

# **Alford Manor House Alford, Lincolnshire.**



**Conservation Plan: Understanding the Place  
Volume Two: October 2006**

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**Alford Manor House Conservation Plan: Volume Two**

**ALFORD MANOR HOUSE**

**CONSERVATION PLAN**

**OCTOBER 2006**

**Anderson and Glenn  
Conservation Architects , Yew Tree Nurseries, Frampton West, BOSTON**

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**ALFORD MANOR HOUSE CONSERVATION PLAN  
VOLUME TWO**

<b>CLIENT</b>	ALFORD AND DISTRICT CIVIC TRUST LTD Alford Manor House, West Street, ALFORD Lincolnshire LN13 9DL
<b>ARCHITECTS</b>	ANDERSON AND GLENN Yew Tree Nurseries, Frampton West, BOSTON Lincolnshire PE20 1RQ
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By Field Archaeology Specialists

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDINGS INVESTIGATION January 2003

By Field Archaeology Specialists

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## UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

### INTRODUCTION

Alford is a small market town in the East Lindsey District Council part of Lincolnshire. It is on the eastern edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds at the start of marshlands that edge the North Sea coast line. (Figure 1)

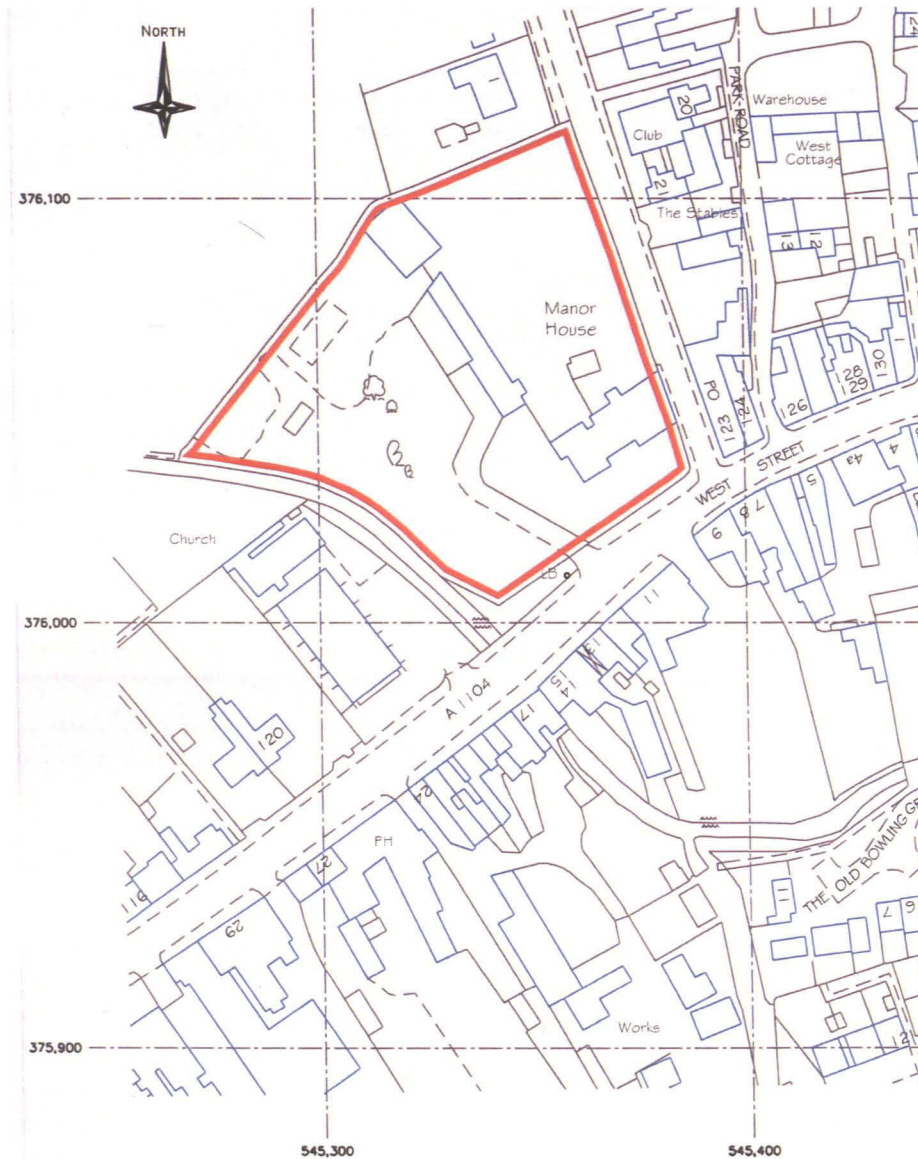


ALFORD

Figure 1: Part of O.S. Map: Surveyed 1824: Railways added 1888 (Not to scale).

The site of the Manor House is on the north side of West Street and is bounded on the west side by the narrow canalised river called the Wold Drift Drain. Beyond this is a former Methodist Chapel and then a range of grade II listed thatched cottages. The eastern boundary is Park Lane and to the rear of the site are open fields and the gardens of properties on Park Lane. The whole of the site is in the Alford Conservation Area (Figure 2).





**Figure 2: Location Plan**

The Manor House is a grade II\* listed building of H plan form with later additions. Also on the site are a former nineteenth century wash house building and an early nineteenth century coach house, both built in the local buff Farlesthorpe brick. There is a 20th century agricultural type shed, Hackett's barn, at the northern edge of the site, near the gravelled car park area. This was erected by the current owners. The rest of the grounds are gardens and a driveway and turning area. There are a number of mature trees on the site many of which have tree preservation orders.

The house stands back from the street frontage before a low brick wall surmounted by decorative cast iron railings.

The house is owned and managed by the Alford and District Civic Trust Ltd.

## METHODOLOGY

The bulk of the historical research for this section has been carried out by Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd of York. They carried out an archaeological buildings investigation in late 2002 and their report of January 2003 is contained as an appendix to this volume.

During the repair contract of 2005/6 further investigations were undertaken and the report relating to those findings is also an appendix to this volume.

Documents and photographs belonging to the Trust and valid information contained in the former Conservation Plan produced by Heritage Lincolnshire in 1999 have also been used to inform the later periods of the site.

## SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The main building consists of an H plan of two full storeys, with an attic in the steeply pitched roof-space. The exterior is all in brickwork and has a thatched roof. To the rear of the house is a lower lean to or outshot which fills in part of the recess of the 'H'. This lean-to can be seen to have originally been single storey and it was raised later and given a flat roof. To part of the west elevation is a lower two storey lean-to with a pantiled roof, this is also a later addition. On the whole of the east side is a further addition where the building has been built out to the line of Park Lane. This has a pitched slate roof separated from the main building by a valley gutter. For the purposes of this document these extensions are referred to below as rear outshot, west extension and east extension.

Part of the archaeological investigations included dendrochronological dating of the principal timbers by Nottingham University. These provided a felling date for the majority of the timbers of 1611. Two main beams gave different dates. One of a beam to the rear outshot was of 1672-4 and one of a beam at first floor level in the front central room was of 1664. The date of 1611 has now been assumed to provide the date of construction of the original H plan manor house.

The house built at that time would have been an unusual construction in that it was formed of solid brick masonry but also contained an integral timber structure. This comprised two storey high timber posts built off stone padstones on a brick plinth and embedded in the solid masonry walling. The posts were of two sections joined together at just below first floor level (refer to figure 23 in FAS report). There would have been a timber wall plate at first floor and at eaves level, although now only the latter survives. Above the upper window cill level the brickwork reduces in thickness with an offset internally and externally and at this level internal timber braces are provided from each wall post to the eaves wall plate. Both of the wings would have had five posts to each long side. The tops of the gables were not built in masonry however but were timber framed with a lightweight daub infill. The exact plan form of the early house is not known for certain, but it would have included some form of rear outshot and it is suggested that the later date for the beam in that structure is due to remodelling.



Conclusive evidence as to the original builder of the house has not been established conclusively. However recent documentary research by FAS has provided the name of a likely founder of the house as John Hopkinson.

The most notable owner of the house is known to have been Sir Robert Christopher who was a lawyer and wealthy landowner in the mid seventeenth century. He was a royalist and was knighted as a result of his loyalty by Charles II after the Restoration. He left money to Alford Grammar School, to a new foundation for almshouses in the town and funds to repair the parish church in which he was buried. It is possible that by the time Robert Christopher acquired the house the building was suffering some structural problems due to stresses between the embedded timber posts and the masonry. The later dating of the first floor beam shows that it was inserted during his tenure, suggesting an internal remodelling. It is also clear that at various stages the front gables and central façade were replaced in solid masonry and the front corner posts removed. Most of this rebuilding must have occurred in the seventeenth century or early eighteenth century because these rebuilt gables have evidence in the form of building lines, for earlier fenestration of a seventeenth century type of wider mullioned windows.

The house passed through a succession of owners from the Manners family (Dukes of Rutland) who were descendants of Robert Christopher's only child, a daughter Elizabeth. During the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was probably let out to tenants. During the eighteenth century, some internal changes were made particularly to the first floor central room where the fire surround and panelled surrounds to the windows date from that period, as does the Flemish bond brickwork of that storey.

General Robert Manners, who owned the house in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, employed a land agent John Higgins who managed his property. He lived at the house in the 1820s and this seems to have provided impetus for a new period of alterations. It is quite possible that some of the sash windows were inserted in the late eighteenth century and new cornices and some fire surrounds. The new east extension was probably erected about that time and the western extension a little later. It is also evident that the house was sub divided with a partition through the hall and first floor room over. Both of the existing staircases were amended to suit the two new dwellings. John Higgins, who became a very well respected local figure, occupied the eastern house, with access to the estate offices in the eastern extension. The repairs to the Manor House in 2005 uncovered early nineteenth century wall paper of considerable quality in the first floor eastern room which the wall paper expert believes is likely to be for someone of high status. This wall paper may well have been chosen by John Higgins.



## THE GROUNDS AND GARDENS

An undated plan of the Christopher Estate in the Higgins collection (Figure 3) shows the Manor House at the time of John Higgins tenancy, after the site and house have been divided.

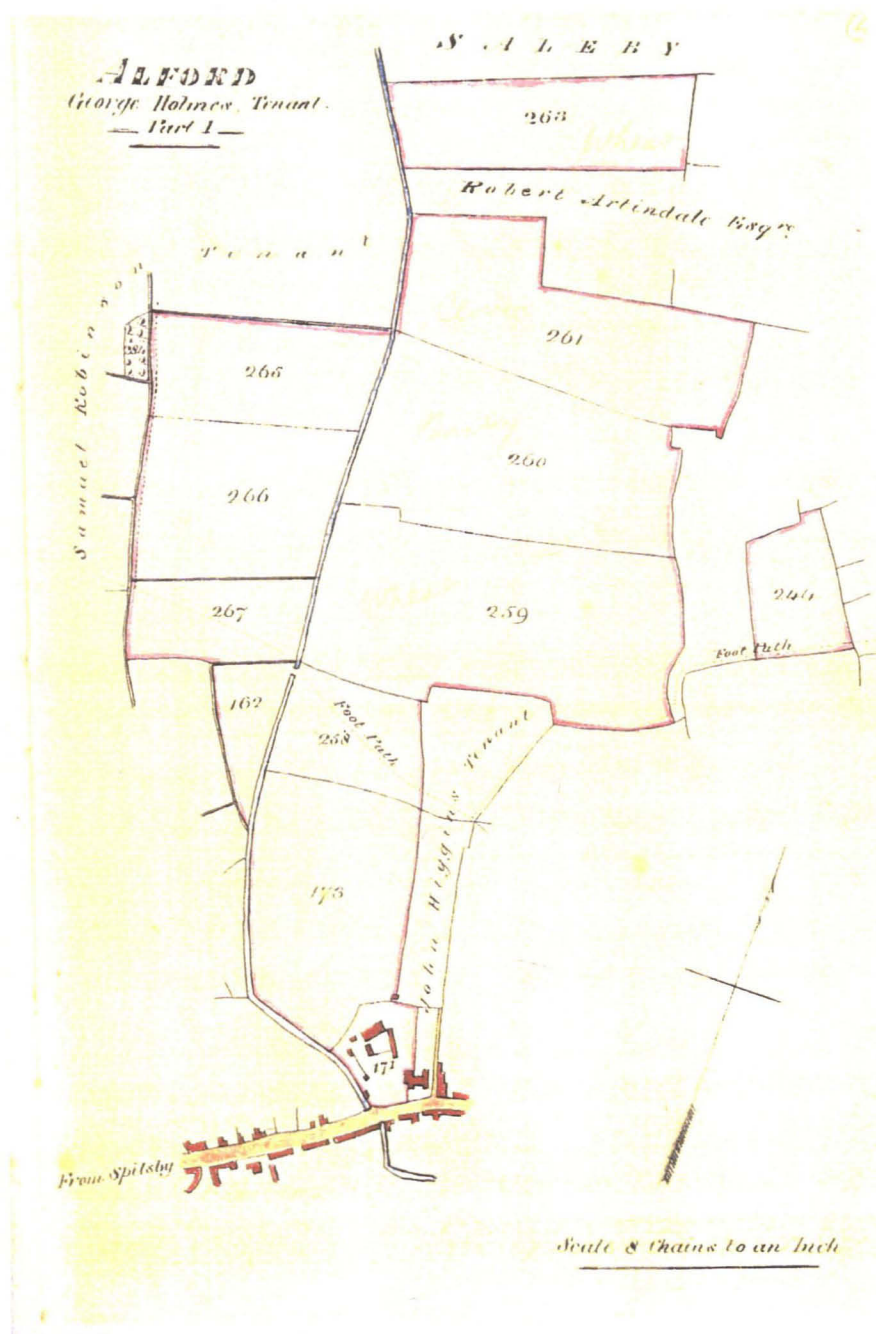
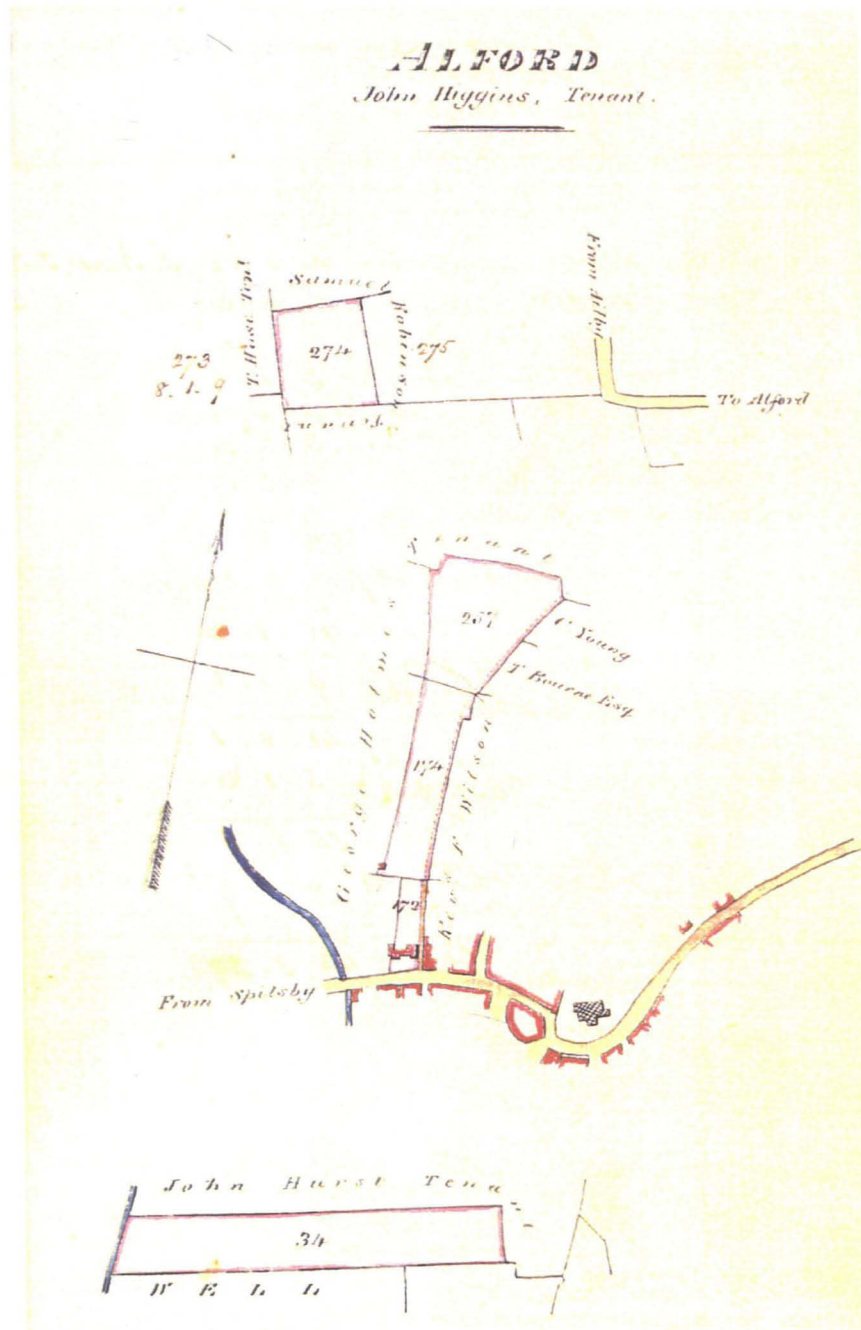


