

Stapleton Road Gazebo

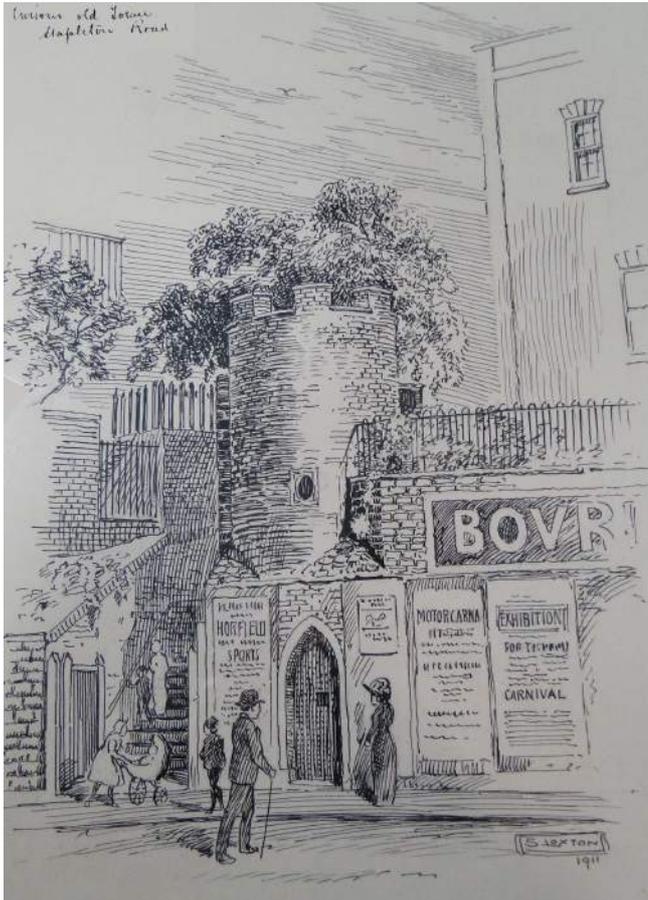
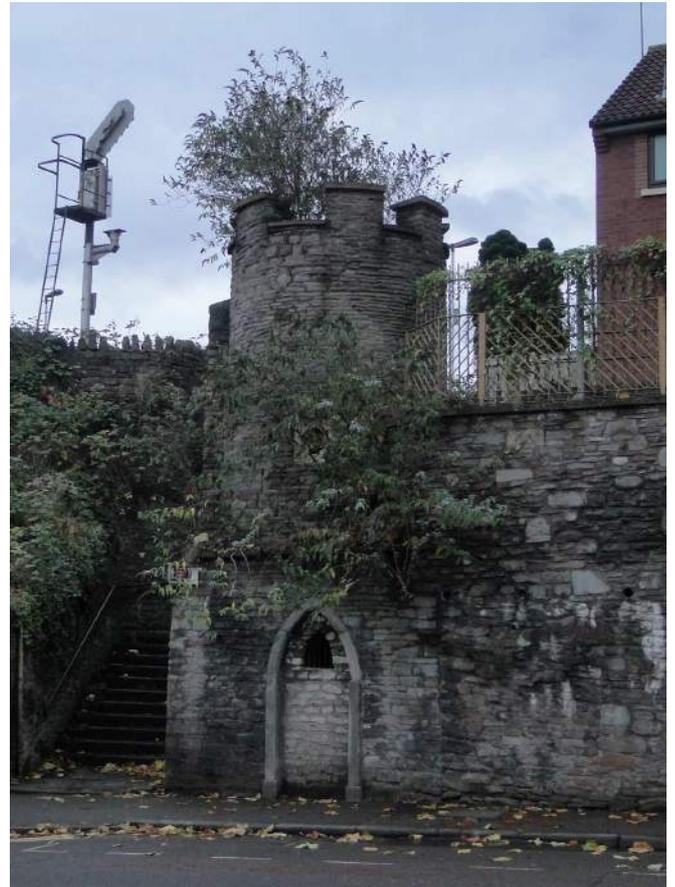


Illustration by Samuel Loxton 1911 "Curious Old Tower"



Photograph December 1914

Sitting on the train looking north as you depart from Stapleton Road station, a round structure is clearly visible in a domestic garden just before the train crosses the bridge. Many people presume this round tower is contemporary with the Victorian railway architecture as it sits very neatly next to the steps leading up from Stapleton Road itself to the platform.

