

Orchard Manor Martin Hussiantree – a brief assessment of the northern cross-wing and its context

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The property lies just to the east of the A38 at Martin Hussiantree (NGR SO87873 59923), standing on the first bend in Church Lane (known prior to 1871 as Strand Lane). The house is of irregular plan, constructed in multiple phases and substantially altered. The building appears to have been “gentrified” and substantially enlarged in the 20th Century, and the name “Orchard Manor” no doubt derives from this period. The 17th Century core of the house probably represents much altered remnants of a larger than average timber framed cottage or small yeoman’s house of 1½ stories. To the south there is a (probably) early 18th Century brick wing of 2½ stories, rather awkwardly linked to the original block by a brick built intermediate structure, and it is possible that the south wing was originally an independent range. The southern bay of the original cottage has been partially rebuilt in brick. As no detailed examination of this area was undertaken the development sequence remains uncertain. The next major phase of alteration seems to have been the addition of a timber-framed northern cross-wing. This structure is lightly but very competently framed with the rails neatly notched into the posts. The principal posts are rather undersized and without jowls, they appear to be pit sawn and squared. The lesser posts and rails are of rather slender section (around 3"x6½") and the intervening rectangular panels are fairly large. Dating evidence for this wing is elusive, the framing lacking any clearly distinctive dating features. The wing appears to be present on the earliest available detailed map showing the house (Henry Lakin’s survey for the Tithe Award of 1840, but the accuracy of the plan is slightly dubious (it omits the southern wing which is clearly earlier). The Ordnance Survey of the 1880s does not show the slight projection of the gable ends of the wing, but does show the house extending this far north, so the cartographic evidence seems rather contradictory. On the sole evidence of the historic mapping we cannot be certain when the wing was added (and even the most recent mapping shows the house plan inaccurately without the circular turret to the NE or the apsidal projection to the south).

The Apportionment for the 1840s Tithe Award lists the present holding thus: (the land parcel numbers refer to the plots on the Tithe Map)

Parcel 79 Bedford, George (owner/occupier) House and Garden , area 29 perches

Parcel 80 Bedford, George (owner/occupier) Garden , area 1 rod 19 perches

Parcel 81 Bedford, George (owner/occupier) Parsons Orchard (pasture), area 2 acres 27 perches.

From this information we can trace, with some certainty the subsequent occupiers of the property in the Census:

Strand Lane Martin Hussiantree (1841)

BEDFORD, George 75 Independant means

ALLIES, Susannah 45 Independant means

CALDEN, Martha 40 Female Servant

Strand Lane Martin Hussiantree (1851)

JONES Adam, Head, 44 Wheelwright

JONES Eliza, wife 36

JONES, Jane Daughter 9

JONES, Thomas Son 8

JONES, Susan Daughter 4

JONES, Esther Daughter 9months

Strand Lane Martin Hussiantree (1861)

GRIZZELL, William Head, 24 Master Blacksmith

GRIZZELL, Emma Wife, 26

(neighbouring property listed as two houses used as a school only 9 till 4.)

Church Lane Martin Hussiantree (1871) – note change of road name

GRIZZELL, William Head 34

GRIZZELL, Emma Wife 35

GRIZZELL, William Son 8

GRIZZELL, Martin Son	5
GRIZZELL, Kate Daughter	9mnths
GRIZZELL, Thomas Brother	28
GRIZZELL, Norah BNiece	6

The Grizzell family were still present in 1881, but by 1891 they had been replaced by the family of Edward Jones (49), a carpenter, with his wife Eliza (49) and four children. By 1901 the younger members of the Jones family had mainly left home leaving Edward and Eliza with just their youngest daughter Edith (22). The identities of subsequent occupants have not been researched.

