



The Riding House, St Giles House, Wimborne St Giles

Building Investigation

Rebecca Lane

Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment



**THE RIDING HOUSE
ST GILES HOUSE
WIMBORNE ST GILES, DORSET
BUILDING INVESTIGATION**

Rebecca Lane

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SUMMARY

The building known as the Riding House is an early 17th century range set on the southern side of the home farm complex associated with St Giles House, the seat of the Earl of Shaftesbury. The report finds that the building was in fact constructed as a stable block in 1616-18. The attribution as a riding house stems from the RCHME Dorset survey but appears to have been a misidentification.

CONTRIBUTORS

The report was prepared by Rebecca Lane, with site investigation by Rebecca Lane and Mike Williams. The photography is by James O. Davies.

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ARCHIVE LOCATION

Historic England Archive, The Engine House, Fire Fly Avenue, Swindon, SN2 2EH

DATE OF SURVEY

The survey was undertaken in October 2014, and the report written in November/December 2014 and revised in light of the dendrochronology and other information in December 2015.

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INTRODUCTION

An assessment of the building known as the Riding House at Wimborne St Giles was undertaken by Investigators Rebecca Lane and Mike Williams from Assessment Team (West) at the request of Francis Kelly, the local Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas. The building known as the Riding House is an early 17th century range set on the southern side of the home farm complex associated with St Giles House, the seat of the Earl of Shaftesbury. It is a grade II* listed building, listed as part of the group of farm buildings associated with the Home Farm (UID 1120130). The building is currently in use for storage and stabling but requires significant investment to address some structural problems. As part of this process new uses are being considered for sections of the building. This report is intended to inform future proposals, by clarifying the early history of the building.

HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

St Giles House sits on the site of the medieval manorial centre for Wimborne St Giles, which by the mid-15th century had become associated with the Ashton family (Cattell and Barson 2003, 8). The earliest elements of the surviving house date from the early 16th century (Cattell and Barson 2003, 9). At this time it is also known to have had an extensive park, indicating that the landscape around the house was already being carefully managed. The earliest elements of the home farm complex probably also date from the early 16th century (RCHME 1975, 97). The RCHME have interpreted three ranges of the current principal courtyard as of early 16th century date. Whilst all three of these ranges have been subject to varying degrees of alteration, the west and north ranges contain jowled posts and other features associated with a 16th century date. The west range is a large 12 and a half bay structure, timber framed above a flint plinth. The timber framing survives in the west elevation of this range, although the east elevation has been rebuilt in brick above plinth level. The north range is similarly framed, although weather-boarded on most elevations. The east range is also of the same date, although more significantly altered in the 19th century. All three were interpreted by the RCHME as barns with significant alterations, particularly to the east and west ranges, to form stables.

In the late 16th century the estate came into the ownership of Sir Henry Ashton, who appears to have managed the estate poorly and run up considerable debts (Flemming 2007, vol I, part I, 39). It passed to his cousin Sir Anthony Ashley in the early years of the 17th century. There appears to be some uncertainty over the exact date and form of this transfer. Hicks (2004) states that he purchased the estate for £1600 in 1600 from his indebted cousin, although other sources suggest that he inherited the estate on the death of Sir Henry and his heirs, either in 1604/5 or 1610 (Flemming 2007, vol I, part I, 39; Cattell and Barson 2003, 10). Notwithstanding the uncertainty over the precise date, Sir Anthony was already a prominent courtier by the time he came to Wimborne St Giles, and had been knighted for his role in the capture of Cadiz in 1596 (Hicks 2004). Sir Anthony appears to have invested heavily to restore the estate, purchasing land sold off under Sir Henry (Flemming 2007, vol I, part I, 39). He also spent heavily on the buildings at Wimborne St Giles, being responsible for improvements to the house, the construction of almshouses in 1624 and investment in the local church.

Although no specific references to the construction of the building have been identified, the building known as the riding house has also been attributed to Sir Anthony (see for example Cattell and Barson 2004, 11). This is largely on stylistic grounds, particularly due to its affinities with the 1624 almshouse range just outside the park. Almost certainly at the same time as the construction of this building the south end of the west barn was also reconstructed, apparently in order to match the new building. This included gable-end features which correspond to those seen on the 'riding house' building.