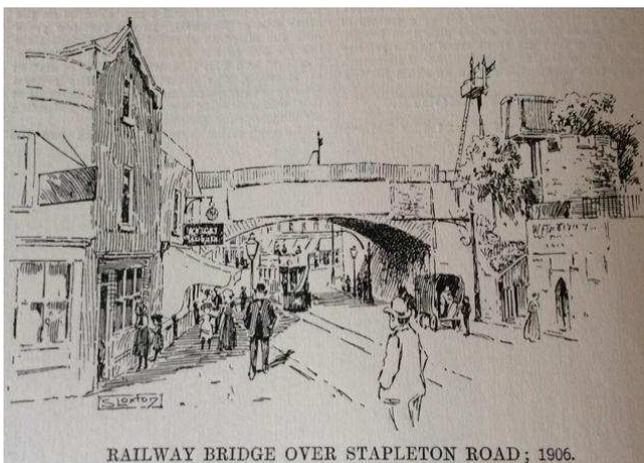


Illustration by Samuel Loxton 1906



Photo December 2014

However the structure pre-dates the railway. The distinctive round dot can be found on the 1840s tithe map where there is no railway and the Frome meanders through fields where the M32 now thunders.



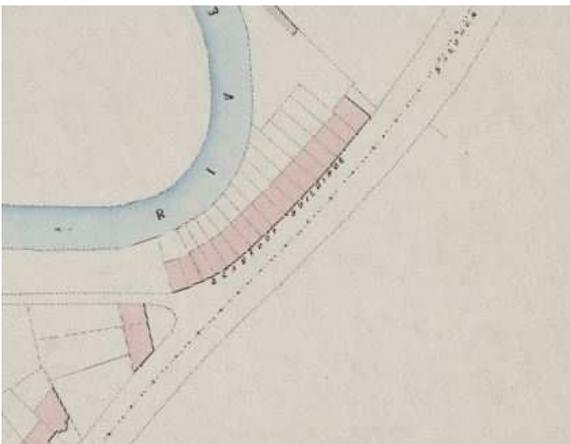
Tithe Map 1840s: tower sits in corner of field 2438

The English Heritage website describes the architectural detail of the tower:

- Grade II listed early 19th century round tower
- pennant rubble with limestone dressings
- crenellated parapet
- lancet door beneath limestone bullseye
- round-arched first-floor rear doorway.

The tower's purpose is not so easy to pinpoint. It is believed that the tower was one of four turrets or gazebos at the edge of grounds surrounding a manor house in St Marks Road. It would have looked over the banks of the River Frome and the Bristol turnpike road.

Stapleton Road railway station opened in 1863. The railway lines appear in the interval between the Ashmead maps of 1855 & 1874 running directly past the tower (these maps extending only to the north of Stapleton Road).



Ashmead Maps 1855 & 1874

The manor house to which the tower probably belonged was known as Easton Manor House. Another name, "Queen Anne's Manor House", is occasionally used as legend has it that Anne stayed at a manor house in east Bristol during a visit in September 1702.

A Manor House is marked on the 1880s OS map, with gardens between the house and the railway line. The building marked Manor House corresponds to the footprint of two buildings that already existed on the 1840 Tithe Map.

