, as a '*praiseworthy piece of work*'.

Jonathan Lees Architects were commissioned to significantly extend and overhaul the existing property but to maintain the character and quality of the existing South and West elevations of the house.

The challenge presented to Fusion Brickwork was to provide a coherent and thoughtful approach to the restoration of the existing building by carefully matching the existing bricks, details and bonding patterns. Research, sampling and local knowledge led to the discovery of the exact brick that was used in the house which was found to be an Oak Fired, hand-made brick that is still available, being produced by HG Mathews.

The entire South and West elevations were carefully repointed using a buff coloured lime mortar that was chosen for its colour and texture. Severely damaged and weathered bricks were skilfully replaced to create fully refurbished external walls and details.

The true skill and patience of the bricklayers is demonstrated in the construction of the new areas of the building. It was my ambition to create a beautiful home that would rely on the skill of the individuals involved to build simple, elegant details using full bricks, rather than factory made moulds, so that it would be an exemplar of what skilled labour is capable of achieving on site.

The principal details that have required a great deal of development with individual bricklayers include the feature buttresses which form an integral and unique part of the design. The curved profile of the buttresses to the main house and to the garden features were entirely experimental and were set up on site, rather than on the drawing board, enabling us to work with Fusion to get the best possible outcome of swept, elegant profiles. Triple and double header arches with creasing tile details, corbels, chimneys and careful infill work to masonry, all show how beautifully laid and thoughtfully considered details can contribute to improve an already beautiful home.

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The building work has also been technically challenging, with infill work to detailed masonry, matching coursework to the existing building and intricate work to the chimney stacks all requiring a high level of technical skill and execution.

The Fusion team have interpreted my often challenging design, achieving the attention to detail and craft that were the visions of the client and I when we set out on this project.

I would like to think that M. Maberley Smith and Sir Edwin Lutyens would be proud of how a bricklayer of the 21st Century can still achieve beautiful craftsmanship with a simple material and that the skills of our forebears have not been lost, they are in fact thriving.

Jonathan Lees RIBA