Sir Anthony's ownership of Wimborne St Giles accompanied a chequered career at court, and he was pensioned off in 1610, in part due to accusations of fraud. He



Figure 1: Estate map of 1659 showing the Home Farm complex towards the bottom (AA050724 © Historic England, photograph: Peter Williams).

sought to regain prominence in the 1620s, initially by courting the favour of the King's favourite George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who visited Wimborne St Giles in 1620 (Flemming 2007, vol I, part II, 45). Subsequently he purchased a baronetcy from James I in 1622, and married Villiers' sister-in-law (Hicks 2004). Sir Anthony died in 1628, his sole heir being a daughter who only outlived him by a few months (Flemming 2007, vol I, part I, 40). The estate then passed to his grandson, Anthony Ashley-Cooper, who was only 8 at the time (ibid.). He was created a ward of court, and the income for the estate siphoned off by his official guardians. Anthony Ashley-Cooper came to prominence in the Civil War, fighting for the Roundheads, and appears therefore to have profited from their success, being able to invest extensively in the house and estate from 1650 onwards (Cattell and Barson 2003, 12).

Anthony Ashley-Cooper's investment in the house and its surrounding parkland is recorded on a series of mid-17th century estate maps. These provide the first documentary evidence for the building, and a *terminus ante quem* for its construction. The first estate map, of 1659, shows the three interconnected ranges of the home farm south courtyard, with, slightly detached, the 'riding house' building (Figure 1). In the centre of the courtyard a further small detached building is shown. This is depicted with two chimneys, and may therefore represent a groom's house



Figure 2:
Estate map of
1672, showing
the transformed
main house
and alterations
to the home
farm complex
(AA050726 ©
Historic England,
photograph: Peter
Williams).

or other staff accommodation. To the north of the courtyard further buildings are shown, including a short range in the position of the surviving (later) farmhouse and a detached range running parallel to the north range of the courtyard. A further detached range is shown west of the remainder of the complex, there is also the suggestion of a short range running from the west range of the south courtyard towards this separate range. A further estate map was commissioned in 1672, the year in which Cooper was made Earl of Shaftesbury, which shows the significant alterations to the main house by that time, and also some changes to the landscape around it (Figure 2). The home farm complex is shown in much the same form as the 1659 map, suggesting there had been no significant alterations, at least in terms of the plan and range of the buildings.

Documentary evidence indicates that the Deere Court, which sits directly to the east of the home farm complex, was planted up with fruit trees between 1675 and 1682, reflecting the Earl's interests in gardening. The description of this planting scheme also indicates that the walling and corner turrets were certainly in place by this date,



Figure 3: 1788 Estate map showing the home farm complex north of the main house (AA050729 © Historic England, photograph: Peter Williams).

and that internal subdivision with walls had also taken place (PRO 30/24/5/293 transcribed in Flemming 2007, Appendix III). There is also reference to a pear tree planted ‘against the barne and by the stable’ (Flemming 2007, App III, 4).

A memorandum of 1669 made by the first Earl to his agent includes instructions for construction ‘at the end of the Oake Barne two stables holding ten horses & a Stable House & Stayre & two Lodging Roomes’ (PRO 30/24/4/183 transcribed in Flemming 2007, App I, 4). This suggests that substantial alterations and improvements to facilities for horses were still being made at this time. The reference to the ‘Oake Barne’ might suggest that this building was to be constructed somewhere near the home farm complex, or possibly reflect the adaptation of one of the barn structures to create further stabling.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries the estate was managed by the successive Earls of Shaftesbury. Their alterations to the house are well documented, and work

to the stables is reflected in the complex interior phasing of the surviving buildings, although the basic layout and form of the home farm complex appears to have been maintained throughout the period. A 1788 estate map (Figure 3) shows the home farm complex with the double courtyard arrangement as was depicted on the 17th century estate maps. The 'riding house' building however, is shown as an L-shape, with a short extension running southwards from its western end. The evidence from the earlier maps and from the building itself indicates that this was not an original arrangement. There is no evidence for a substantial extension or alteration (even one subsequently removed), and it seems likely that this was in fact an independent structure which sat next to, but not structurally connected to, the riding house building.