The occupants give some indication of the status of the house – after the death of George Bedford (who was of independent means) they were mainly skilled independant tradesmen who would have lived in relative comfort in comparison with the agricultural labourers who occupied most of the neighbouring properties. The house was quite possibly once more than one dwelling – the intriguing reference (in the census return) to two houses used as a school in 1861 appears to possibly refer to the present building, particularly as the house would seem to be rather large for just Grizzell and his young wife. Further research is needed to clarify this. The building which apparently served as a wheelwrights shop/smithy then carpenter's shop lay in the area of the present "Orchard Cottage", and was marked as smithy on the 1880s Ordnance Survey.

The listed building description (compiled in the mid 1980s) is as follows: "*C17 with early C18, late C19 and mid C20 alterations....C17 part of 2 bays on north-south axis; single bay wing added during C18 to south east to form L-plan; late C19 T-shaped addition at north gable end formed by a two bay timber framed cross-wing and a small single bay brick wing at the centre of its north side elevation; an apsidal extension projects from the eastern angle of the T-plan..*". This description is a little confusing as it seems to interpret all of the house north of the original 17th C portion as a single late 19th C extension, when it is clear on internal examination that there have been several phases of alteration and extension. Not only are there differences in the fabric of each phase there are clear signs of alteration, most notably at the head of the stairs where the link into the framed "cross-wing" has clearly been cut through the pre-existing framing. Should the northernmost single storey block have been present or intended at the time the framing was built then it is likely that the framing would have been discontinued where it was not going to be visible internally. Certainly the eastern gable end (erroneously described as jettied when it is actually supported by an awkward bracket) has been much altered at ground level, and this work appears actually rather later than 19th Century, as does the circular addition to the NE. These appear to be mid 20th C modifications, the turret apparently being provided to accommodate an internal WC. There is a large apsidal single storey bay windowed 20th C extension on the southern elevation of the south wing (not mentioned on the Listing description).

To the north of the cross wing there is a mid 20th C extension which accommodates the present staircase. Much of the present layout and character of the house appears to date to the mid 20th C, and several pseudo historic features seem to have been added at this period, most notably the impressive "inglenook" fireplace and carved surround in the southern wing. Internally the building is much altered, with evidence that ceilings in the older part of the house have been raised and internal walls removed. The small circular "turret" at the NE corner of the house probably dates to the 1930s-1950s when there was a resurgence of "mock tudor" architecture.

The main element of the present structure that will be affected by the development of the intended garden room is the NW elevation. The framing has been restored in relatively recent times, and some timber replacement has occurred, most notably the sill beam which has been replaced at a level well above ground level, the principal posts having been cut short, probably because of decay. The posts have been cut off at different levels, and the new sill beam is shaped to accommodate the shortfall in length of the intermediate posts. The area beneath the sill beam has been built up in brick. The dating of these repairs is likely to be c1950-1970s. The panel infills are of modern cement render, reportedly on a backing of chickenwire. The panels have been rendered flush with the framing, and some of the apparent regularity of the framing may be seen on close inspection to be actually a paint effect. Several of the joints have been patched with cement, but again the extent of these repairs has been disguised with paint. The collar has a timber patch repair at the foot of the curving queen braces. The box framing has no other visible bracing on this elevation, though there are (rearranged) braces on the opposing gable. All windows on this elevation are of relatively recent date. The windows of the upper floors are mid 20th C softwood side opening casements (with "heritage" style ironmongery) and the ground floor windows are recent good quality oak side opening casements. The framing shows little

sign of distortion, and this is unusual in a building where the lower parts of the posts appear to have been removed due to decay. Many of the pegs are also rather fresh-looking and it may be suspected that the framing has been extensively refurbished.