Figure 3:

The site area appears to be the same as that occupied by the manor today. There was no coach house, wash house, or eastern extension shown on this plan. The western extension is however evident. To the west of the house, in the part of which George Holmes was tenant, there appears to be a range of buildings in the form of a crewyard.

A further undated plan (Figure 4), showing the John Higgins tenanted area, seems to show that the western extension has been built. However it is not possible to be certain from the limited information provided.



**Figure 4:**

It is known that John Higgins died in 1872 and the land agency was taken over by his son Frederic who also lived in the Manor House. Another map also from the Higgins collection, dated 1879, shows the site by that time complete with coach house, attached outbuilding, wash house and a further building to the rear adjacent to the wash house (Figure 5).



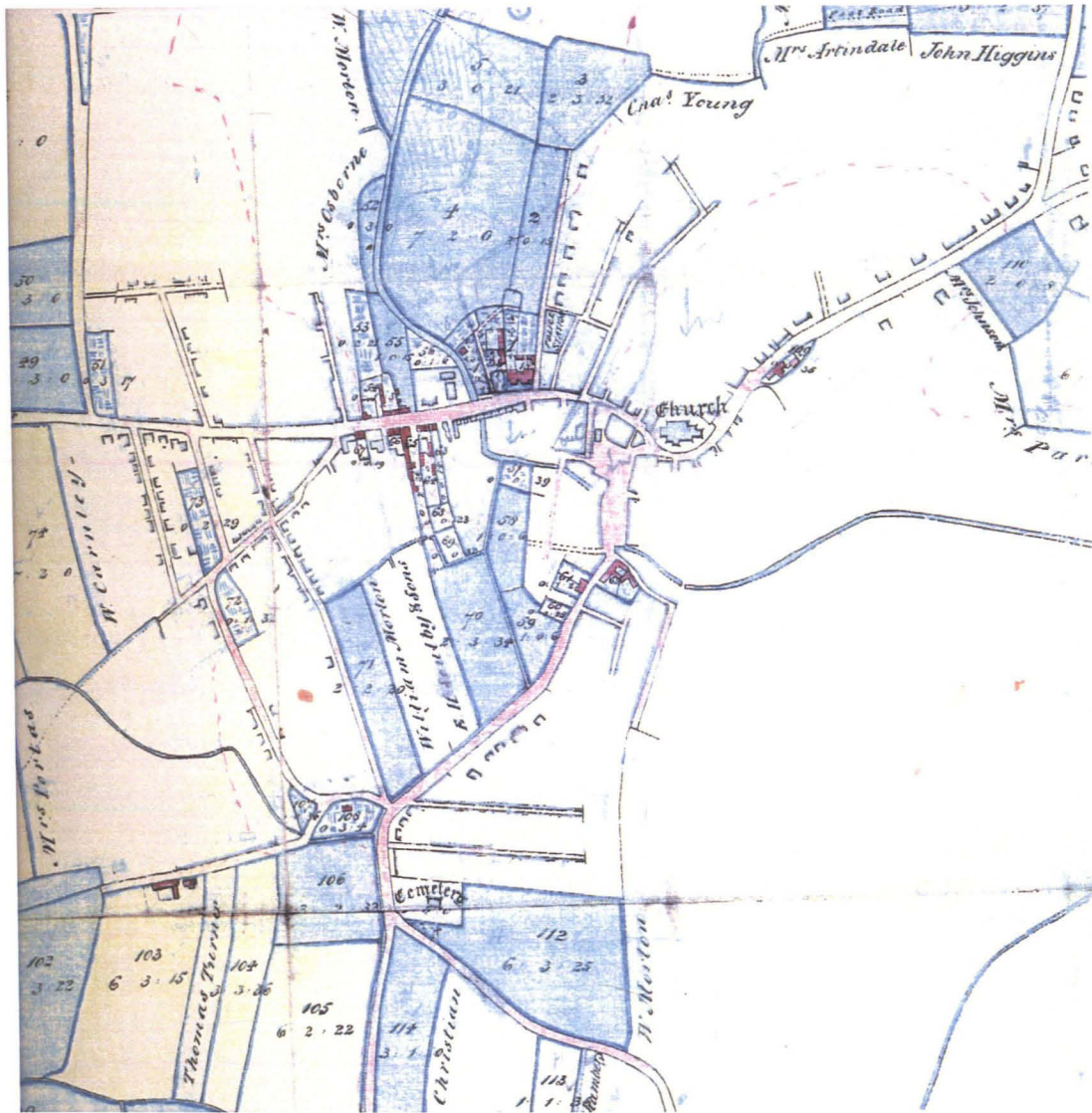


Figure 5: Map of 1879 from the Higgins Collection

It also suggests that the gardens were laid out in the simple pattern corresponds with the box edged beds and walks that are evident today. Beside the coach house is a drive and in front of the building adjacent appears to be a yard area. A heavy line across the front of the site may indicate the low wall and gateways along the frontage. (Plates 1 & 2 )





**Plate 1: Alford Manor House on an early 20<sup>th</sup> century postcard  
(Anderson and Glenn)**



**Plate 2: Alford Manor House in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A hand tinted postcard.  
(Anderson and Glenn)**



The ordnance survey plan of 1887, shows the drive in the same location as the map of 1879 and the same ranges of outbuildings. The area between the drive and the adjacent chapel is well treed on the map. By this time the small rear porch and rear lean to either side of the rear entrance have also been constructed. (Figure 6).

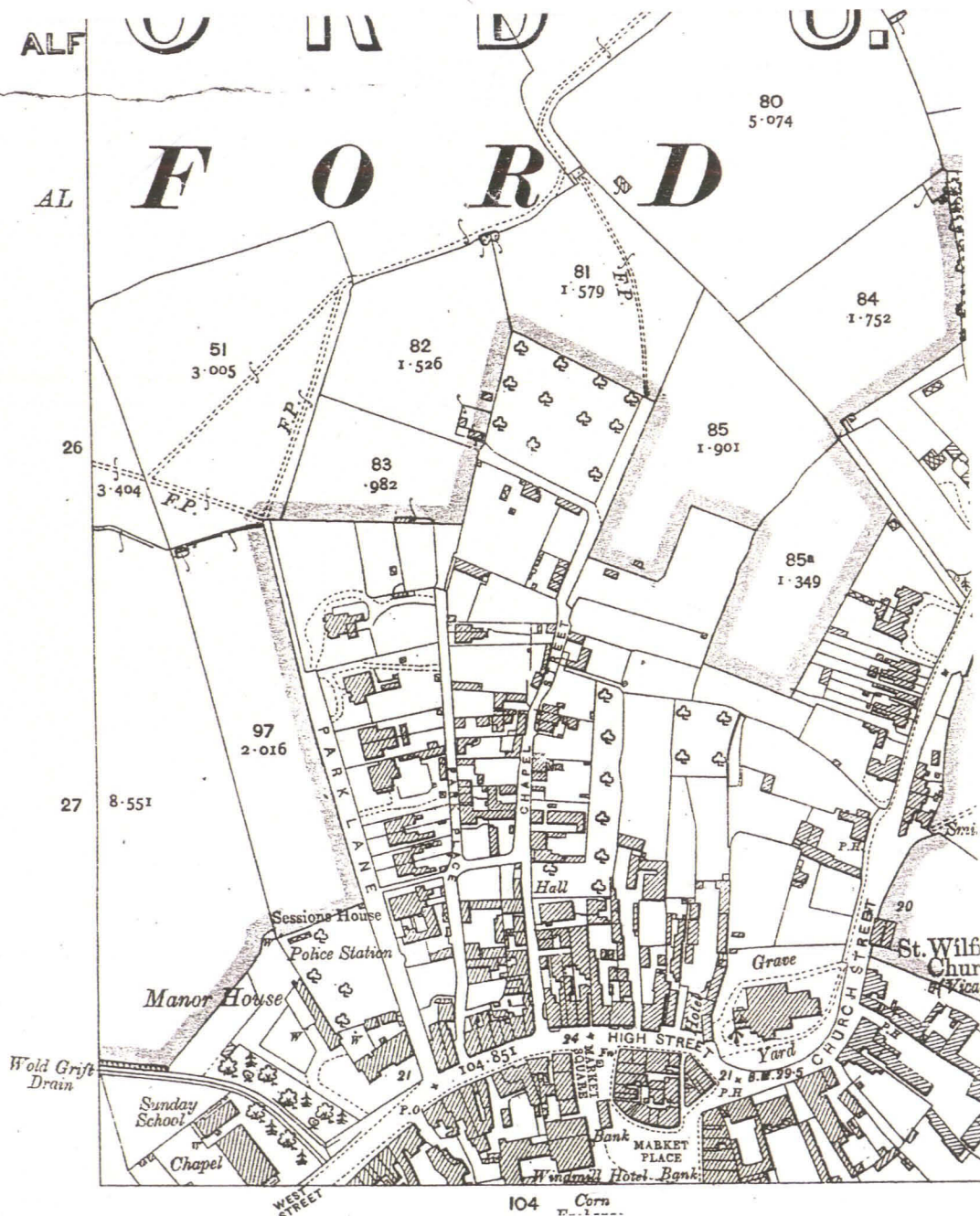
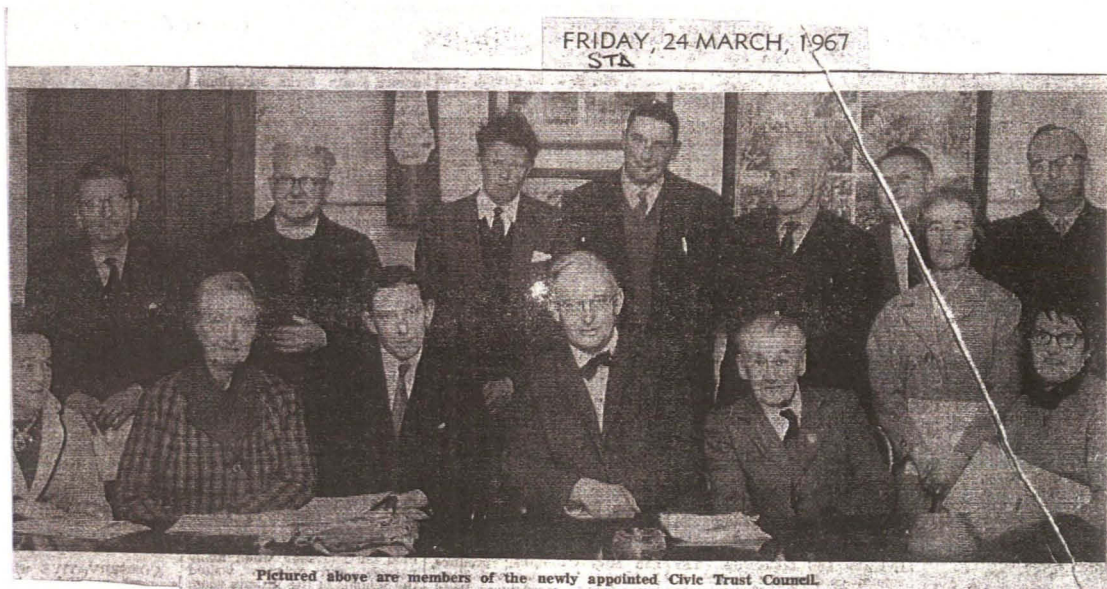


Figure 6: The Ordnance Survey map of 1887.

### LATER HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The house continued to be owned by descendants of the Manners family until 1895 when it was sold to the Rawnsleys of nearby Well Hall. In 1958 it was purchased by Dorothy Higgins, grand daughter of John Higgins who then sold it to the Alford and District Civic Trust in 1967.

The Trust was incorporated on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of March 1967. Its aims were to preserve and promote the heritage of the town of Alford and its neighbourhood. The original members were all local residents including members of various professions, housewives and also the spinster Dorothy Higgins. (Plates 3 and 4)



**Plate 3: A press photograph of the original council of the Alford and District Civic Trust. The chairman Dr F.W.Lapage is centre front.**



# Community centre plan MANOR HOUSE RESCUE BID

Cost will be £6,000

AS the 17th Century thatched Manor House in West Street, Alford, slowly deteriorates, the new Alford and District Civic Trust Ltd. has now set out on its great rescue and restoration operation. It will cost them all of £6,000, even with the house given them as a free gift, and so far they have little more than £650, initial grants from government and local government sources.

The size of the enterprise — planned to give Alford a first class community centre and tourist attraction — was brought into focus at a special meeting of the trust's new council on Saturday.