By the late 19th century some consolidation of the home farm complex had taken place. The 1888 First Edition Ordnance Survey map shows that the range that previously ran parallel to the western side of the complex (shown on both the 17th century and 1788 plans) had been demolished, as had the small building to the south-west of the riding house building (Figure 4). Structures sitting in the centre

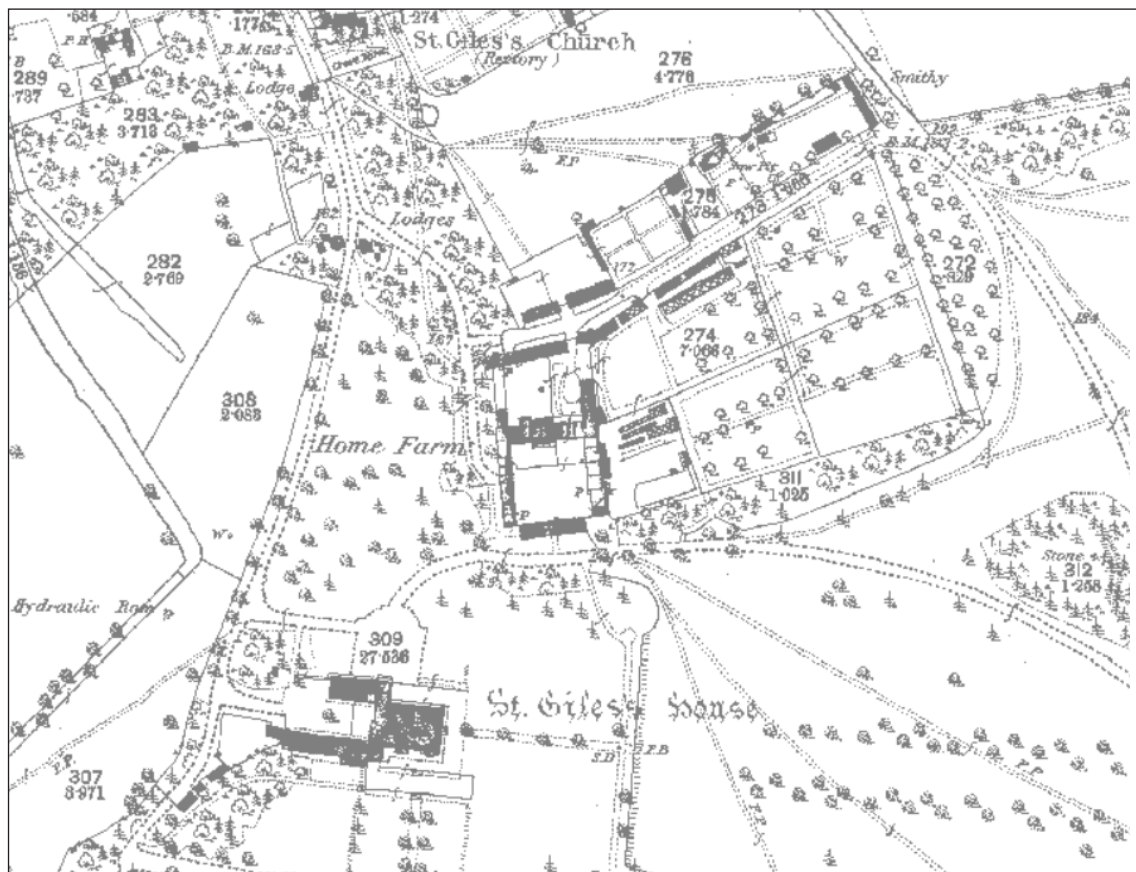


Figure 4: Extract from the 1888 1st edition Ordnance Survey map 1:2500 showing the Home Farm complex.

of the southern courtyard had also been demolished. This map shows the complex much as it survives today, although internal alterations continued into the 20th century.

Extracts from a memorandum made by the 9th Earl in the 1930s make reference to changes to the 'stable yard' in his lifetime:

'In 1886 when my grandfather died the Estate cart horses were stabled in the stable yard and there was a right of way through the yard through which tradesmen's carts and vans were to drive to the village - The cart lines were removed the right of way blocked up and new boxes made for horses all along the western side of the yard where the cart horses used to stand. [...]

'When we first married twenty horses were standing in the stables a stud of horses that we enjoyed for a good many years but when the great war came practically all were commandeered for the army except what I was entitled to myself as general officer commanding a brigade - and after the war with taxation severe and prohibitive we had to cut down to lowest possible requirements some of the stalls being made into kennels for dogs - every member of the family seeking consolation in a pet dog of sorts!' (transcribed in Flemming 2007, App I, 6).