In 1840 John Goolden owned plots 2432 and 2433 which form the Manor House area, along with 2430 and 2431 being land to the west. The land to the north of the Manor House was under the separate ownership of Isaac Noake - fields 2438 (gazebo field) and

2437 are described as The Meadow and The Orchard. Isaac Noake also owns plots 2434 (Baptist Meeting House), 2435, 2436 and 2439 being those buildings and fields directly east of the Manor House.

By the 1880s map, the round gazebo finds itself within the garden of an end terrace on Belmont Street. By the 1900s map St Marks Grove has been built across the orchard up to Belmont Street.



Ordnance Survey Map 1880s & 1900s

From 1897, street directories indicate that the manor house building was used as the “Manor House Christian Recreational Institute”.



Illustration of “Manor House, Easton” by Samuel Loxton circa 1900

The Manor House is marked as “Institute” on the (damaged) 1940s map and was in use as the East Bristol YMCA prior to WWII. It functioned as a storage shed in a builders yard from 1939 to 1993.

A 1994 archeological evaluation by Bristol & Regional Archaeological Services (BARAS BA/C069) found no reliable dating evidence for the original walls. The BARAS report suggested that the arrangement of second floor windows depicted by Loxton would hint at “a 17th century date or earlier”.



1940s Ordnance Survey Map



1984 Aerial Photo

The storage shed/Manor House can still be seen in the 1984 aerial photo. The M32 (opened 1975) makes an appearance top left. The builders yard was developed as a housing association block of flats ("Manor Court") in the late 1990s. Many of the Victorian properties in Belmont Street were taken down and rebuilt as a terrace with the name "Manor House" in the late 1990s – this extends as far as the house next to the gazebo. The 2012 aerial photo shows the block of flats and the ever-present gazebo (with a good head of buddleia).