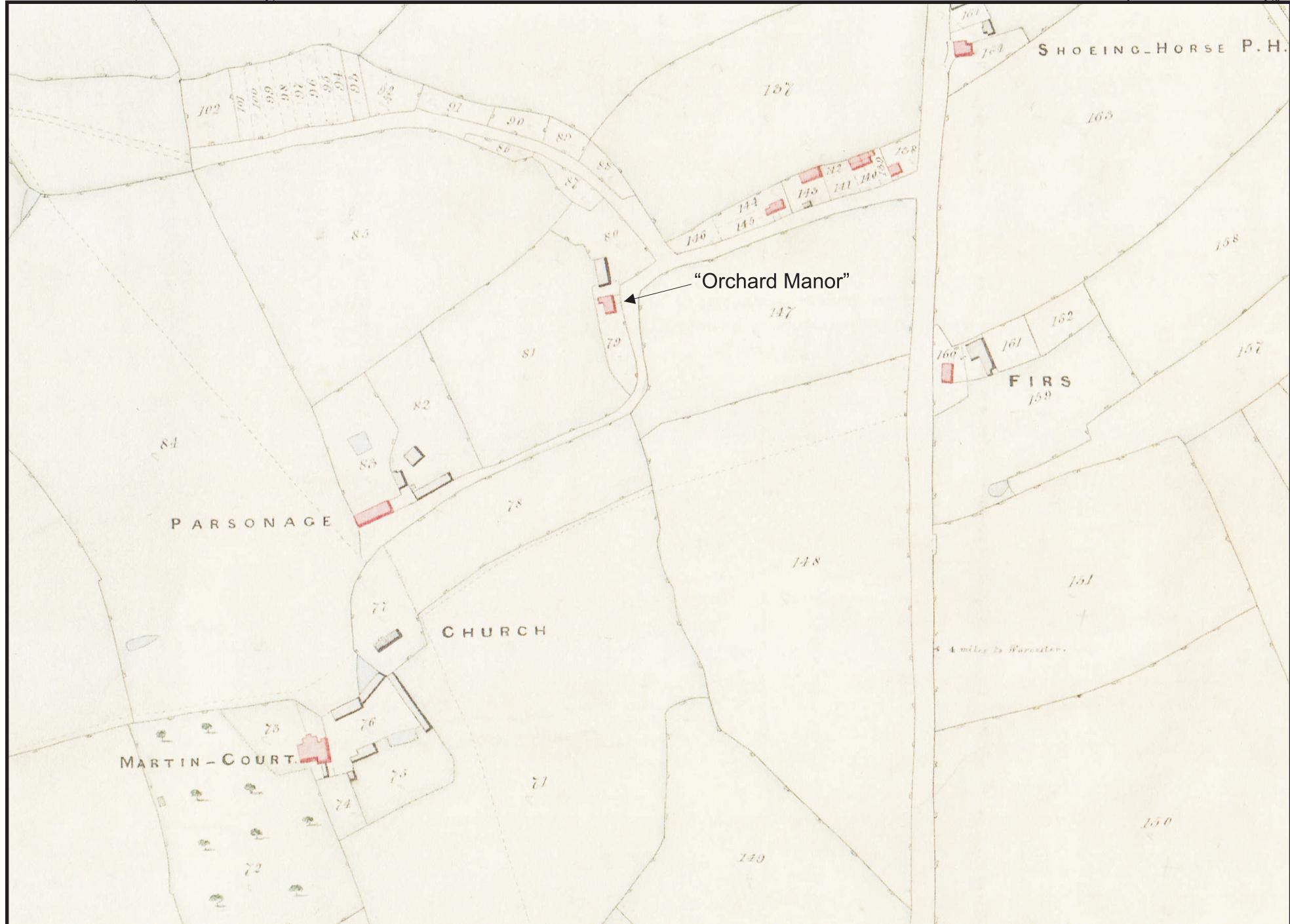
Without detailed intrusive examination of the structure dating of the frame of the NW elevation is dependant mainly on visual appearance, and this is limited in the present case by layers of paint externally and restricted exposure internally. The overall character of the timber framing (very large panels taller than they are wide) and the use of relatively slender timbers suggests a late date for hardwood framing, as does the use of sawn rather than adze trimmed timber. The internal ceiling heights are generous, even within the attic storey, and this suggests a mid 18th C date for the framing at the earliest. It is perhaps significant that the framing has been undertaken with considerable skill, despite its apparent late date – (generally it is found that by the early-mid 18th C the quality of carpentry in oak frames is not as skilled as that of the 17th C, but this may reflect that by the mid 18th C oak framing was generally relegated only to agricultural buildings and there was a greater use of softwood for framing in domestic contexts). Given the documented occupants of the house in the 19th Century were at one time a highly skilled woodworker (a wheelwright) and later (in the 1890s) a carpenter it is not impossible that the wing could have been built (or rebuilt) by either Adam Jones or Edward Jones, as is implied by the Listed Building description. It would however be very unusual for a building of this date would be built in such a traditional form with structural framing except where undertaken for antiquarian reasons. Brick was by this period the cheaper material, and where traditional appearance was required it was more common to use applied “mock framing”. Overall it would seem more likely that the projection marked by Lakin in 1840 is a representation of the present structure. Given the apparent extent of early- mid 20th C repairs and alterations it would only be possible to determine the original form of the cross wing with extensive exposure of the frame.