Attribution as a Riding House

The Riding House building was examined by the RCHME in the 1970s for the Dorset inventory volumes (RCHME 1975, 97). The published RCHME volume appears to have been the first to identify it as a riding house, and recorded further that the courtyard to the north was initially used as a manege. It is notable that in the field notes for the preparation of the volume the building is in fact referred to as the 'south stable range' and that the description is written on the assumption this was its original purpose (Historic England Archive: notes on Dorset Volume V Wimborne St Giles). The description also identifies some internal evidence for this – including the interpretation of the surviving post as part of a stable arcade. In pencil adjacent to the title someone has annotated the building as 'Riding House?', and by the time of publication this had clearly become the preferred interpretation. A note inserted into the file relating to this reads 'Mon[ument] 8 south stable range: annotated in pencil by Spencer Corbett (editor of the volume) 'Riding House?' – an identification difficult to understand, but which was perpetuated in print' signed SJC [possibly Stephen Croad?] 23.8.88. The process of this attribution indicates that there was no suggestion of this interpretation prior to the RCHME survey, and furthermore, that this interpretation was not supported by the evidence from the building.

It is clear that the documentary evidence also does not support this interpretation. Although there has been no in-depth study of the available documents, no prominent references to a riding house have been identified. The identification of the courtyard as a manege moreover is contradicted by the map evidence which indicates that in the 17th century there was at least one structure, probably some form of domestic accommodation, placed in the centre of the courtyard.

BUILDING ANALYSIS

The following analysis describes the principal features assigned to each phase of the building's development. It is clear that after construction the building has been subject to a series of phases of alteration. The extent to which these can be reconciled into definite phases is limited, as many alterations would have been piecemeal. The phasing below should be treated with caution therefore, as although the form of the alterations can be identified and some dating ascribed on a stylistic basis there is very little evidence of the precise sequence in which the alterations were made.

Phase One – 1616-18

This represents the principal phase of construction of the extant building. On the basis of stylistic and documentary information this has been ascribed to the early 17th century. This date is confirmed by the dendrochronological analysis which produced a consistent felling date from the principal components of the buildings of AD1616, with construction suggested to be within a year or two of that date (Bridge forthcoming). As constructed it comprised a nine-bay, two-storey building of brick with stone dressings. The principal entrance was on the south elevation of the building, which also represents the main façade (Figure 5). This elevation is dominated by the four wide bays with gables rising above them, which alternate with 5 shorter bays with eaves. At ground-floor level the building has a series of four four-light mullion windows, each sitting directly under one of the gables. The lights have elliptical heads, with ovolo mouldings to the mullions and jambs. A continuous stone string course runs across the elevation acting as a hood mould to each of the ground-floor windows. This is not at the same height as the internal floor, but appears to have been placed lower to give the elevation a more regular appearance. There is also a brick plinth running along the building with an ogee-moulded capping.

The extant doorcase appears original, but has been relocated (Figure 6). Originally it appears to have sat further west, in the third bay from the west, where there are two vertical rows of queen closers visible, with corresponding joints in the brickwork of matching proportions to the doorcase and its overlight (Figure 7). The form of the door case shows a classical influence in the building with a simple chamfer profile to the jambs and the elliptically-arched head, and a projecting console keystone which rises to the hood mould. The hood mould itself runs around the outer edge of the stone head of the doorcase. It has projecting label stops which have been struck back, but which appear originally to have formed a small lip in the same profile as the main hood. Above the hood mould there is a small stone overlight with an oval window set in a sunk stone panel. Above the stringcourse the first floor of the elevation appears originally to have been largely without features. Of the four square-headed windows currently visible the central two may be original. The easternmost window at this level is certainly an insertion (see discussion of the interior below). The upper floor was therefore principally lit by the small oval windows in the four gables, which take the same form as that over the principal entrance. These would have provided only limited light – which may indicate that the first floor of the building was not heavily used. Each gable is supported on ogee-curved stone kneelers, with stone capping, and with three obelisk finials at the



Figure 5: South elevation (DP166137 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 6: Relocated doorway on the south elevation (DP136166 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

shoulders and the apex of the gables.

The west elevation of the building has smaller, two-light versions of the larger windows on the south elevation (Figure 8). There are two windows at high level on the ground floor, with two further openings at first-floor level. Although the lights are now blocked with brick at ground floor level they may have originally lit a ground floor room at this end (see discussion of the north elevation below). The upper windows still light a small chamber at first-floor level; although this has been heavily modified (see below) it probably represents a similar arrangement to the original.