In a back room at Alford Corn Exchange a score of local men and women talked about their district's biggest communal effort. It is designed not only to preserve the Manor House for future generations, but "to provide the cultural facilities for all ages which are lacking in the district, and which are essential to the full development of the area."

These words are part of the text of a brochure which the Trust has published now that it is legally in being.

## Five aims

This is now circulating in the area, inviting all well-wishers to help in the vital fund-raising by becoming subscribers to the Trust.

The brochure sets out five broad aims of the Trust, apart from the first big objective which is to take over the Manor House offered to them by the owner, Coun. Miss D. E. Higgins.

"To promote and preserve for the benefit of the public the natural, artistic and cultural amenities of Alford and its neighbourhood.

"To protect any building which is of beauty or historic interest.

"To promote the spread of education, useful knowledge and research.

"To support the improvement of craftsmanship and development of industry to the benefit of the artistic and cultural life of the district.

## Working windmill

"To protect from disfigurement the views of and from Alford and its neighbourhood."

The brochure text defines in one eloquent paragraph the setting and achievement which the trust wishes to safeguard and improve upon.

"The market town of Alford lies among the most varied and picturesque countryside

## TRUST SETS UP COUNCIL

in Lincolnshire. It has been described as a typical English market town, acting as a centre for the villages and hamlets of both Wold and Marsh. Its church, its ancient buildings and market place, together with its working five-sail windmill reflect the daily work and lives of generations of past inhabitants.

"The most immediate concern, however, is to restore and develop Alford Manor House, kindly given to the Trust by Coun. Miss D. E. Higgins, for the benefit of the community."

The move towards a Civic Trust for Alford began some time ago, but the main impetus came from a public meeting last summer when many county figures came to praise the little market town, and applaud the bold scheme to preserve and bring back to

life the old Manor House which has grown round a Tudor house.

A steering committee was set up then and later appointed Dr. F. W. Lapage, the local county councillor, as chairman, and Mr. A. S. Hackett, of the Grammar School staff, as secretary. For months they folk have been at work on detailed plans which reached the first key stage on 9th March. On that day the new Trust became legally incorporated. It is now being registered as a charity.

## Elected members

Without further ado the steering committee has dissolved as such, after first creating a council to administer the Trust until the first annual meeting.

It has announced that the Earl of Ancaster, Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, has accepted the Trust presidency. There are six vice-presidents, Sir Francis Hill, Sir John Maitland, County Alderman Mrs. D. G. Palethorpe, Mrs. S. Rawnsley, Sir Eric Riches and Mr. Peter Tapsell, M.P.

Elected members of the council are: Dr. Lapage, Mr. Hackett, Mr. P. R. Hill (treasurer), Mr. J. B. Bedford, Mr. H. J. H. Dyer, Mr. W. N. Farnsworth, Coun. Miss D. E. Higgins, Coun. S. Porter, Mr. A. E. Smith, Coun. Dr. D. C. Staveley, Mrs. D. Stokes, Mrs. M. Heath, Mr. S. R. Sargison, Mr. L. A. Hendry, Mr. C. F. L. Banks.

Ex-officio representative members of the Council include: Mr. W. J. Drakes (Bilsby and Farlethorpe Parish Council), Mrs. M. Smith (Willoughby Parish Council), Canon G. J. Lanham (Vicar of Alford), the Rev. L. Morley (Superintendent Methodist Minister), Mrs. R. Lord (Alford W.L.), Mr. J. Elkington (Round Table), Mr. G. Willoughby (Young Farmers' Club and traders and farmers association), Mr. K. A. Walker (Alford branch, N.F.U.), Mr. S. Cawthorpe (Alford amateur sporting organisations), Mr. A. P. Pigott (Secondary Modern School), Mr. J. Smith (County Primary School).

Saturday's meeting set up an executive committee of the chairman, secretary, treasurer, Miss Higgins, Dr. Staveley, and Messrs. Farnsworth, Smith, Hendry and Bedford, with one vacancy to be filled as necessary.



Dr. F. W. Lapage, Trust council chairman and re-elected to the County Council.

Plate 4: A local press article from 1967 describing the setting up of the Trust and the proposals for the future of the Manor House.



The building was first listed as being of special architectural and historical interest in 1953. It was upgraded to II\* in the resurvey of 1987.

The first task of the Trust was to repair the house and in particular to have it rethatched. This was carried out by the Lincolnshire Thatcher John Scoley and all of the original material was stripped off and many roof timbers removed especially in the central range. A new reed thatch roof over roofing felt was provided in 1969. (Plates 5 and 6)



Plate 5: New thatching underway by John Scoley.



Plate 6: The Manor House with new Norfolk Reed thatch in the late 1960s.



Other alterations undertaken included the removal of the partitions that divided the house on the ground and first floors and the insertion of a central front door and flanking windows (Plate 6).

L. ALF 069.

# ALFORD MANOR HOUSE

(A.1104 to Mablethorpe)

## OPEN DAYS

This unique thatched Tudor Manor House in the market town of Alford is now in the process of restoration and will be open to the public on :

**SATURDAY, 30th August, 1969**  
10.30 a.m. — 1.00 p.m.      2.30 p.m. — 8.00 p.m.

**SUNDAY, 31st August, 1969**  
2.30 p.m. — 8.00 p.m.

**MONDAY, 1st September, 1969**  
2.30 p.m. — 8.00 p.m.

<b>Flower Displays</b>	-	<b>Historical Exhibits</b>
COFFEE		TEAS
<b>Admission 2/6</b>		<b>(Children 1/-)</b>

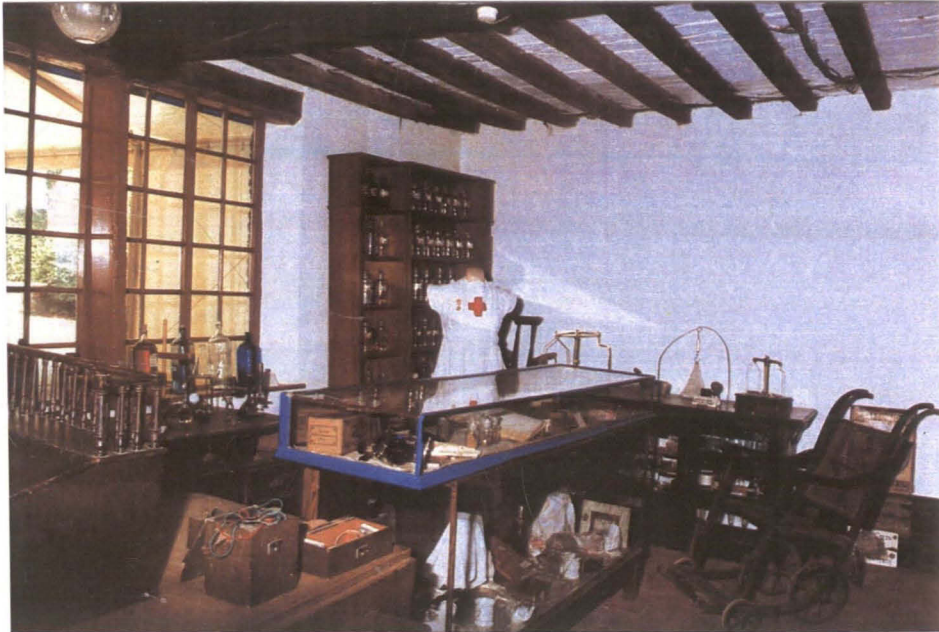
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Dunn Printing Co., 22 Chapel Street, Alford

Plate 7: Early poster advertising the Manor House attraction.



The building was initially tenanted by the Lincolnshire Nature Trust, which became the Lincolnshire and South Humberside Trust for Nature Conservation. It eventually occupied the majority of the first floor rooms along with an office of the Workers Educational Association, which used the ground floor front room of the west wing. The remaining rooms were set out as a local folk museum. (Plates 8 and 9)



Plates 8 & 9: Folk Museum room settings

The Lincolnshire Trust eventually moved out to new premises in Horncastle in 1993 and the museum function expanded into other rooms. The ground floor entrance hall provided a facility for the local tourist information centre, with the western front room used as a meeting room and the eastern one as a tea room (Plate 10).



Journey back to the past through the shops, the workshops,  
the schoolroom, the prison cell...large displays of tools  
and implements, costumes and photographs

**NEW FOR 1992 - THE AMERICAN EXHIBITION**

OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK  
MAY 4th TO OCTOBER 2nd  
INCLUDING BANK HOLIDAY WEEKENDS

Mon - Sat 10.30 am - 4.30 pm

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No Smoking  
No Photography  
No Dogs unless carried  
(with the exception of  
Guide Dogs)  
Restricted Mobility Access  
Car Parking Facilities Available



**ADMISSION**  
Adults: 50p  
Children  
(accompanied): 25p

Alford and District Civic Trust Ltd  
Manor House, West Street, Alford, Lincolnshire. LN13 9DJ  
Charity registered number 252330

Plate 10: Poster for the expanded folk museum.



In 1998 proposals began to be put together for improvements to the gardens by Groundwork Lincolnshire. It also became clear that repair works were required to the house and that the roof needed re-thatching. The Heritage Trust for Lincolnshire in partnership with Groundwork and the Civic Trust proposed an application for funds to the Heritage Lottery Fund. To support this, a feasibility study was commissioned from Glenn Anderson Associates, (now Anderson and Glenn) to cost out repair and alteration options for the house.

This study dated April 1999 revealed that the house was in a far worse condition than had originally been envisaged. It was evident that significant structural repairs were required and the Heritage Lottery Fund subsequently agreed to a two stage project to repair and alter the building. This project was managed by Alford and District Civic Trust.



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TIMELINE

- 1283** The town of Alford is granted a charter for a market
- 1500s** John Leland describes Alford as a 'modest market town in the Lindsey marshland.
- 1611** Timber felling date for roof and floor timbers. House probably built by John Hopkinson.
- 1638** Robert Christopher is married in Spalding. He is thought to have acquired the Manor House shortly thereafter.
- 1641** Robert Christopher has a daughter Elizabeth who is baptised in Alford.
- 1661** Robert Christopher is knighted following restoration of the monarchy.
- 1668** Sir Robert Christopher dies and leaves the property to his daughter Elizabeth, Lady Sheraton.
- 1700s** Alford Manor House belongs to successive generations of the Manners family, as Lucy Manners, wife of the second Duke of Rutland, was Sir Robert Christopher's grand daughter. The house was possibly tenanted during this time, but did undergo some updating and improvements, particular some panelling and fireplaces.
- 1819** General Robert Manners has an agent John Higgins who moves into the house at this time. The house is divided in two and new extensions are built on the east side during his tenancy.
- 1872** John Higgins dies and his son Frederic continues as agent.
- 1915** The house is sold by the last descendant of Sir Robert Christopher, Mary Nisbet Hamilton, to Walter Rawnsley owner of the nearby Well Estate. It is tenanted.
- 1958** Dorothy Higgins, grand daughter of John Higgins purchases the house.
- 1967** The newly formed Alford and District Civic Trust acquired the property.
-

## REPORT ON THE RECENT PROJECT

In order to inform the repair project an opening up contract was set up to be able to better understand the construction and condition of the building. This was undertaken in autumn 2002 with main contractors Tasker Builders of Sleaford. This enabled an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken and construction professionals to investigate the condition of hidden floor and wall structures.

The following reports resulted from this work:

- Archaeological Buildings Investigation, January 2003 by Field Archaeology Specialists, Historic Buildings Section.
- Access Audit Report, by NTA Projects, August 2002.
- Tree Ring Analysis of Timbers from the Manor House by Department of Archaeology, University of Nottingham.
- Survey of the fabric and historic timbers by specialists Hutton and Rostron, November 2002.
- Report on historical evidence for thatching materials by Historic Thatch Management.
- Protected Species Report, By Gary Steele, April 2003
- Fire Safety Report by M. Nevitt, July 2004
- Tree Survey Report by Mark Hudson, July 2004

Detailed proposals were drawn up for the repair and alterations of the House and a contract let following competitive tender to Tasker Builders of Sleaford. Work commenced in February 2005 and was completed in May 2006. The works included the following:

- Repointing of external brickwork using a pre mixed lime putty/coarse sand mortar from Skillington Workshop.
- Rebuilding of gable apexes and chimney stack tops using handmade bricks by York Handmade Brick Company.
- Rethatching of H plan roof using new long straw thatch by thatching specialist Roger Evans overseen by thatching adviser Keith Quantrill. The east slope of the eastern wing retained the reed thatch of 1969 as a base coat.
- Repairs to wall plates in new oak. New over roofing members to centre and west wing in treated softwood.
- Repairs to attic and first floor structures overseen by structural engineer Ed Morton of the Morton Partnership Ltd.
- Demolition of late nineteenth century lean to and porch at rear.



- New two storey rear extension containing disabled platform lift, and new lead roof across extension and first floor nineteenth century addition.
- New cast iron rainwater goods, improved drainage system and French drain.
- Plaster repairs in lime plaster; upgrading of fire doors; new ironmongery; full redecoration.
- New lighting, heating and other services, overseen by Brian Evans, of Brian J. Evans.
- New kitchen fittings, new disabled WCs, new mast lightning conductor.
- Conservation of historic wallpaper by specialist Alyson McDermott. (accompanied by report dated January 2006)

The building opened again to the public on June 13<sup>th</sup> 2006.



**Plate 11: Work starts on the restoration.**





Plate 12: Repointing brickwork using pre-mixed lime putty/coarse sand.



Plate 13: New hand-made bricks.





Plate 14: Re-thatching using new long straw.



Plate 15: Repairs to oak wall-plate.



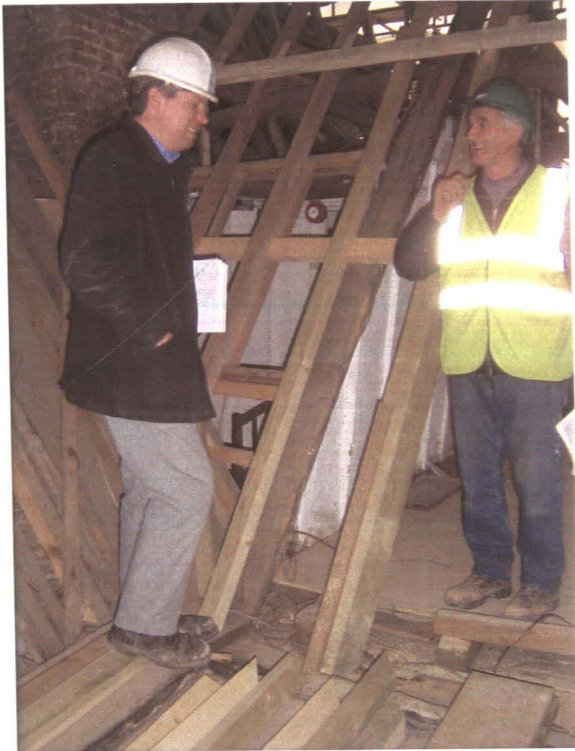


Plate 16: Repairs to the attic & first floor structures were overseen by structural engineer Ed Morton.

