



Listed Buildings/ Monuments

In

Durrington



Garden Ground

Bulford Road, Durrington, Wiltshire

Grade II - Listed 3 May, 2007

Private house and doctor's consulting rooms. Designed 1949-51, built 1951-2, by Robert Townsend for his own use.

MATERIALS: Brick, laid in Flemish and stretcher bond with timber panelling and full-height glazed openings below a shallow pitched copper covered roof with deep eaves. Thick framed timber windows and doors with exposed brick and polished marine plywood panelling.

PLAN: All single storey, though with a higher central double-height living room; essentially linear in plan with two wings arranged around the square diagonally-set central living area, itself backing on to a large central stack.

DESCRIPTION: Kitchen and bathrooms located to the rear of the stack lit from above by an asymmetrical lantern. The central living area, accessed from the entrance hall, is divided into a dining room and living room by a low brick wall with timber shelving above terminated by a pier. The fireplace is formed of a massive brick stack supported on a lintel formed of vertically set bricks set on a diagonally shaped pier, the hearth is backed in light coloured fire bricks. Above is the ceiling of the pyramidal roof, horizontally boarded. Above the entrance to the hall and adjacent to the stack is a large asymmetrically shaped vertically planked timber hardwood screen. The kitchen is separated from the dining area by double face cupboards all finished in polished plywood. The east wing accommodates the former consulting and waiting rooms and dispensary of the doctor's facility, in addition to a lofted children's play area above the garage. The west range comprises a suite of four bedrooms all accessed from a rear corridor, the north-most being the principal

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bedroom with a coved plywood ceiling. All the lesser rooms are panelled with plywood and have fitted cupboards and shelves.

HISTORY: Garden Ground, Durrington, was built in 1951-2 to the designs, dating from 1949-51, of the architect Robert Townsend, as a family home incorporating a consulting room and dispensary for his General Practitioner (GP) wife. Townsend's own practice studio was built across the road from the house. It is noteworthy that Garden Ground was constructed in the period of very stringent building materials rationing of 1945-54. This limited both the availability and cost of materials as well as setting a cap on expenditure for new buildings. Townsend worked with Fredrick Gibbard and F R S Yorke before WWII and trained at, and remained closely associated with the Architectural Association (AA) throughout his career. Townsend was a prolific architect with many building designs to his credit, mostly within the south west. He set up practice here in the late 1940s and a number of commissions for private dwellings followed. Most notable are a sequence of four houses built in Wiltshire and Oxfordshire between 1949 and 1953. These houses, at Gastard, Corsham, Banbury, Great Somerford and Garden Ground, all bear the unmistakable influence of Frank Lloyd Wright - specifically the planning and ethos of the earlier Prairie Houses and the Usonian Houses of the late 1930s and 1940s. These domestic commissions are very different from the industrial buildings which characterise his later career. Townsend is chiefly recognised as one of the key innovators of British factory design in the mid C20. By 1957 he had designed the weaving shed at the Royal Wilton Carpet Factory (demolished in the 1980s) and followed this with the Silhouette Factory at Market Drayton in 1959-60 (now demolished).

SOURCES:

'House at Durrington, Wiltshire, designed by Robert Townsend', Architects Journal (26 March 1953) 401-3
Architectural Design, November 1953

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION:

Garden Ground is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * designed and built between 1949 and 1952 by the architect Robert Townsend for his own use, the house is one of the earliest explorations in England of the architectural principles of Frank Lloyd Wright, betraying an early understanding of Wright's most influential work
- * the building demonstrates sophistication of architectural composition, ingenuity in planning and services, good use of materials and detailing and overall integrity of design, at a time when, for the great majority of new dwellings, architectural flair and innovation were secondary to the essential utilitarian provision of domestic accommodation for a displaced and growing population
- * Garden Ground is significant not only for its architectural innovation, but also for the fact that it was built to such a high standard in the first decade after the Second World War, when severe constraints on the availability of building materials for private domestic dwellings were in place

(British Listed Buildings)



Durrington - Listed Buildings - Garden Ground *(Photo courtesy of Dave Healing 2014)*