Below the inner edge of both first-floor window sills there are rows of queen closers which run from three courses below the sill down to the stringcourse. Elsewhere in the building these are typically associated with original window or doorway



Figure 7: Original position of the south doorway, as indicated by disruption in brickwork and queen closers to the west (DP166174 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

openings, although not all original openings employ them. It is difficult to establish what, if any, feature the two rows here may relate to. Although large cracks run down the elevation just inside of the two rows, these appear to relate to structural issues associated with the insertion of a fireplace against this wall (see below) rather than to any earlier feature. The two extant rows of queen closers also sit a considerable distance apart, making it unlikely they relate to a single feature, unless it was very large. The fact that they span the floor level (which runs above the stringcourse position on this elevation) makes it unlikely they relate to a feature which ran through to the interior (a window or doorway). It is possible that they may relate to a feature or features that were only visible externally, a pair of sunken panels for example, but there is no evidence to support such a theory. Moreover, notwithstanding the structural cracks, a significant proportion of the brickwork between the two rows appears original. It is impossible to rule out the possibility



Figure 8: West elevation (DP166171 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

Figure 9: detail of the west doorway, showing poor alignment of the stones of the doorhead with the jambs (DP166171 crop © Historic England, photograph James O. Davies).



that there was some form of feature at the centre of this elevation, but on balance the current evidence appears to suggest that there was no significant original opening here. The use of queen closers may instead relate to the window openings above, in keeping with the somewhat inconsistent application of such a feature in other parts of the building.

Above the first-floor window openings an area of blocking sits equidistant between the lintels of the two windows (see Figure 8). This presents a much more clearly defined original opening, probably blocked when the chimney was inserted. The original form of this is not clear, but its proportions appear similar to the extant windows to either side. Sitting at a slightly higher level than the windows to either side it may have lit the upper area of the first floor, which was perhaps partitioned from that below (see internal description). The gable end of the building has shaped kneelers, obelisk finials at the bases of the gable and a moulded stone capping. It was probably originally finished with a further obelisk finial, as is still the case at the east end of the building, the current chimney being a later insertion.

The doorcase now sitting in the centre of the west elevation is similar to that on the south elevation and may represent an original feature. It has similar detailing as that to the south elevation, particularly in the plain chamfered jambs and head, the projecting key stone, and the hood mould. One distinctive difference is the survival



Figure 10: East elevation (DP166144 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 11: North elevation (DP166142 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

of moulded decoration on the front of the keystone, which may have eroded from the same feature on the south elevation doorway. The poor fit of some of the stonework however suggests that it has been altered, particularly in the way the stones of the door head sit slightly inwards from those of the jamb (Figure 9). The hood moulding also appears poorly jointed, and the camber of the doorway head is much steeper than that to the south elevation. Visible around the upper sections of the doorway are brick infill sections which suggest that the current door position may in fact be inserted into an original opening, possibly a window. However, if this is the case then the opening was wider, and lower, than the surviving windows of this elevation. The precise form and function of this opening, and its relationship to the doorcase remains uncertain.

The east elevation matches that to the west in its detailing, including the mid-level stone stringcourse for example (Figure 10). Its features differ in some significant ways however. There are two areas of brick infill indicating the position of two original high-level ground-floor window openings. The proportions of these infill areas match those on the west elevation, and it is likely that the windows took the same form. Just south of the centre of the elevation a row of queen closers is visible associated with a large area of patched in brickwork to its south. Although this patching has obscured the form of this opening it is suggested that this may have formed a small doorway at this end of the building. It cannot have been of the same proportions as that on the south elevation however, as its position, partly below the southern of the high-level window openings, would not have allowed for a doorcase of the same height. It may have formed a small side entrance, away from the principal elevations that fronted towards the main house. At first-floor level there are three unglazed ox-eye stone openings. These are original, and indicate that originally the upper storey of the building at this end had a different function than that to the west. The form of the upper gable matches that to the west, with a moulded stone capping, and three obelisk finials.

The north elevation is considerably plainer than that to the south, reflecting its less prominent position facing into the farm courtyard (Figure 11). A brick plinth, with no stone moulding, runs along the base of the elevation and a brick plat band marks the internal first-floor level, which means it sits higher than the moulded stone stringcourse on the other elevations. This feature strongly suggests that, notwithstanding the lower stringcourse on the other elevations, the current floor level is original. This is further confirmed by the position of the only extant original opening on this elevation, the taking in door towards the east of the elevation, which sits directly above the plat band. This feature appears originally to have been matched by a further taking in door towards the centre of the elevation, although this has now been infilled to create a window opening. The remainder of the openings at this level are later insertions.