Plate 17: The new two-storey rear extension, containing the disabled lift.

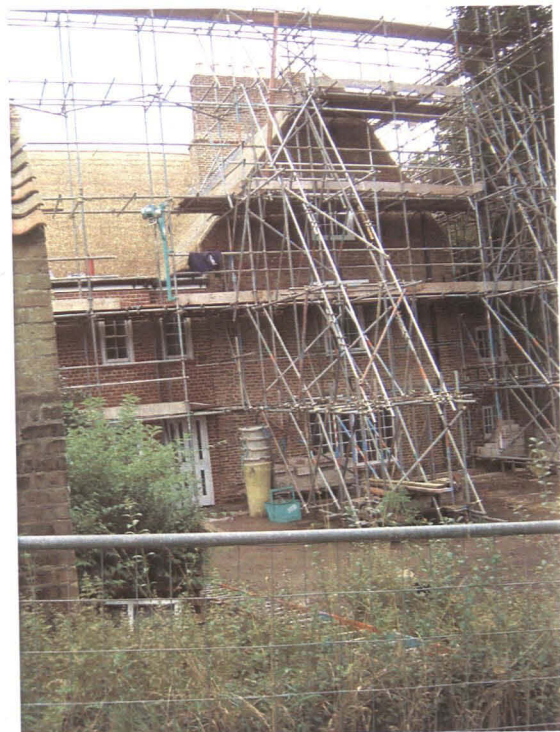




Plate 18: Conservation of historic wall-paper

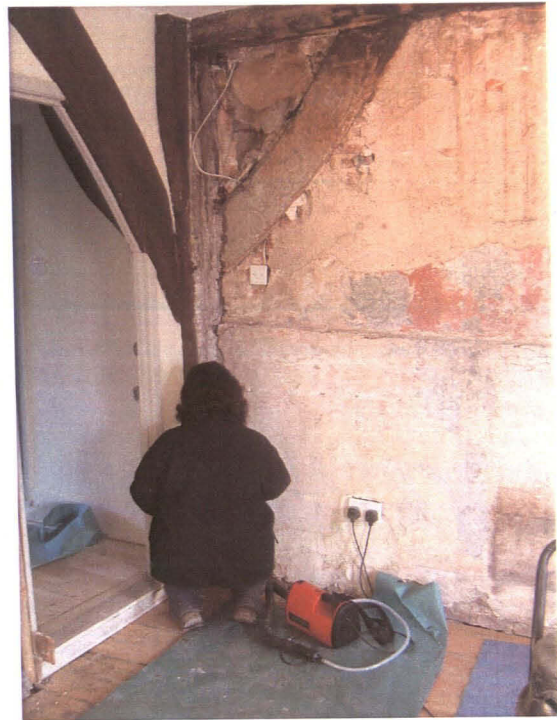


Plate 19: The restored Manor House.





# ALFORD MANOR HOUSE

ALFORD

LINCOLNSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2006

HISTORIC BUILDINGS SECTION







**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**  
ALFORD MANOR HOUSE  
LINCOLNSHIRE

SITE CODE: AMH05  
NGR: TF 4534 7603

**REPORT**  
September 2006





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## Summary

This report presents the results of a watching brief undertaken at Alford Manor House, Alford, Lincolnshire, by the Historic Buildings Section of Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd, between the 9th February and the 3rd July 2005. The monitoring formed part of an ongoing investigation into the history of the building, following the survey and research carried out previously (FAS 2003). Various sections of the historic fabric were exposed and recorded, including sections of the roof structure and internal elevations. A small section of ground exposed by the demolition of a modern extension was also subject to below ground archaeological investigation.

Further documentary research has tentatively identified the person responsible for the construction of the house as John Hopkinson, with the period of Robert Christopher's ownership possibly starting in the late 1630s. The results of the watching brief provided further insight into the dating and analysis of the house provided in the earlier phase of work. More information was uncovered about the form of the house as it was constructed in c.1611, particularly the upper sections of the gable ends, which were timber-framed originally, with projecting windows. The surviving original roof timbers were also recorded, indicating the first form of the roof, and that the house had overhanging gables to both the front and rear (north and south). A below ground archaeological investigation to the north of the house revealed a 19th century floor surface and, in the area not affected by these alterations, the construction trench for the insertion of the house's brick foundations. Internally, further evidence of the house's earlier decorative schemes were recorded, including window shutters, paintwork and wallpaper.

## Acknowledgements

Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd would like to thank Alford and District Civil Trust, Mary Anderson, Conservation Architect Anderson and Glenn, Beryl Lott, County Archaeologist, Lincolnshire County Council and Taskers Builders for their cooperation and support during this project.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document presents the results of a programme of recording and analysis undertaken during repairs and renovations at Alford Manor House, Alford, Lincolnshire, by the Historic Buildings Section (HBS) of Field Archaeology Specialists (FAS) Ltd on behalf of Alford and District Civil Trust. The recording was carried out between the 9th February and 3rd July 2005.

### 1.1 LOCATION AND LAND USE

The town of Alford lies on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds and the Marshland of east Lincolnshire, within the administrative area of East Lindsey. Alford Manor House (NGR TF 4534 7603) is situated towards the centre of the town along West Street, with Park Lane running along its east side (Figure 1; Plate 1). To the west of the house an open area is used as the car park of the museum. The river, now canalised and known as the Wold Grift Drain, forms the property's west boundary; to the north is a garden, beyond which are fields.



Plate 1 Alford Manor House from the south

The house is maintained by the Alford and District Civic Trust as a museum of Alford and the surrounding area. The house, three storeys in height, consists of two cross wings to either side of a central range. It is constructed primarily of brick and timber, and is, for the most part, roofed with thatch.

### 1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

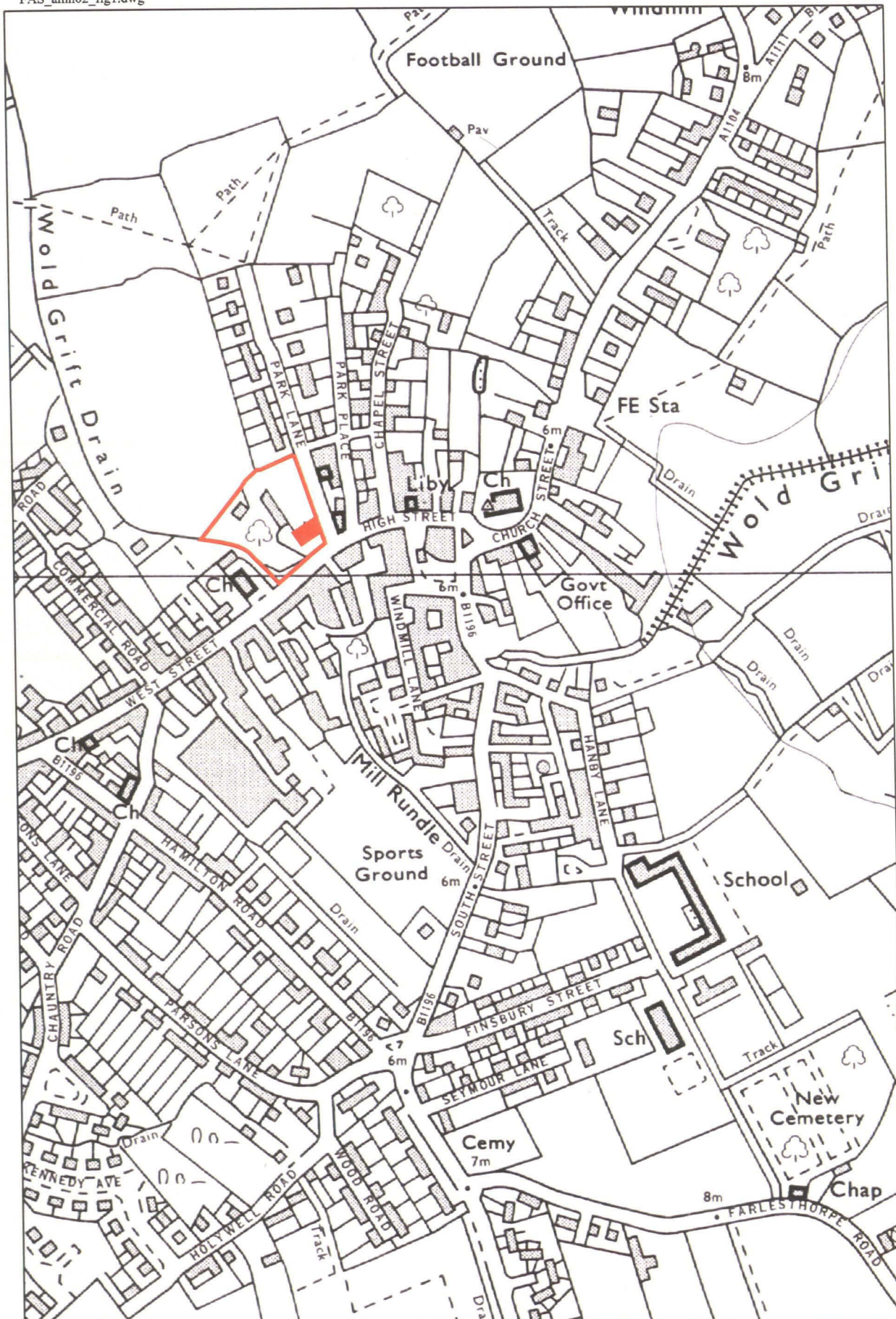
Following the preliminary research undertaken by FAS in 2002 (FAS 2003), the purpose of this watching brief was to record any further archaeological features uncovered during the programme of restoration and renovation undertaken on the house. Further documentary research was also undertaken. This work was intended to enhance the interpretation of the building, particularly that which would help refine understanding of the earlier phases of the house, with attention to room lay-out and decorative schemes.

### 1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The town of Alford takes its name from a ford that once crossed the brook now known as the Wold Grift Drain. It was recorded in the Domesday Book as a small village with some 50 inhabitants, but no significant landowner or church, the latter being founded at the end of the 12th century. Alford was established as a market town during the late medieval period following the grant of a charter for a market in 1283. In the 16th century John Leland visited Alford and described the town as 'a modest market town in the Low Lindsey marshland. The town is entirely roofed with thatch and reed, and is served by a small brook' (Chandler 1993, 304).

Traditionally, Alford Manor House was thought to have been built by Thomas Tothby of Tothby Manor in the





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Location map

Scale 1:5000



Figure 1



16th century following a form typical of that period with a central hall and two cross wings providing high and low status accommodation (for example Cooke 1988). An alternative hypothesis contended that the main range and one of the cross wings dated from the 1540s, with a further wing added at a later date. It was assumed that this initial construction was as a timber-framed building, with the brick cladding added following its purchase by Sir Robert Christopher, c.1661. Additional confusion had been caused by the classification of the building as an example of a high status mud-and-stud building (Barley 1952), the vernacular construction method in Lincolnshire. This inaccurate classification has persisted, with the building being included even in recent examinations of the mud-and-stud tradition (Cousins 2000).

Archaeological and historical research undertaken by FAS in 2002 (FAS 2003), established that Alford Manor House in fact dates from the early 17th century and was constructed as a composite brick and timber building. The programme of dendrochronological work undertaken by English Heritage refined this date range further, providing a felling date of 1611 for timbers in all sections of the building, thus supporting the analysis of construction as a single and coherent construction phase. Modifications were found to have been carried out in the late 17th century, which may have led to the supposition that the building was clad in brick at this date, with further additions throughout the 18th and 19th century and considerable internal alterations effected in the 20th century to allow the building's use as a museum.

Ownership of the manor house has been traced back as far as Sir Robert Christopher, who owned the house by the 1660s. It had been assumed he bought the house from a William Cowley following the statement in Christopher's will (1668) that:

'... I further give and bequeath unto my dear daughter the Lady Sherard all that my Capital Massuage in Alford with all my land there which I purchased of William Cowley Esq. and his wife and all other my Mesuages, cottages, lands, penements and heritaments in Alford, Riggesby, Alesby, Towthby, Greenfield, Weli, Thorestropp, Saleby, Billesby and Asfordby, together with a lease I now hold of the parsonage of Alford...' (LA NWII/5/2).

The understanding is, since it is not mentioned separately, that Alford Manor House formed part of the land bought from William Cowley. Further research has clarified the period of Christopher's ownership.

Following the bequeathing of the lands in Alford to Sir Robert Christopher's daughter Elizabeth, Lady Sherard, the house passed to Elizabeth's daughter Lucy, who had married John Manners, 2nd Duke of Rutland. The house then remained in the ownership of the Manners family for several generations, although, given the status of the family, it was never used as a residence. Under the ownership of General Robert Manners in the early 19th century, the house was let to John Higgins. Higgins lived in the house in the 1820s, and some of the alterations to the house surviving today can be traced to his tenancy, including some of the extensions to the rear and the estate office which was added to the east wing. The house was also divided into two properties, with the main hall and bedroom above divided roughly down the middle.

The house was sold by Mary Nisbet Hamilton, a descendant of the Manners family, in 1915. It was bought by Walter Rawnsley of Well House, but leased to the Botham family. In 1958 it was sold again, and bought by Dorothy Higgins, the granddaughter of John Higgins. Dorothy sold the house to the Civic Trust in 1967. Following this sale the house underwent considerable work, including rewiring, the removal of some of the 19th



century partitioning and the opening up of the hall and the fireplace in the northeast room. Several windows were also reinserted on the ground- and first-floor. The house was rethatched in 1969, at which time considerable repair to the timbers in the roof were also effected, with a new roof erected over the remains of the original. In 1983 the house was thatched again.

#### *Recent archaeological investigation*

Recent analysis of the manor house (FAS 2003) established that it was of composite brick and timber construction, which involved structural timber posts providing a bay system. This consisted of ten posts (five in each wall) providing four bays in each of the cross wings, and a further eight posts providing a three-bay central range. Each post was seated on a masonry pad, a standard procedure designed to prevent timber being affected by damp and associated decay. Each post consisted of two timbers probably joined by a scarf joint, which rose to roof level where a wall plate was seated on the posts to provide support for the roof structure. Further wall plates appear to have originally been present in the shorter (north and south) walls of the cross wings at first-floor level, to provide an additional tie for the corner posts and support for the floor structures incorporated; these have been removed, which seems to have contributed to the spreading visible in the corners of the wings on the north elevation. A number of braces were visible, or exposed during the course of initial work, at first-floor level, which were clearly designed to provide additional support for the upper wall plate and roof structure. Analysis also revealed several internal structural details, particularly relating to the floor types. Floorboards in several first-floor and attic rooms were lifted to reveal the joist systems underneath. This revealed a consistent form of flooring employed with joists tenoned into a main bridging beam; however, some rooms had additional sub-joists which provided springing in the floor. This technique may denote higher status rooms, and was concentrated at the front of the house.