It is significant that the lower elements of both gable ends have apparently been cut back – presumably because of decay. That the framing has been cut back is clear from the fact that the sill beam on the NW elevation does not continue beneath the corner posts, the intermediate posts terminate at a different level, and also the north western storey post has a scarfed partial repair. It is very unlikely that oak (even poor quality oak) would have deteriorated so fast that such major repairs of substantial posts would be required within a century of construction. As the ground floor elements of the eastern gable end have also been apparently remodelled to form a porch and hallway it must be suspected that there had also been problems with the framing in this area, amounting perhaps to extensive rebuilding. The use of cement render panels has left the building vulnerable to water penetration, as cracking due to differential expansion is inevitable with this type of infill. Whilst flexible sealants have been used on the panel borders these have a very limited service life, and in the interests of long term maintenance and thermal efficiency it would be advisable (in due course when refurbishment is needed) to replace the cement rendered panels with a more flexible and breathable alternative. In the long term the provision of pent-board weatherings may assist in deflecting water from the face of the wall – this is a traditional, and low impact method of preventing water ingress where there is insufficient roof overhang (as is clearly the case on the NW gable end). The lack of any roof projection at the gable ends is almost certainly the result of ill-informed replacement of the roof structure of the north wing in the mid 20th C (internal inspection of the roof of this wing shows it to have machine sawn softwood rafters) – it is general in timber framed buildings to have a roof projection over the eaves and gable ends of 8"-12" minimum to protect the framing and infill panels from the wet. The addition of barge boards adds to the protection. The present roof looks rather modern and bare as it lacks these important functional and traditional details.

The intended scheme will require the removal of the relatively recent (mid-late 20th C) sill beam from the NW gable end, the removal of the modern brick plinth wall and modern fenestration and infill panels. None of these are of historical or architectural significance as they do not even appear to replicate the historic arrangement. The only impact of the proposed scheme on historic fabric would be the further truncation of the already truncated intermediate posts. It may be possible to retain the central intermediate post and scarf on additional timber to restore the post to its original length. This would restore some structural integrity to the truncated original frame, whilst retaining the post as a feature within the intended island unit.

The plan-form of the present house is rather rambling, and the result of a long sequence of alterations and additions. The intended addition of a garden room and utility room will not detract from the rather *ad hoc* collection of previous extensions at the northern end of the house, and does not impinge at all on

the original 17th C structure. The probably mid-late 18th C north cross-wing has been very substantially altered in the past and there are at least three phases of existing extensions in brick adjoining the principal elevations, therefore a sympathetic timber extension to the rear elevation will have very little impact on the visual amenity of the building. There is unlikely to be any substantial impact on below ground archaeology as a result of the intended extension. A well is recorded in this general area on the 1880s Ordnance Survey map, but appears to lie slightly beyond the footprint of the intended new building.



Extract from Tithe Award Map for Martin Hussiantree surveyed by Henry Lakin 1840



North-east elevation



Detail of frame repairs to NW elevation
of cross-wing



General view of western elevation