Immediately below the plat band a series of small infilled openings are visible regularly spaced along the elevation. Internally these are concealed by plaster, but they may represent the position of small vents, which were often provided directly over the top of stalling to help the circulation of air within a stable (as with the inserted, later, examples on the south elevation). Towards the western

Figure 12: Position of original door opening, indicated by rows of queen closers and infill brickwork (DP166142 crop (c) Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



end of the elevation an area of disturbed brickwork is visible at the level of, and partly disturbing, the plat band. This may simply be an area of later repair, but it alternatively may indicate the position of some form of opening at an intermediate level to the two floors. It could tentatively be suggested that this may be the position of a window lighting some form of stair, but further evidence would be required to confirm this.

At ground-floor level all the windows are inserted, and the extant doorways are almost certainly also later insertions, although the extensive plasterwork around the exterior of the doorways makes this difficult to definitively prove at present. Originally therefore, the elevation would have been largely blank at ground-floor level. At the west end of the elevation however, around the westernmost window opening, there are a series of joints with later brick blocking visible in the elevation (Figure 12). These appear to relate to an original doorway opening, which sat in almost the same position as the later window. The presence of the doorway is indicated by a row of queen closers which runs down the eastern side of the later window, extending into the brick plinth below. The corresponding western side of this opening appears to have been removed when the window was inserted. To either side of this original doorway the positions of two window openings are also visible. That to the east is indicated by later brick infilling with a distinctive row of brickwork, formed of bricks placed on-edge, probably indicating the original lintel position. That to the west is less clear, but a row of brick headers at roughly the same level may indicate another lintel position. This evidence may indicate that originally this section of the building formed a separate unit, with an independent access route from the farm yard on the opposite side of the building to the original main entrance. This may have formed a grooms' room or tack room, possibly with access to a first-floor chamber above, as indicated by the first-floor windows at the west elevation of the building.

Internally significant alterations have masked much of the original form of the building, and only a few features remain which may indicate its original form. At ground-floor level the main evidence for the original form of the building comprises a single post, now set within a later partition wall between the eastern stable and the



Figure 13: Stable arcade post surviving in the wall between the east stable and the stair (DP166162 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 14: Detail of the chamfer stop on the post (DP166158 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

stair (Figure 13). The early date of this post is indicated by the form of the moulding visible on its southern face with a decorative chamfer terminating in a scroll and vase stop with a faceted end (Figure 14). There is no corresponding chamfer to the northern side of the post, which indicates that the 'fair' face of this feature fronted south. In both the east and west faces of the post a series of redundant mortices are visible. Those to the west could be closely observed and measured. The largest of the mortices on the western face measures some 0.99m in height and sits at the same height as the chamfer (Figure 15). There is a series of five redundant peg holes in the north and south sides of the post corresponding to this mortice (Figure 16). Although the eastern side could not be closely observed the redundant mortice appears to be of the same proportions (Figure 17). Fixed to the top of the post on the southern side is a short section of moulded timber forming part of a cornice (Figure 18).

These features taken together appear to indicate that the post originally formed part of a longer feature, the position and size of the mortices suggesting that this took the



Figure 15: Detail of the side of the post, showing the infilled mortice measuring 0.99m in height (DP166161 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 16: Detail of the upper section of the mortice showing some of the pegs to either side formerly holding it in place (DP166159 © Historic England, photograph James O. Davies).

form of a timber arcade. Both the position of the chamfer and its decorative stop, and the fragment of cornice, indicate that this feature was designed to face south, towards the original entrance front of the building. This strongly suggests that it was part of a stable arcade, which was a feature of some notable early 17th century examples of the form (see discussion below). Although there is no direct evidence that this feature is original to the building, the form of the chamfer stop corresponds to those visible on the original roof tie beams and thus a contemporary date seems likely.

Sitting north of the post, and possibly tenoned into it at its southern end, is a single stable partition, which again has been used to form part of the wall between the stairway and the east stable (Figure 19). This feature might be assumed to have been repositioned, but its relationship to the post, and the gap at its northern end which would allow for a hay rack or other feeding arrangement, suggests that it may in fact be *in situ*. This feature is relatively undiagnostic in terms of date. It may relate to a phase of alteration prior to the significant changes which turned the building arrangement around (see below), but it is also possible that it is original.



Figure 17: The surviving post as visible from the east stable (DP166185 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 18: Small surviving section of cornice attached to the southern side of the post (DP166160 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 19: Stable partition surviving in wall between east stable and stair, apparently connected to the post at its southern end (© Historic England, photograph: Rebecca Lane).