Externally, analysis of the elevations revealed evidence of several phases of remodelling to the house. A complete rebuilding of the south elevation was identified, with a straight joint in the west elevation providing evidence of the meeting of the old and new sections. Alterations were also identified to the windows at all levels, with straight joints surrounding a significant proportion of the openings, which indicate the presence of earlier windows, in most cases in the same location as the present features. Other areas of disruption, most notably to the northern gable end of the east cross wing, provided evidence of piecemeal repair to the building. Internally there was also evidence surviving for several of the phases of decorative schemes. Several of the bridging beams on the ground floor retained 17th century decorative mouldings, their date suggesting they are part of the original form of the house. An area of horse hair plaster identified in one of the first-floor rooms (F5) may also date from this earliest decorative phase. There was also evidence for 18th century decoration, with the forms of several of the ceiling cornices and skirting boards suggesting they date from this period. Sections of an early block wallpaper were also uncovered, dating from the late 18th or early 19th century. Early 19th century work remained in more of the features, particularly some of the earlier surviving windows and several of the six-panel doors.

#### *Additional documentary research*

Following the dendrochronological evidence which indicated that Alford Manor House was actually constructed c.1611, further documentary research has been undertaken on the period prior to Robert Christopher's known occupation which had begun certainly by 1668, although circumstantial documentary evidence would suggest that Christopher had occupied the house for some time prior to this date. As early as 1639 to 1642, two



conveyances describe Christopher as '...of Alford gent' (WCRO CR 611/796/1-13; WCRO CR 611/806/1-2). The latter conveyance was of the lordship of Mumby and other lands (mainly in Essex) and the sum of money involved (£1,465) indicates the considerable wealth of Christopher at this time. Given that Christopher married in Spalding in 1638 and his daughter was baptised in Alford in 1641, it would seem that Christopher could have acquired and occupied the house by, or shortly after his marriage in 1638. There are other later references to Christopher in Alford through the 1650s, including the recording of a fine of 2s. he was to pay because he 'did fetch fier in an open vesell' (Dudding 1930, 183). Christopher was also acting as Sheriff of Lincoln in the 1650s (see LA NEL V/10 for example), suggesting that despite his alleged royalist sympathies he had come to an understanding with the Commonwealth government. Two years earlier (1666) a letter was sent to William Mountagu from Alford by Christopher (LA TYR 2/2/12), indicating that he was perhaps occupying the house at this time.

The possible 1638 date for Christopher's acquisition of the house is significantly earlier than suggested by Dudding (1930, 70), who posited that it was built in 1661. However, there is still a gap of some 27 years between 1638 and the buildings probable construction date of *c.*1611. As already noted, Christopher's will suggested that the property was purchased from William Cowley. William Cowley Esq. is noted as a freeholder in Alford in 1656 and again in 1660 (Dudding 1930, 182; 185). Although a freeholder of property in Alford, Cowley would not have necessarily resided in the town. Unfortunately no further documents have been located which connect Cowley with the house. It is possible that Cowley's ownership was transient and an intriguing document from 1636 might suggest this to be the case. A bargain of sale, dated 15 October 1636, states that the manor house called 'Reavill Place' or 'Hambye House' and other lands in the town were being sold by John Hopkinson and his son John, of Alford to William Saltmarshe of Struppy and William Saltmarshe of Wragby (LA LLHS 38/2/16). The Saltmarshe family do not appear to have become residents of Alford after this sale and therefore might have quickly sold the house on to William Cowley and thus, subsequently to Robert Christopher. If this were the case then the house was linked to the Alford manors of Hamby (and thus the name 'Hambye House') and Rither.

While there is no direct evidence linking the current Alford Manor House with either of these names, the use of the term 'place' in the latter title is usually indicative of a house and land of considerable size. It seems unlikely that early 17th century Alford would have had more than one substantial manor house within the town, and thus a tentative link between the house and the bargain of sale can be drawn. John Hopkinson thus becomes a potential early owner of Alford Manor House. There are references to a John Hopkinson throughout the 17th century, confirming two, if not three generations of the family bore the name. The earliest reference is in 1618, when a John Hopkinson of Alford was listed as a witness in a case between Lady Hatton and Sir William Monson (LA TYR 2/1/25). A further insight into his activities is provided by a caveat to the document which informs us that the depositions include 'Much evidence about the state of the banks and the process of enclosure which was chiefly by the man responsible, John Hopkinson'. Such involvement in the enclosure process suggests that he held enough land in the locality to benefit from enclosure, and also that by 1618 he had been resident in Alford long enough to have played a role in the enclosure process. It is therefore more than likely that he was in Alford at the time of the construction of the manor house.

A further reference to John Hopkinson occurs in 1627, again in relation to the enclosure of land (LA TYR 2/1/31/2). He is listed as one of the four people who occupy a substantial property belonging to the Earl of

Exeter, land totalling some 960 acres and described as 'marsh next to Croft'. This is described as being enclosed within the last 32 years, probably referring to the drainage of the marsh to create usable agricultural land. From these documents it is clear that Hopkinson had significant landholdings throughout the area and, given the family's ownership of a substantial property in the 1630s, it is possible that he was responsible for the construction of the manor house. This may also correspond to his involvement in the enclosure process; a desire to maximise income from his land could be linked to substantial personal expenditure. Following the sale of 'Hambye House' in 1636, the Hopkinson family remained in Alford with references to a John Hopkinson as late as 1674, presumably the son or grandson of the John Hopkinson of 1618. He is described as 'gent.', so whatever the reason for the sale of the house in the 1630s, the family retained a significant standing within the local community.

The names used for the property in the bargain of sale of 1636 may indicate that the house, or the plot of land upon which the house was built, had links to another notable family in Alford, whose name was synonymous with one of the manors in the town. The Hamby or Hanby family, gave their name to the manor of Hamby, which must in some way be linked to the house as described in the sale of 1636 ('Hambye House'). Their name occurs frequently in the 16th century records of the town, in relation to the buying and selling of extensive properties. However, following the last reference to 'Edward Hamby of Alford' who is listed as buying property in 1593 (LA Holywell 72/17), their name does not occur again. It may be that their link to Alford ceased at the end of the 16th or the start of the 17th century, perhaps following the sale of property there. Although there is no direct evidence of this, the construction of the manor house in c.1611 could well be the mark of a new owner, although the current manor house could well have replaced an earlier house linked to the Hambys, whose name was retained despite the rebuilding.

On the basis of the evidence a sequence of the house's development can be traced:

- c.1611: construction of the house in one phase, including cross wings;
- mid-17th century: ownership of the house passes to Sir Robert Christopher; remodelling of the south front;
- 18th century: house owned by the Manners family and largely tenanted; internal decorative scheme updated;
- 19th century: house still let, tenants including John Higgins; partition of the house into two dwellings, building of the estate office to the east and other extensions;
- 20th century: house sold to two local residents and then to the Alford Civil Trust; removal of some 19th century partitions, restoration of some original features.

## 2.0 FIELDWORK PROCEDURE

A digital photographic record was made of the brickwork, timber and decorative schemes exposed during repairs to the interior of the house. During the rethatching and repair work on the roof, the opportunity was taken to record the exposed sections of the original roof structure, which included all of the central range and west bay and most of the east range. Scale drawings were made on site which were then digitised using AutoCAD 2000i. These drawings were then incorporated into the record of the building created during the



earlier phase of work (FAS 2003). Drawings were also made of items uncovered during repair and reconstruction work to the gable ends at attic level. These were also digitised and have been presented in the report as scale drawings.

Following the demolition of two of the small rear extensions which had housed modern toilet facilities, a below ground investigation was carried out to expose any evidence of previous occupation levels. The area was cleared to allow examination of any underlying structures and a full photographic record was made of the features uncovered, using 35mm colour and monochrome silver-based film.

### 3.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

#### 3.1 INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

Renovation work involved the removal of plaster and hardboard stud wall covering. Where this work revealed historic fabric recording consisted of digital and conventional film based photography.

##### 3.1.1 Ground Floor (Figure 2)

###### *Room G11*

Stripping of the plaster from the lower part of the walls in room G11 (the kitchen) revealed a little more of the history of alteration to the house. The timber post, which had been observed previously in the east wall, could be seen to have been shortened (Plate 2). This was probably as a result of decay at the base of the post, the resultant gap being infilled with brickwork. The stone pad, originally intended to support the post, remained *in situ*. Clearly the original builders were aware that the bases of the timber posts would have been prone to decay and tried to avoid this problem with pad stones, a solution not entirely successful.

Stripping plaster from the north wall of room G11 provided some evidence of the proportions of the original window (Plate 3). It was clear that the window had been longer originally; a lower sill was visible, evidence consistent with that observed on the exterior. When the window was shortened, the sill and jambs were built up and narrowed using larger bricks with much wider mortar joints. Judging by the bricks and mortar type used this alteration appears to have been undertaken in the late 18th or early 19th century.



**Plate 2** Room G11, shortened timber post with brick infill



**Plate 3** Room G11, scar in the wall showing the original window proportions

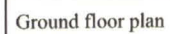


Figure 2





**Plate 4** Room G11, later brickwork of passageway wall



**Plate 5** Room G11, alterations to the walling

The evidence from the passage wall of room G11 suggests that the wall was an inserted feature. Once plaster had been removed it could be seen that the passage walling abutted the north wall of G11. The brickwork used in the passage walling appeared to be of late 18th or early 19th century date (Plate 4). It had been suggested that this wall and passage were an original feature, part of the early 17th century arrangement, typical of houses of this period, and it is possible that the brickwall replaced an earlier wall of timber framing. However, no certain evidence was found to indicate this.

The west wall of the passage, also serving as the west wall of G11 (the kitchen) retained evidence for being a primary feature of the house. On removal of the plaster from the lower part of the wall it could be seen that there had originally been a timber post incorporated into the fabric (Plate 5). The post had been removed and replacement brickwork inserted. However, the pad stone, intended to support the post remained *in situ*. Within the same wall, to the south of the removed post and door opening to the buttery and pantry (rooms G13-14), a further post remained *in situ* along with its pad stone (Plate 6). The pad stone appeared to have been raised on several courses of brick, perhaps as a result of the bottom of the post decaying. This wall also provided evidence that the current access between the entrance hall (G3) and kitchen (G11) had been inserted. The brickwork forming the north jamb of the door could be seen to have been inserted crudely against a cut made into the primary brickwork. Access to the kitchen appears to have been either from the cellar door or *via* the common parlour (room G4).



**Plate 6** Room G11, *in situ* timber post and padstone



**Plate 7** Room G11, fireplace with east side reconstructed



The south wall of the kitchen (room G11) retains a large and original early 17th century fireplace. Stripping of the plaster in this area indicated that the east side of the fireplace had received some reconstruction (Plate 7). This was perhaps as a result of the removal of an oven from the fireplace and the creation of the door opening through into the common parlour (room G4).

To the west of the fireplace is a short passage which provides the current access to the entrance hall (room G3). Originally, this passage only gave access to the common parlour to the south, the blocking of the passage being clearly visible on removal of some of the plaster (Plate 8).

#### *Room G14*

In the pantry or buttery (G14) a further door opening was identified after the stripping of plaster to reveal the original brickwork underneath. Although adhesions of limewash to both the original and the fill brickwork made the form difficult to discern, the straight joints identified indicate the presence of a doorway (Plate 9). Its presence was confirmed by excavation carried out on the exterior of this wall.



**Plate 8** Room G11, blocked passageway to room G3

#### 3.1.2 First floor (Figure 3)

##### *Room F1*

In room F1 the modern boxing was removed from the bridging beam running across the centre of the room thereby revealing the moulded form of the beam. The moulding appeared to be identical to that already observed in the centre or 'best' bedroom (F3). Several different schemes of decoration were also visible on the beam, including layers of limewash and a layer of distinctive, powder blue paint, which covered both the beam and areas of plaster surviving within the boxed area.



**Plate 9** Room G14, blocked external doorway

##### *Room F5*

The decorative features surviving on the east wall of room F5 have already been noted (FAS 2003). Removal of the hardboard cladding on the north wall, in order to establish the conjectured presence of a fireplace, proved this hypothesis to be correct. However, the expected early 17th century fireplace had been partly filled in to create a smaller opening. The wall around this had been covered with wall paper of early 19th century date. With this significant discovery it was not possible to explore the 17th century fire opening further.

##### *Room F11*

Further detail was also revealed in what was originally the closet for room F11, now a small corridor used to





access the extension to the east of the manor house. The removal of the plaster ceiling revealed the various timbers used to support the floor above. Most of this appears to be plain cut timber of a poor quality, but towards the centre a moulded beam survives. The form of the moulding is a simple chamfer decoration, with a chamfered stop visible at one end. This may represent another *in situ* early 17th century beam, the simple form of the moulding indicating the relatively low status of this room. An empty lap joint which is visible towards the western end of the beam may indicate the position of a strut providing a small partition to divide the closet from the room, with enough space for a doorway to the left of the strut.

### Room F17

In the closet to the south of room F17, hardboard was removed from the external wall to reveal the interior of the blocked up window which originally lit the closet (Plate 10). The external blocking of the window was noted in the earlier phase of work (FAS 2003, 12). Internally, the opening for the window survives with its associated panelling *in situ*. Panelling has also survived on the other walls on the closet, providing a complete encasing. The form of the moulding and size of the panels suggests possibly a late 17th, but probably an early 18th century date. In places the interior of the panels is missing, but enough survives to ascertain the form of the panelling. The panelling is largely plain open panels with a simple moulding profile at the edge of the panels. Smaller panels at the top of the wall had a more decorative moulding which projected out from the face of the panel, providing a decorative feature in the room. Particularly notable is the survival of the shutters associated with the window. These were folding shutters, with plain strap hinges on the left hand side and at the centre, allowing the shutter to be folded up against the left hand side of the window. When closed, the shutters were secured by two metal latches secured by hinges to the left hand side of the window, and hooking into window stays on the right hand side. Visible approximately a third of the way up the shutter are two black marks. These appear to be singe marks and may be the result of candles being placed on the window sill.



