

The Landmark Trust

SWARKESTONE PAVILION, NR. TICKNALL, DERBYSHIRE

For a long time, little was known of the Swarkestone Pavilion; neither its precise date, nor its designer, nor its place in the wider arrangement of house (the vanished Swarkestone Hall) and garden. Even its name has varied according to differing opinions of its original purpose - from the Stand or Grandstand, through the Bullring to the Summerhouse. It has been widely agreed, however, that here was a distinguished piece of architecture. In type it belongs to the same family as the late Elizabethan and Jacobean prodigy houses, reduced to miniature proportions. Fortunately, more information has emerged about the whole of Swarkestone following research in the Harpur-Crewe archive by Dr Howard Colvin and Philip Heath, and this has since been added to by local historians.

A new house (28 hearths in 1662) was built at Swarkestone in the 1560s by Sir Richard Harpur, a lawyer who rose to eminence under the patronage of the Earl of Shrewsbury and by his own marriage to Jane Findern, an heiress. In 1622, the estate was inherited by his son's ten year old grandson, John Harpur. This John formally took up his inheritance in 1630, and was knighted in the same year. At the same time a marriage was arranged for him with Catherine Howard, granddaughter of the Earl of Suffolk, and step-daughter of William Cavendish. Accounts for 1631-2 record the expenses of 'gloves, gauntlets and liveries' at their wedding, and for preparing Swarkestone Hall for their residence.

The arms of this young couple appear on the shields on the front of the Pavilion and it may have been built to celebrate the marriage. Entered in the same set of accounts for 1631-2 is a payment of £111 12s 4d to Richard Shepperd the mason for 'New Buildyng', together with a sum for 'Boardes' for the 'Bowl Alley house'. There seems every reason to identify these entries with the Pavilion and to date it therefore to 1631-2. The Shepperds were well-known masons in the area at the time. Whether Richard Shepperd was also its designer is uncertain: he also built the 'Gothic Survival' church at Staunton Harold but little else is known of him, although he describes himself in his will as 'Architecter'. The Harpur accounts also name a Mr. Woolridge as the Bowl Alley Surveyor, and Mark Girouard has suggested that the Pavilion could be attributed on stylistic grounds to John Smythson. This is credible, given Smythson's service with William Cavendish and Sir John Harpur's marriage with Cavendish's step-daughter, the closest of several links between the two families.

The accounts also help to disperse the bloodthirsty mythology that has grown up around the Pavilion, and establish it as belonging not to the activities of the park but to those of the garden; as a pavilion or banqueting house overlooking a bowling green, no doubt as part of a formal garden layout. It is worth noting that in estate papers of the last century it was commonly referred to in these terms, once even as the Bowling Green Pavilion. It may well have doubled as a banqueting house, to which small groups could retire to enjoy the 'banquet' course of fine wines and sweetmeats, play cards, or just enjoy the view of their host's estate.

The interpretation of the Pavilion's surroundings is confused by the later history of the site. Sir John's branch of the family died with him in 1679. The estate passed to the Harpurs of Calke and the house was dismantled in 1746-8. Surviving high walls containing windows and doors and even a fireplace may reflect its outline at least in part. While an element of picturesque management has been involved in this structure's preservation, as in that of the Pavilion, a symmetry appears to exist between the two, in axis with the old door in the wall opposite. This fits too with a formal layout of gravel paths recorded during ploughing in 1988 in a paddock to the west of the walls; and with a rectangular pond, possibly a canal, which formerly lay to their east. However, in the early

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19th century, Swarkestone was the scene of largescale breeding and sale of livestock. It is possible that some of the walled enclosures, even that in front of the Pavilion, relate equally to this activity.

Although the cupola roofs were carefully repaired in 1844 after one was struck by lightning, the Pavilion fell in dereliction. It acquired some notoriety in 1968 when it was used by the Rolling Stones to promote their album *Beggar's Banquet*, and another image from the same photoshoot was used on the back of a later compilation album, *Hot Rocks 1964-1971*.

Landmark had first approached the Harpur-Crewe estate to acquire the Pavilion as early as 1966, just a year after the trust was founded, but it was not until 1985 that it finally took it on. By then, it was a shell without roof or floors. The lead had been stolen from the tower roofs so that only their timber frames remained. Repairs were undertaken by Linford Bridgeman Ltd under the supervision of John Bucknall of Rodney Melville & Associates, and such was the dereliction that almost everything you see today except the masonry is new work.

The masonry is local gritstone, probably quarried on the estate, and used as rubble for the back and sides but carefully dressed to ashlar for the front elevation. It had mostly weathered well although some careful repointing was needed, using colour-matched lime mortar. The lime render on three sides of the Pavilion was renewed. Some of the window surrounds and sills were so cracked as to need replacing and so sections of new stone from a quarry in the Pennines were inserted.

The cupola roofs were found to have had their profile slightly changed in 1844, having been set back inside the line of the cornice. After some negotiation with English Heritage, who were reluctant to see this early repair lost, we reconstructed the slightly more generous seventeenth-century profile around the 1844 frame, like an onion skin. Permission was gained to transpose the old ball finials from the inner to the outer skin, and the cupolas then recovered with lead. The main roof would also originally have been covered in lead, but as one of the turrets was to become a bathroom, a surface less slippery when wet was necessary and so the new roof is stone paving laid on asphalt on top of a concrete structure. The water drains away between and under the stones.

The cellar, which had been deliberately filled with rubble, and steps were rediscovered and the residue of a lime ash floor was found at first floor level although it was decided that a wooden floor would be more practicable for today's needs.

Apart from a few old patches of plaster, no trace of the first floor chamber's decoration remained, even though it is likely that this would originally have been highly ornate. To avoid fakery, a simply heavy cornice moulding was applied to give the room dignity. The staircase had long since disappeared and so the architect has designed a new one in the position of the original, made to a quality to rival anything that the joiners of the 1630s might have produced.

The Landmark Trust is a building preservation charity that rescues historic buildings at risk and lets them for holidays. Swarkestone Pavilion sleeps up to 2 people. To book the building or any other Landmark property for a holiday, please contact us.