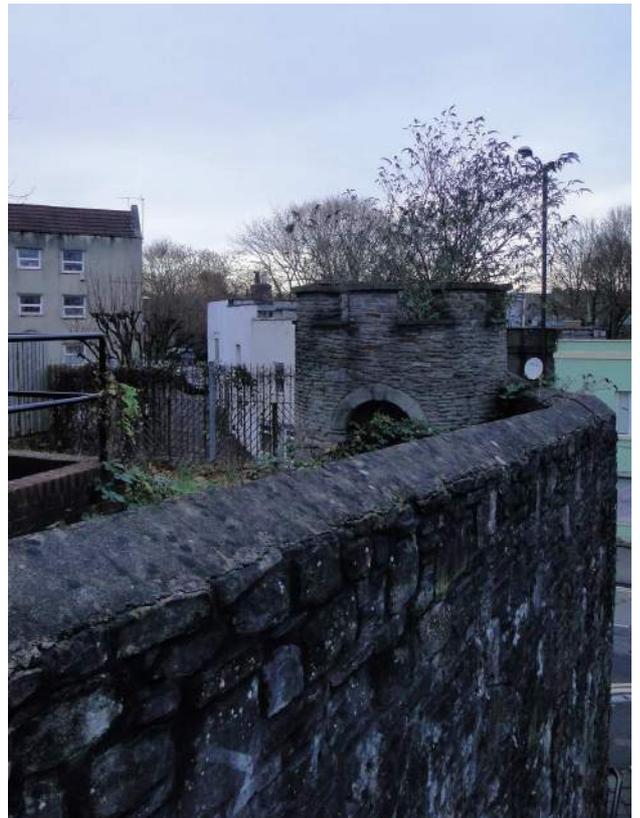


2012 Aerial Photo

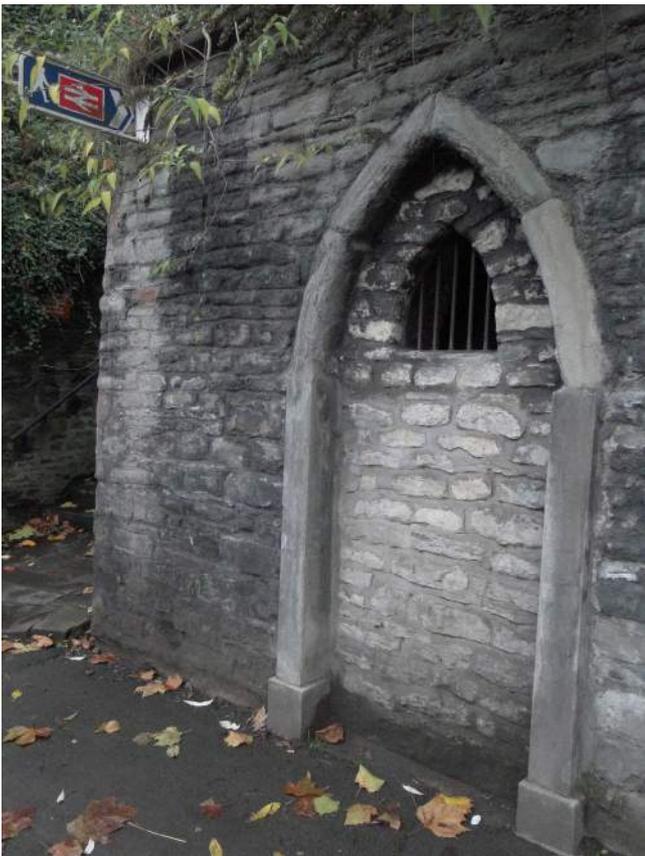
So, the crenellated tower has nothing to do with the railway, but it does provide a link to an Easton Manor House of possible 17th century date. Restoration work was done on the tower in the 1980s but it is now suffering from invasive buddleia in the stonework.



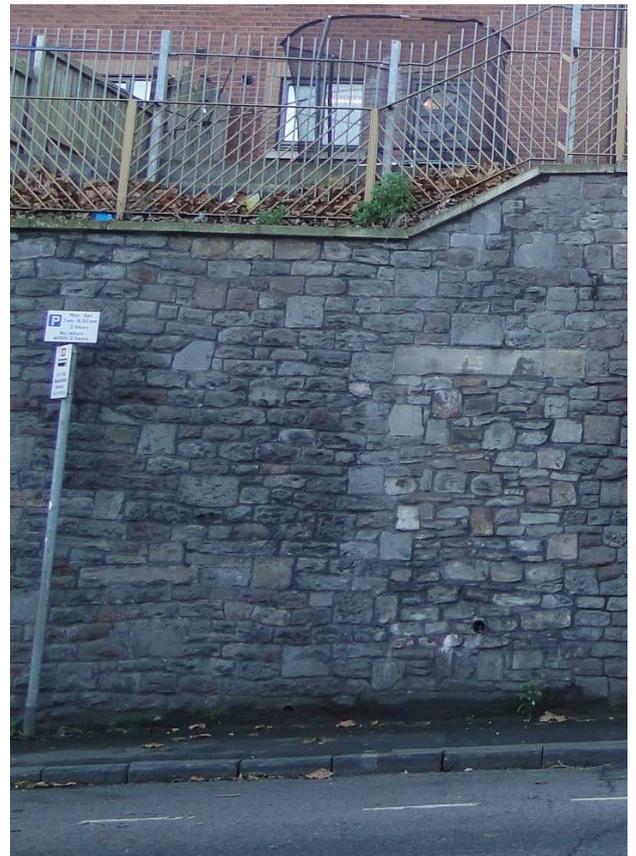
Credit: LW Ellery 1984 "Easton, The Forgotten Hamlet" (Undated)



Photograph December 2014



Photographs December 2014



Next time you are passing, have a look through the street level bars to see the internal stone spiral staircase. It is also interesting to walk along the high wall to the west of the tower to see the shapes of blocked gates and wonder if there is any truth in the local legend of underground tunnels between the original four towers!

Bristol Council's Know Your Place website is great for those who are curious about the evolution of today's city.
<http://maps.bristol.gov.uk/knowyourplace/>