**Plate 10** Closet in room F17, uncovered panelling and window shutters

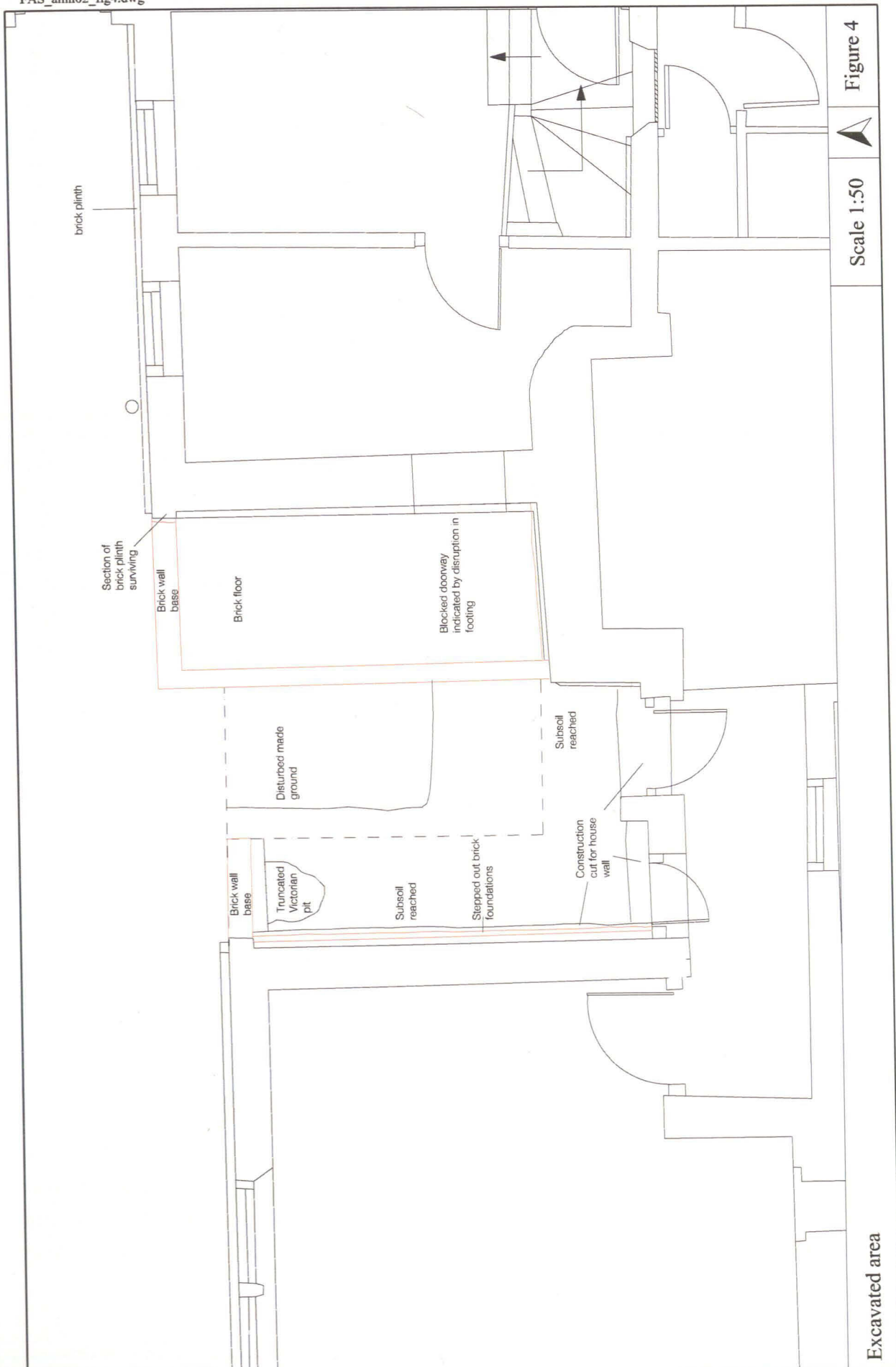
### 3.2 BELOW GROUND INVESTIGATION (Figure 4)

A below ground investigation was carried out in the area to the north of the house occupied previously by the modern extension which housed toilets. Prior to investigation, demolition of the extension had reduced the walls to foundation level. The remainder of the floor surfaces were then lifted to allow an archaeological examination of the underlying area. The majority of the area (the ground under what had been rooms G16 and G17) was found to consist of



**Plate 11** Rubble levelling and foundations of the house





disturbed made ground, including rubble, probably associated with the levelling of the area prior to the construction of the extension (Plate 11). Two sondages were cut through the rubble, which continued to approximately 0.6m below the present ground level (as seen in the yard to the north of the house). Beneath this layer, subsoil was encountered with a number of features cut into it. Most of these appeared to be construction cuts associated with the foundations of the house, identifiable extending approximately 0.1m from the current walls. In the northwestern corner of the area the line of a truncated pit was identified, apparently Victorian in date, although this feature was not excavated further.

The removal of the ground to this level also revealed the foundations of the house, which consisted of bricks of the same proportions and type as found in the elevations of the manor house. The foundation layers stepped out from the main elevation of the house with rows of stretchers and headers identifiable.

The removal of the flooring to the area previously room G15 revealed an earlier brick floor surface under the brick footings for the floor to the room (Plate 12). This floor was composed of bricks approximately 0.11m x 0.22m x 0.06m deep, which appeared to be machine-made, but of relatively poor quality. The floor was clearly associated with a structure, the outer wall of which survived as the western wall of room G15, as this wall marked the extent of the surface. The surviving base of this wall comprised machine-made bricks of a better quality than those used in the floor surface.



**Plate 12** Brick floor and associated doorway

The removal of the wooden flooring also revealed further sections of the wall to the west of room G14, which is obscured by plaster above floor level. On this wall, 0.30m from the returning wall to the south of the room, a disruption in the brick indicated the presence of a doorway, now blocked (see Plate 12). This feature was also observed internally as straight joints visible in the fabric of the wall to the west of the pantry (see Plate 9). Given the small amount revealed, it was not possible to ascertain whether this door was original or had been forced through the earlier wall. However, the presence of the room identified by the brick wall and associated flooring, makes it likely that this doorway provided access to that room, prior to the construction of the rest of the extension which then allowed entry from the west. This suggests that all three features are of the same date, and the machine-made nature of the bricks used, suggests a mid-19th century date at the earliest.

The closer examination of the wall elevations in this area of the building showed the line of the brick plinth surviving to the south and west, approximately 1.0m from the base of the wall. Where the brick wall had been demolished to the north of room G15, a small section of the plinth survived. Although it appeared to have been cut back along the rest of this elevation, the footings of the projection surviving at ground level along this wall. Enough survives to indicate that all three of these walls were external at the time of the construction of the manor house.



### 3.3 SOUTH GABLE WALL INVESTIGATION

The south gable wall of the eastern wing was taken down for consolidation, and the opportunity was taken to record the uncovered wall plate in greater detail (Figure 5). The earlier phase of work on the manor house noted that the wall plates at the gable ends of each wing were bonded into the gable walls, making a full examination difficult, although partial plans were created (FAS 2003). The current renovation work confirmed the presence of a series of nine mortices towards the outer edge of the upper surface of the wall plate, approximately 0.25m apart. These are clearly associated with the upright timbers of the framing used at this level, which unlike that below, would have been a visible part of the structure of the house. This close studding represented a decorative element in the timber framing of the upper stories.

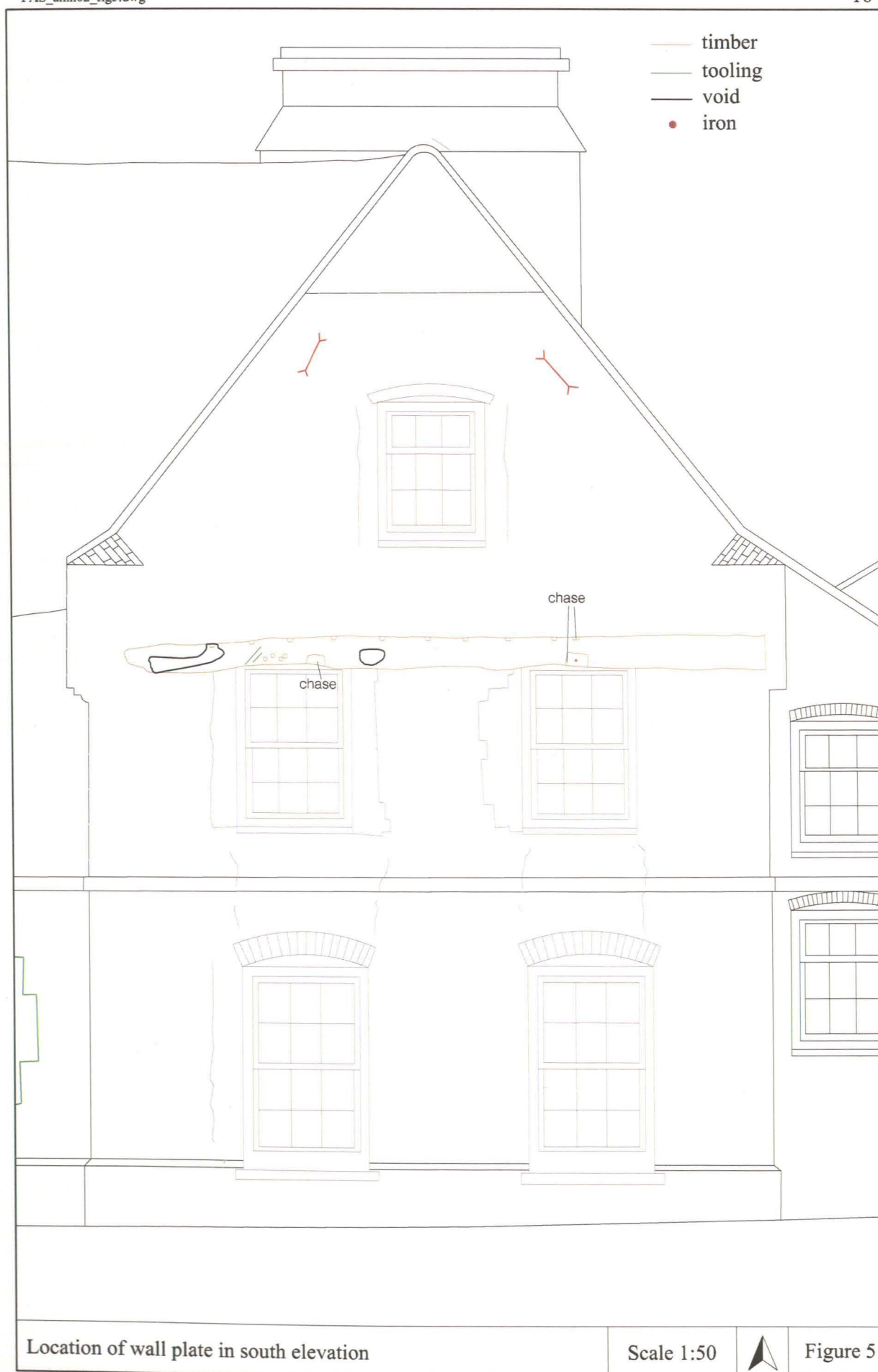
During investigation, the wall plate was not removed from the wall and it was therefore not possible to examine the base or rear of the timber, however there was some evidence on the front of the plate to suggest that further structural joints would be included on the base, probably associated with timber-framed elements at first-floor level (Figure 6; Plate 13). Two cuts survive in the front surface of the beam, approximately 0.05m deep, tapering very slightly towards their top. These appear to be the front sections of lap joints, which would have held timbers running downwards from the plate. The two chases are approximately 2.5m apart. On the outer side of both of these chases three empty peg holes



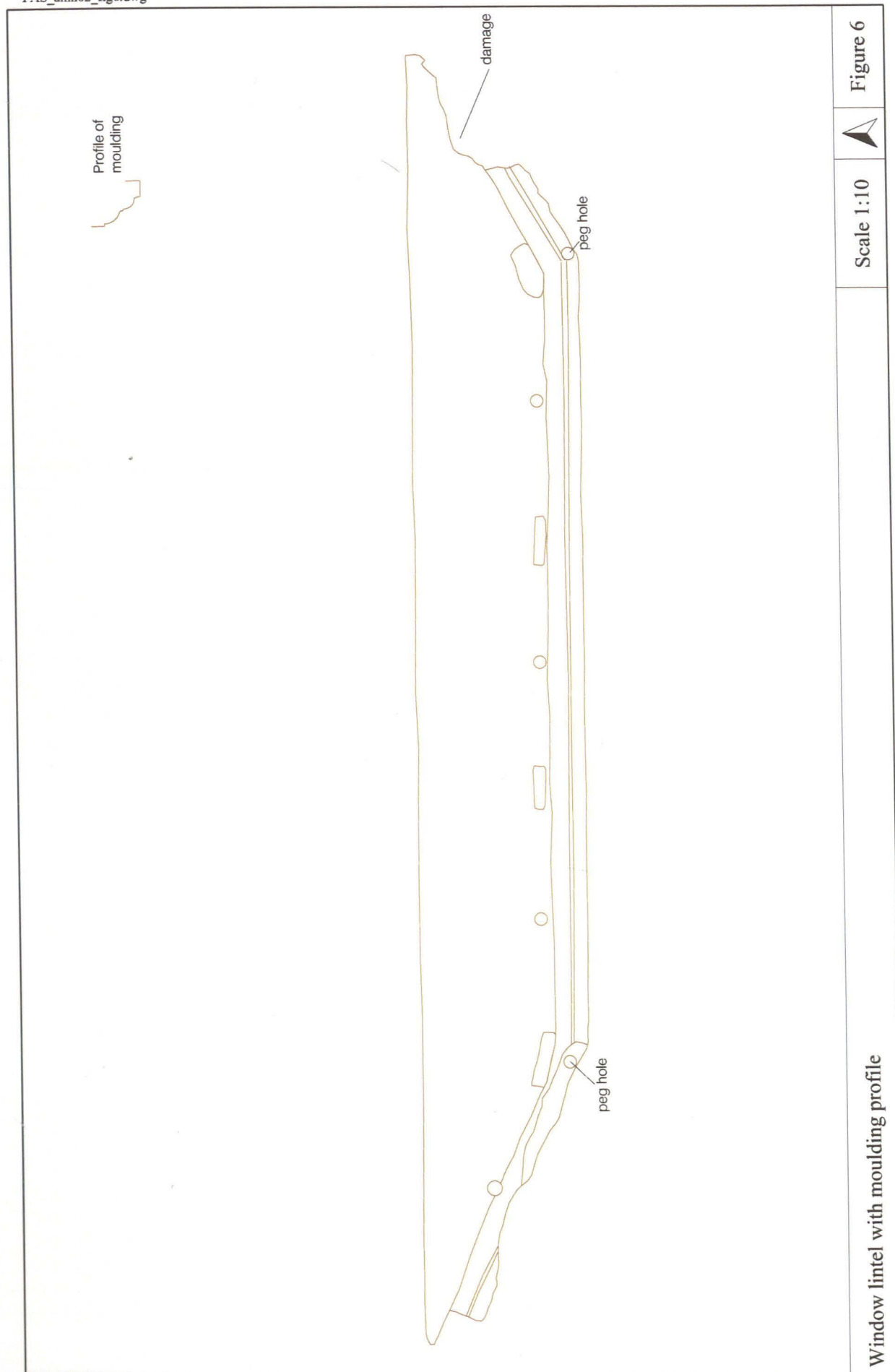
**Plate 13** South gable; uncovered wall plate with lap joints

are visible, which are probably associated with curved arch braces projecting from the upright wall posts to the wall plate. These are used in other places in the interior at first floor level, to brace the wall plate against the upright timbers. The two mortices in the upper surface of the plate which correspond to these cuts also have small chases cut into them, approximately 0.04m wide, these may be the remains of peg holes suggesting that the mortices in these locations were secured with particular care. Their distance apart corresponds to the proportions of the sill described below and suggests that the struts projecting from these mortices were important structurally as the main supports for the projecting window.