Figure 20: The original taking-in door in the north elevation (DP166168 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 21: Detail of chamfer stop (DP166178 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 22: Interior of the eastern gable end showing the original high level opening with its timber lintel, and the inserted window opening below (DP166166 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 23: Roof structure looking east (DP166167 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

At first-floor level there have also been significant alterations for the insertion of grooms' accommodation (see below) which has obscured much of the evidence in the western five bays. However, more of the original form of the building is discernable towards the eastern end. The most notable feature is the extant original taking-in door in the northern elevation (Figure 20). Internally this has a splayed brick opening and a chamfered lintel with scroll stops matching those on the principal trusses (Figure 21). In the western gable wall the three ox-eye stone openings are also visible, each with a large timber lintel. These sit neatly with the timbers supporting the external shaped kneelers and are clearly also original features. This is also the case with the upper oval opening in the western gable of the southern elevation, which is visible within a stepped brick surround (Figure 22). Below this, the easternmost of the first-floor level window openings is visible (see Figure 22). There are clear indications of the cutting back of the brickwork for its splayed opening, and there is no timber lintel. This seems likely to be an inserted feature therefore. The evidence for the three further window openings along this elevation at this level is largely concealed with later plaster. However, there are some differences between the central two and the inserted eastern example, as they appear to have timber lintels. This may indicate that these two openings are in fact original, possibly because of a different flooring arrangement in the central section of the building. Any removal of plaster around these features might confirm whether or not they are original.

Three bays of the nine-bay roof structure are fully visible at the eastern end. The



Figure 24: Detail of chamfer stop on tie beam (DP166177 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

other trusses are partly visible via the open area over the ceiled-in western section of the first floor. The roof structure is formed of 8 collar trusses, with queen struts rising to support the principal rafters (Figure 23). The trusses support a staggered butt-purlin roof, although some of the purlins and all of the common rafters appear replaced. Where visible the bases of the tie beams are chamfered with scroll stops to both ends (Figure 24). The remaining five trusses have been subject to more alteration, but appear to have originally taken the same form.

Now part of the area open to the roof, the fourth bay from the west has a spine beam running through the northern half of the bay, spanning the space between the tie beams (Figure 25). This has scroll stops which match those of the original tie beams to either side indicating that it is probably contemporary with them and therefore with the construction of the building. It also has redundant seatings for joists on its north and south faces, indicating that it supported an additional floor which must originally have covered at least this bay. The truss dividing this bay from that to the east has a series of vertical timbers of relatively thin scantling, and poorly finished, lapped between the collar and the apex of the roof (Figure 26). Redundant seatings on the upper side of the tie beam and the lower edge of the collar indicate that a similar arrangement previously existed between the tie beam and collar. Where these timbers survive there is no evidence for any infilling— the timbers have no grooves or stave holes and there is no evidence of daub or plaster on the truss itself. This appears to have formed an open screen arrangement at this upper level therefore. There is no evidence for any flooring on the trusses to the east of this, and



Figure 25: Roof structure looking southeast showing original spine beam (DP166163 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 26: Roof structure looking northwest showing partition timbers above the collar of the central truss (DP166163 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

it may be that this screening is associated with the floored area, perhaps marking its furthest extent east.

To the west any further evidence for flooring is concealed by the inserted grooms' quarters. However, at high level, where the upper part of the trusses are still visible over the inserted ceilings, the central truss of the building appears to have the same residual arrangement of lapped vertical timbers between the collar and roof apex. This may indicate that originally the floored area spanned two bays between the two trusses with vertical timbers. Although the evidence further west was not available for close examination, there are suggestions of at least one further truss with some residual vertical timbers possibly suggesting that originally there were at least two areas of the upper floor of the building which originally had some form of intermediate floor and screen arrangement. The purpose of this arrangement is unclear, but given that the floored area was largely open to either side it probably does not relate to the type of domestic accommodation which has later been inserted.

Despite the extensive later alterations, the evidence from the exterior and interior of the building strongly suggests that it was built as a stable, with stalls ranged against the northern wall of the building, which was largely featureless at ground level. The principal entrance to the building was via a doorway towards the western end of the south elevation, which probably accessed an open passageway which ran along the southern side of the building, lit by the windows in the south elevation. The stalls appear to have been demarcated by a central arcade of which the single



Figure 27: Detail of one of four 18th century windows inserted into the north elevation (DP166142 crop © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

post represents the only definite surviving *in situ* feature. It is possible that there was some form of internal subdivision towards the western end, and that this area formed a tack room or grooms' room. At first-floor level the extant taking-in door, and the evidence for a further door towards the centre of the elevation, indicates that the majority of the upper floor was probably used for storage for hay and other feed. The two window openings at the western end however suggest that this part of the building may have provided some domestic accommodation, perhaps matching a similar arrangement at ground floor level. Access between the two floors may also have been provided at this end.