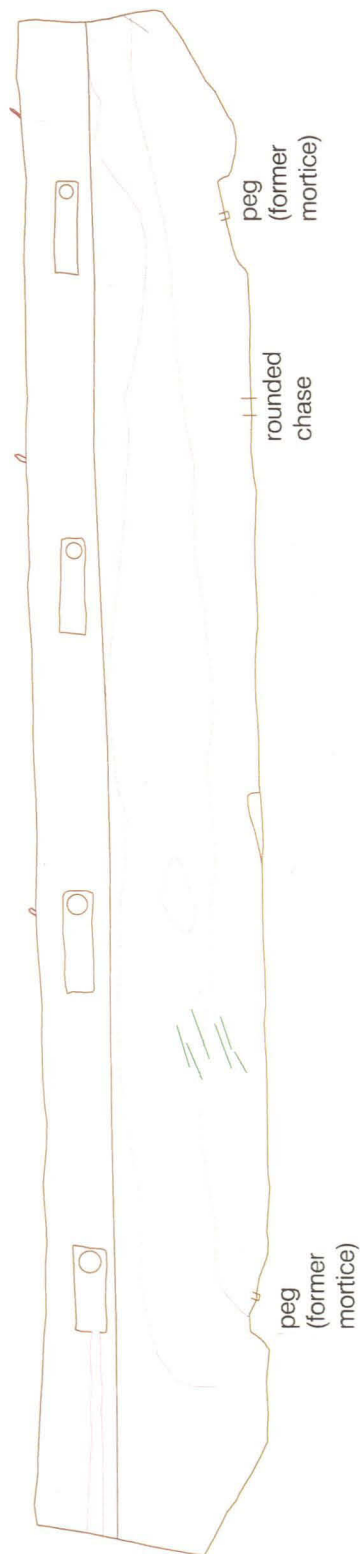
During the reconstruction of the south gable of the east wing, two sections of reused timber were recovered, which had been cut back and incorporated into the brickwork as the lintels for the present first-floor windows. Surviving evidence on the timbers suggests they originally formed the sill and the lintel of a timber-framed window (Figure 6 and 7). The lintel has survived with more of its original features intact. This includes the moulded sill, with an ogee and ovolo moulding, which suggest a 17th century date. Against this moulded edge run a series of alternate mortices and circular holes. There are now four mortices, approximately 0.1m in length and four circular holes, approximately 0.03m in diameter. It is probable there would have been another hole in the damaged area on the right of the lintel, matching that surviving on the left hand side. Peg holes surviving in the edge of the sill, correspond with the two mortices at the corners of the lintel, and suggest that the tenons engaged in these were carefully secured. This series of tenons and circular holes would have originally secured the uprights of the windows. Timber mullions would have been tenoned into the mortices, with additional







timber  
tooling  
void  
iron  
crack



Scale 1:10

Figure 7

Window sill



division of the lights by smaller bars running equidistant between the two mortices, into the circular holes. The location of the mortices associated with the glazing at the outer edge of the lintel indicates that the window would have projected out from the level of the main elevation. The upper surface of the lintel has a far greater level of decay, making it difficult to locate any mortices or associated features which could indicate the form of the framing above the window. However, the relatively good survival of the outer edge with no indication of mortices suggests that the associated timbers did not follow the projecting line of the window, but were secured further back, in an area that is now badly eroded.

The sill of the window had suffered more severely from cutting back when it was adapted for use as the lintel of the later window. The moulding of the outer edge survives in only one area with the rest of the front of the sill cut back. Only part of the moulding can now be distinguished and consists of an ovolo or quarter roll with further decayed sections above (Plate 14). It is possible that the original moulding matched or at least complemented the moulding taken of the lintel (see Figure 6). The two ends have also been truncated severely, although the surviving section of the angled outer edge indicated the sill had the same proportions originally as the lintel. Any features associated with the upright mullions and glazing of the window, located against the outer edge of the timber as with the lintel above, have also therefore been truncated, although the internal cuts of the two corner mortices survive, and half of a round chase along the front of the piece, indicate a pattern of glazing of the same proportions as the lintel. The underside of the sill had better surviving features with four mortices apparent towards the inner side. These are approximately 0.15m in length and spaced approximately 0.35m apart. From the spacing it seems likely that there would have been a further mortice in both of the truncated ends, with six in total to secure the sill. The interior of the mortices was well-preserved, with the scar of the core drill used to create the cuts visible on the right of all four of the surviving mortices.



**Plate 14** Recovered window sill with moulding

#### *Evidence for later alterations*

The removal of the timber lintels revealed further evidence of the earlier window schemes in the brickwork at first-floor level. This phase was identified during the earlier phase of recording from straight joints in the brick elevation (FAS 2003)(see Figure 5). The section through the wall provided by the removal of the lintels revealed the embrasures of the earlier windows had survived intact, with plaster and limewash adhering to the line of the opening (Plate 15). The window to the west retained evidence for earlier embrasures to both sides of the current opening, with the original opening measuring approximately 1.60m across, with a 0.30m brick fill to the left of the window and 0.20m of fill to



**Plate 15** South gable, surviving earlier window embrasure



the right. The window to the east had only one earlier embrasure remaining, but with almost 0.50m of brick fill. This window apparently followed the line of the earlier embrasure on the right hand side, with all the narrowing required to create the current opening inserted on the left. This presumably placed the window in line with that at ground-floor level, creating a more symmetrical appearance. The earlier embrasures were more square than the current window openings.

### 3.4 ROOF STRUCTURE INVESTIGATION

As part of the renovation process, the roof thatch was removed and repairs were carried out to the roof structure beneath. The opportunity was taken to record the surviving sections of the original roof structure, much of which remains *in situ* despite the insertion of modern timber joists in 1967 to carry the roof covering. All of the roof structures were exposed, except for the upper portions of the eastern side of the east wing.

Overall, the structures of the two cross wings survive relatively intact, with the majority of timbers left *in situ*, if decayed, with clear sequences of carpenter's marks visible. The central range had far fewer surviving timbers, although enough remained to make the form of the roof evident. The survival of the wall plates at this level, although again badly decayed, meant that in many places where upright members of the roof were missing, the trenching where the rafters engaged with the wall plate survived, and these have also been indicated on the roof plan (Figure 8).

All three sections (the east cross wing, west cross wing and central range) appeared to have the same form of roof structure. This was formed by a series of rafters which rested against the wall plate at their outer edge and against a ridge piece at the apex (replaced in all cases), forming a basic A-frame. Although decay to the wall plate and the timbers has meant that few are now attached, a number of surviving peg holes in both timbers and in the wall plate, suggest the method by which the rafters were secured to the wall plate. As noted above, where the rafters are now missing, the trenching of the timbers in the wall plate is also evident (Plate 16). The wall plates which ran across the gable ends acted as tie beams for the structure, with further strengthening in the inclusion of collars, usually added to every fourth rafter. Pegs survived in a number of places, fixing the tenon and mortice joint of the collar and tie beam.



**Plate 16** Wall plate in central section with the trenching of original rafters

In a standard roof structure, the principal rafters with which the collars were associated, would have been correspondingly larger to reflect their more important structural role. Larger timbers have not been used in this case, with the principal and common rafters of the same proportions. Clasp purlins have been used to brace the structure and help prevent it spreading. The purlins are formed of timbers of a similar proportion to the rafters, with bridle scarf joints originally creating a continuous line, although not all of these timbers remain. An additional row of purlins survives below the main row in the southern section of the west wing. It is not



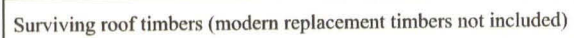


Figure 8

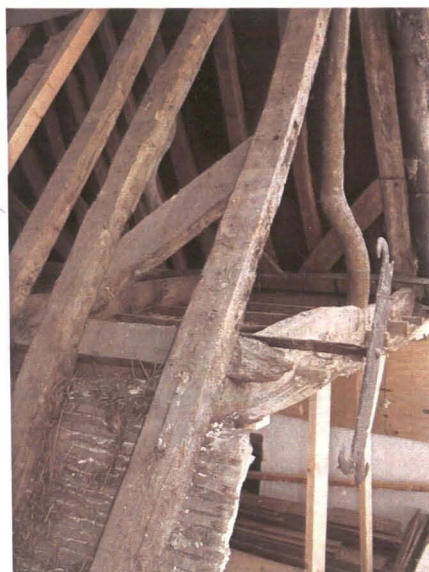
clear whether this feature originally appeared elsewhere in the building, or was included in this area for a specific structural reason. Both the cross wings have curved wind braces included at the extreme south end of the range. These run from the clasped purlin and terminate against the final principal rafter, mid-way between the purlin and the ridge piece. The removal of the gable wall at the southern end of the east wing, revealed mortices on the south side of the final principal rafter (Plate 17). This suggests that originally the roof continued to the south of the present gable end, and that the wind brace, the northern section of which survives, originally continued into the rafters to the south terminating at the ridge piece.

#### *Internal features*

The collars in the central and western range have cuts in the underside, intended to house timbers to allow a ceiling to be inserted at this level (FAS 2003, 43). Where the central range joined the east and west wings, in the timber studding which formed the passageways to the central attic room, two hatches were observed in the south walls, which had been plastered over and were not visible from the interior. That to the east had some of the panels of the hatch surviving *in situ* (Plate 18). The framing shows a three panel arrangement with one horizontal panel to the top and two panels below. To the west only the framing survives indicating a slightly different form with the square divided into two panels by a single stud in the centre (Plate 19). The panels were not available for measurement, but appear to have the same proportions and must have provided access to the small space between the wall of the passage and the sloping roof. The purpose of this access is not clear, the space is too small to allow storage, and the hatch appears to be too small to allow physical access, although it seems most likely that they were included to allow repairs to be carried out to the roof structures at the junctions of the central range and the cross wings.

#### *Later repairs and alterations*

Several phases of repair were visible in the surviving roof structure. Particularly noticeable was the use of unconverted timber, rough hewn wood sometimes with the bark surviving, in a number of locations (Plate 20). It had been used as a ridge piece in the central range. In the southern section of the west cross wing, shorter lengths of unconverted timber had been pegged to the double row of purlins.



**Plate 17** East wing, empty mortice indicating the continuation of the wind brace to the south



**Plate 18** Eastern hatch with some panels *in situ*



**Plate 19** Western hatch



In some places this seems to have replaced the original, full length, timber, while in others it had been used in addition to the original roof structure, providing additional bracing. To the west side of the east wing, reused timber had been used to brace the base of an original timber. This short section of timber may originally have been from elsewhere in the manor house, since it had the remains of a small section of moulding on the inner face.

Repair was also evident to the southern wall plate in the central range, necessitated by the spreading of the wall at the western end of this range. The movement in the wall appeared to have been so severe that the rafters became detached from the original wall plate, which survived bonded into the wall, with clear indications of the trenching where the timbers used to rest (see Figure 8 to 10). As a remedy an additional wall plate has been inserted inside the original, and fixed to the earlier wall plate with metal ties (see Plate 16). The original rafters had then been fixed in the same manner as they were to the original, although with square-headed iron nails rather than timber pegs.



**Plate 20** Unconverted timbers used to brace the ridge piece in the eastern wing

#### *Carpenters' Marks*

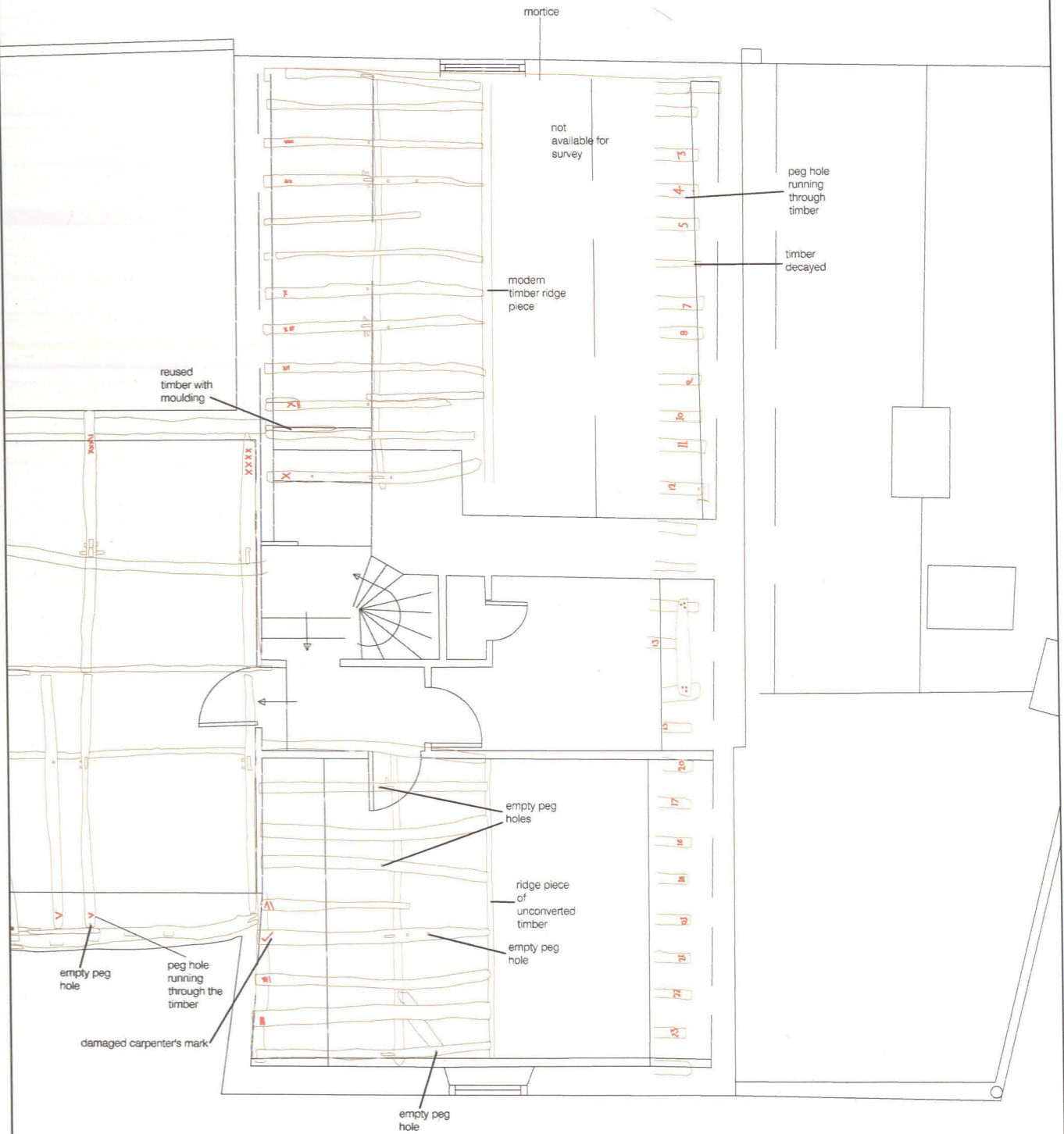
The recording of the roof structure uncovered relatively full sequences of carpenters' marks on the upper surfaces of the roof timbers in the east and west cross wings, as well as some evidence of the sequence in the less intact central range (Figure 9 and 10). It is not unusual to see common rafters marked on the top of the timber, with principal rafters normally labelled to the side. This helped in the forming of the truss, with the construction of the joint between the principal rafters, collar and purlins. At Alford, however, the trusses were also marked at the top, reflecting the form of the roof, with no distinction in size and proportion between timbers of the common rafters and those acting as trusses (Plate 21). It is notable that both sides of each range had a different numbering system from that corresponding, suggesting a construction technique whereby the rafters on one side were installed independently from those opposite, rather than with the corresponding timber on the other side, and the roof was erected accordingly.



**Plate 21** Common rafters labelled (from right) with a sequence of carpenters' marks

Five separate numbering sequences were identified during the recording of the roof structure. Most of these employed Roman numeral systems, with additional marks to distinguish separate sequences. In the central range, despite the relatively low proportion of original timbers surviving, a standard Roman numeral system appears to have been employed, with the timbers to the south running from I to XX. Only two carpenters' marks are identifiable in the northern section of the central range, XXXVI towards the eastern end and XXXX at the

- timber
- tooling
- ✕ carpenters' marks
- iron
- trenching



Roof structure over the east wing

Scale 1:50



Figure 9





Scale 1:50



Figure 10

extreme eastern end. This suggests that the sequence from the south continued along the north, running west to east this time, with a sequence from XXI to XXXX. Sequences of Roman numerals had also been employed in the western range, with small additional marks to distinguish the western and eastern sections. That to the east used a circle, usually placed over one of the digits to act as an identifier. To the west a semi-circular 'hat' was used, again placed over one of the smaller digits of the number.

The western section of the east range again employed Roman numerals, on this sequence a small fleck is used to distinguish the timbers. The most complete sequence is the eastern side of the east range (where only the base of the timbers was revealed), which shows a clear numbering sequence from 3 to 34, although there appeared to have been some adjustment, with the rafters from 15 to 20 inserted in a confused order. This sequence is also noticeable for the use of Arabic numbers, something which had become relatively common by the 17th century, although Roman numerals were still employed more frequently. At Alford, the sequence had been employed as a distinct numbering system, presumably again to act as a way of distinguishing this section of the roof during construction.

As with the central range, both cross wings appear to have one sequence of carpenters' marks running from south to north and the other from north to south. Interestingly, in both wings all sequences appear to start with the second timber, implying an alteration to the roof structure at both the north and south gable ends (see Plate 21). As in all cases this second timber sits over the wall plate at the gable end, the original first timbers must have projected forward from both the north and south elevations.

#### *Evidence for a dormer window in the central range*

One timber in the southern section of the central range retained evidence of further structural use. Two sets of three empty peg holes survived, and a small section of the rafter cut back on the right side of the top surface approximately half way up. Unfortunately there are no further original timbers surviving to the right of this rafter, to indicate the other side of any additional structure. However, it is possible that this indicates the presence of a dormer window, with any upright posts tenoned into a plate which projected to the right of the surviving timber. The location of this rafter would place the dormer window in the centre of the range.

## 4.0 DISCUSSION

Continuing investigation at Alford Manor House has allowed additions to, and further refinement of, the phasing and analysis provided by earlier work (FAS 2003).

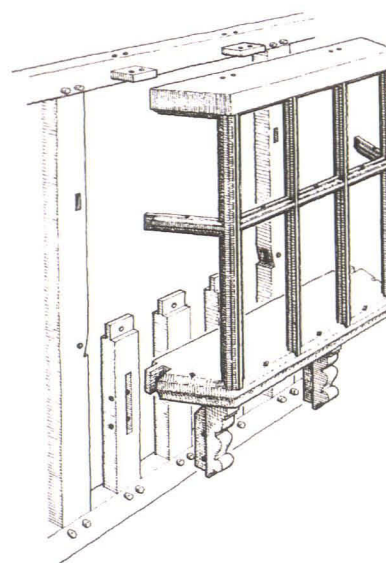
### 4.1 CONSTRUCTION OF THE HOUSE

Much of the additional information gained in this phase of work has elucidated our understanding of the construction of the house c.1611. The below ground investigation to the north of the house revealed the construction cut and the foundations of the house, confirming the use of a brick, the bricks being of the same form as the surviving sections of the original elevations. This confirms the construction of the house in one phase, with the matching form of the brick reflecting the contiguous construction of the foundations and main elevations.



Internally, more of the original wooden framing and the brick elevations of the house were revealed by the removal of layers of accumulated plaster. The details revealed largely confirmed the analysis of the structure provided in the earlier phase of work on the site, which identified the form of the timber structure employed, and the composition of the walls and the original features surviving internally, including the bridging beams exposed in many of the rooms and also several of the fireplaces. The further beams uncovered in this phase of work corresponded to those already observed, where features such as mouldings were identifiable. Their location in the house has also confirmed the proposed function and status of the rooms (FAS 2003).

The recent work uncovered considerable evidence of the original form of the gable ends of the two cross wings, particularly the discovery of the sill and lintel, which showed the form of a window, probably that of the attic storey, as well as the nature of the timber-framing in the area around it (Figure 11). The evidence for the projecting form of the window, with the timber-framing above and below it apparently flush with the main wall elevation, further informed the reconstruction of the gable end. A reconstruction of a similar window form is provided in Plate 22 (Harris 1993, 24). The window is the same shape and follows a similar projecting form, although from the surviving evidence at Alford it is impossible for us to ascertain the glazing form or whether the windows had transoms running horizontally. The mortices surviving in the base of the sill, and the corresponding mortices noted on the upper face of the window plate surviving *in situ* also suggested that close studding was used, at least on the south elevation, which served a decorative, as well as structural, purpose.



**Plate 22** Reconstruction of a projecting window from Harris (1993, 24)

Evidence for the form of the first-floor elevation was also uncovered. The partial lap joints noted on the wall plates suggested that the proportion of the window at attic level (with the two ends 2.50m apart) was matched by a window of similar proportions below. The surviving sections of the window however, were more likely to have come from the attic level, since the sill of the first-floor window would have been located directly above the brick portion of the elevation, and would therefore not have had the mortices for close studding which were identified on the surviving sill. The surviving peg holes next to the lap joints, indicated the location of arch braces running from the post to the wall plate, as survived elsewhere in the building.

The form of the gable ends has also been elucidated by the recording of the roof structure. The evidence from the carpenter's marks and the wind braces, suggested a further rafter was originally included at both the north and south ends, creating a substantial overhanging gable on both the north and south elevations. Given the early 17th century date of the roof, it is likely that, at least to the south, these gable ends would have been hung with barge boards, probably with decoration, although from the surviving evidence any possible form cannot be ascertained.

The roof structures of all three wings of the manor house take the same form of common rafter roof with clasped purlins. The common rafter roof is typical of the early 17th century date of the house, since it was clearly not intended for display as one would expect in an earlier house with an open hall arrangement. The surviving



Conjectural reconstruction of the east wing south gable end

Scale 1:50



Figure 11



evidence of the carpenter's marks gives us an insight into the construction of the roof, with the separate systems of marks on both sides of each wing suggesting that the two sides of the roof were treated separately from each other, rather than construction truss by truss from which the same carpenter's marks for every pair of rafters would be anticipated.

### *Floor Plan*

Some further evidence for the original planned form of the ground floor has also emerged from the watching brief work, particularly in the area of the of the kitchen and its access arrangements (Figure 12). However, the arrangement of the back or east stair still remains problematic. It is possible that the lower part of the stair was actually contained within the outshot rather than within the main body of the house, although without further evidence this remains a tentative suggestion.

## 4.2 LATE 17TH TO EARLY 18TH CENTURY REMODELLING

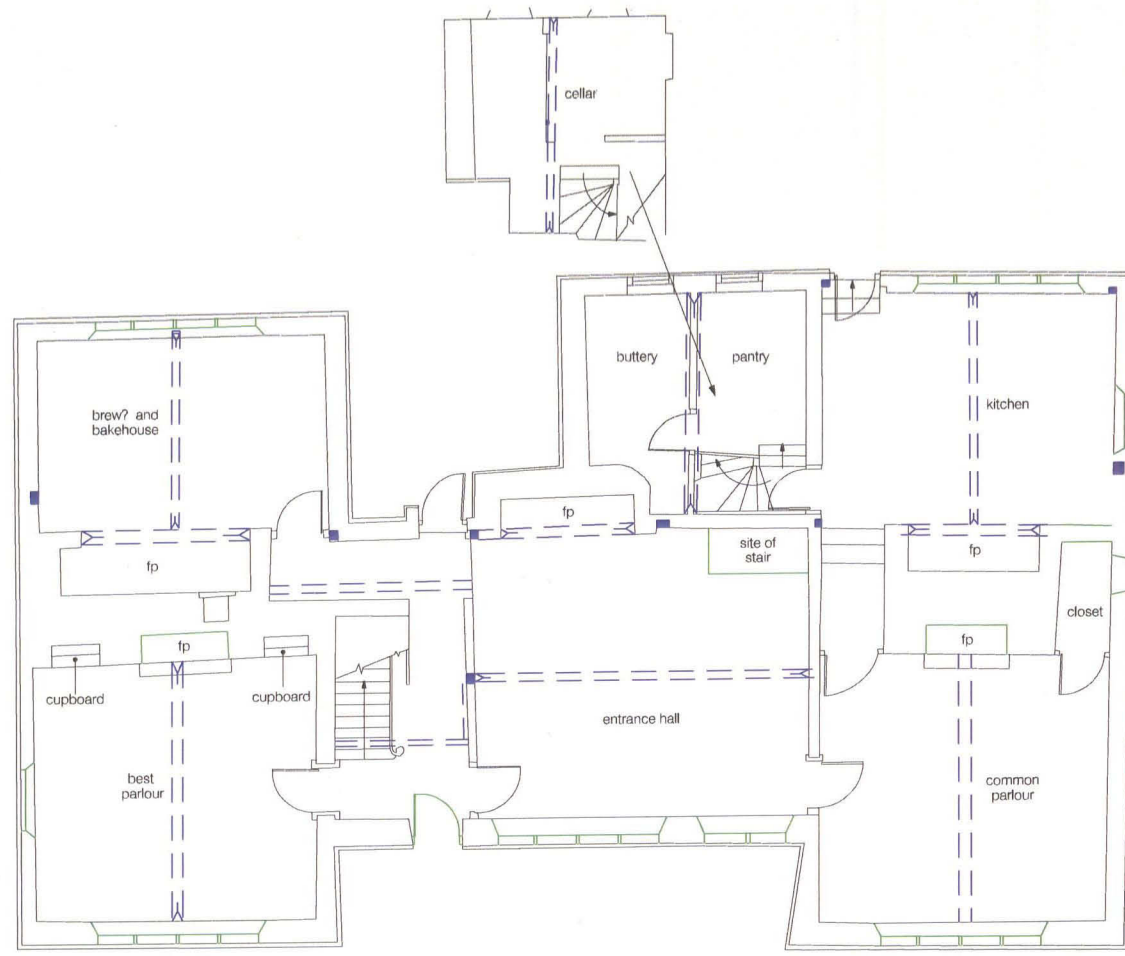
Considerable evidence was uncovered of the substantial remodelling of the house, both externally and internally, which took place in the late 17th or early 18th century. The most significant change was the remodelling of the gable ends of the cross wings, which included the removal of the timber-framed sections in the upper part of the house. The joint between this remodelled facade and the original brick work was identified in the earlier phase of works on the western elevation of the building. Evidence of the form of the building in this late 17th/early 18th century phase was also uncovered during the reconstruction work on the south gable end of the east wing. The window openings of this phase, identified previously from straight joints visible to either side of the narrower later openings, were seen in detail following the removal of the lintels above. The two wider openings which formed the windows at first-floor level during this phase had a slightly different alignment to the two later windows, creating a less symmetrical appearance. The eastern of the two windows was more central in the range than its later replacement.

Internally the decorative schemes employed in the house also seemed to have received considerable attention at this time. The panelling surviving in the closet of room F17 almost certainly dates to this phase and corresponded with that surviving in the room which it served. The fact that carpentry of a high quality was used in a private space may perhaps be taken to indicate that similar woodwork would originally have been found in other areas of the house, particularly the more public rooms.

## 4.3 LATE 18TH CENTURY

It is evident from the internal decoration that repair and improvement continued throughout the late 18th and into the 19th century, however, given the piecemeal nature of the surviving evidence, much of which is difficult to date, it is problematic trying to ascribe the majority of the minor decorative and internal works to any given period. The work of the late 18th century on the house is therefore characterised mainly by the insertion of the sash windows in all of the elevations. Although the majority of these are now later replacements, largely of the early 20th century, the form of the windows suggests that they were originally late 18th century in date. Evidence for this stage of alteration to the building was found within the south elevation of the east wing, where the removal of the gable wall revealed the infill of the earlier wider window openings to create the narrower profiles more characteristic of sash windows. The residual 17th century wooden sill and lintel, which

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Conjectural reconstruction of the original ground floor plan

Scale 1:100



Figure 12





presumably had been used as the lintels for the later 17th century windows were again reused at this stage as the lintels for the 18th century sash windows.

#### 4.4 19TH CENTURY

The doorway and brick floor identified in the excavation to the north of the house represented part of the expansion of the house during the 19th century. At this time offices were added to the east and west of the building, and the main house was subdivided into two dwellings. The additional room created at this point and later subsumed into the modern extension for the toilets, probably represented further storage and/or kitchen space. This is suggested by the access to the room from the earlier kitchen with no apparent external access, as well as the relatively low status brick flooring provided for the room. The creation of additional service space was perhaps the result of the subdivision of the house and the need for a larger service area for the dwelling created in the western half of the building.

### 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH

The recent additional documentary research has refined our understanding of the probable builder of the house as John Hopkinson. Further research on both the Hopkinson and Hamby family would undoubtedly cast more light on the early history of the current house and any predecessor.

#### 5.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND EXCAVATION

Little is currently known of the gardens and layout of the grounds which would have existed with the 17th century house. Earthworks in the current garden to the north suggest that these were formal. Further, there is the potential for an earlier house on the site, perhaps to the west of the current house. Survey and archaeological excavation would add much to our knowledge of these aspects of the site's history.

Within the building, the question of the layout of the lower part of the original eastern stair remains unresolved. Any future work on the interior of the building should take this research question into account.

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