Phase Two – Late 18th century

One of the principal phases of alteration to the building is the 'turning round' of the internal arrangement – when the original stalling was removed and new stalls inserted against the south wall of the building. A precise date for this alteration is difficult to determine, although a *terminus ante quem* is provided by the earliest phase of stalling which works with this arrangement. This is represented by the short section of stalling in the east stable with acorn finials which appear late 18th or early 19th century in date.

Subsequent alterations make the precise form of the reorganised stables difficult to confirm. The extant north elevation ground-floor window openings all appear to relate to this phase (Figure 27). They are consistent in size and form, and in the use of reused timbers for internal lintels. Where exposed, redundant mortices and other features are visible in these timbers, and they may well be reusing partitions or other features from the original stable. The window frames have subsequently been replaced, but the proportions of the windows are consistent with the late 18th or early 19th century date suggested by the extant early stabling. The westernmost of these windows blocks the original doorway which gave access to the putative grooms' room or tack room at the western end of the building. It may therefore be at this date that the central doorway on the western wall was provided, in order



Figure 28: Detail of extant central doorway on the north elevation, showing blocked earlier doorway to the right of the plastered section (DP166147 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

to provide continued external access to this end of the building. The uncertainties over this feature, however, as discussed in phase one, make this only a tentative suggestion.

The evidence of the creation of doorways in the north elevation in this phase is less clear, as the areas around the surviving openings are largely concealed by later plasterwork both inside and out. One opening which may be ascribed to this phase is a blocked doorway visible immediately west of the extant central door (Figure 28). A single junction that must have formed the western side of this opening is visible in the fabric just beyond the plastered area adjacent to the door. The eastern side to this is concealed. This does not appear to have been an original feature, as there are no queen closers associated with it. It sits directly in line with the relocated principal doorway in the southern elevation. It is suggested therefore that the southern doorway was relocated at the same time, and that these two opposing doorways provided access to some form of central area, perhaps open to part of what is now the western stable. The blocked doorway on the northern side is relatively low and can only have provided access for people rather than horses. There is no evidence to indicate that the relocation of the doorway was directly contemporary with the stables being turned around – but it certainly pre-dates the 19th century alterations (see below) and has been placed in this phase accordingly. It is notable that, with the blocked central doorway, the two extant doorways to either side then create a regular spacing of doorway openings with the windows sitting equidistant between them.



Figure 29: Surviving stalling visible in the east stable, acorn finails marking the end of each bay (DP166187 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

This suggests that in fact the position of both the eastern and western doorways was established in this phase, although the form of the doorways themselves may have been different from that which survives.

The principal external alterations in this phase were clearly to the north of the building. To the south, as well as the relocation of the doorway from the west to the centre of the elevation, the only alteration appears to have been the row of small, high level vents running just above the stringcourse on the south elevation. As with the postulated earlier vents on the north elevation, these would have provided improved ventilation around the stalls. Although there is no direct evidence for the date of these features they are likely to pre-date the larger late 19th century vents below them (see phase four below), and one would anticipate some form of ventilation being inserted with the stalling against the south elevation.

Much of the evidence for the interior layout of the building in this phase has been obscured by later changes. However, the retention of the original post and early (possibly original) stall in the wall between the east stable and the stairwell suggests that, as altered, this marked a ground-floor partition in the rearranged building. These earlier features can only have been retained *in situ* if they did not interfere with the subsequent form and arrangement of the building. The eastern stable therefore cannot have been accessed via the doorway in the centre of the south elevation, and its principal entrance must have been via the courtyard and the eastern doorway in the north elevation, the arrangement that survives today.



Figure 30: Detail of one of the acorn finials in the east stable (DP166183 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

The principal element surviving from this phase is the early stabling in the eastern stable (Figure 29). This comprises four stall partitions with acorn finials at their northern ends (Figure 30). Associated with this is the flooring in this area, which comprises herring bone brick under the stalling, sloping towards a central drain, with stretcher-laid brick in the passageway area to the north. The stalling has been replaced at the eastern end, but probably originally continued to the eastern wall of the building, as the spacing provided would have allowed for two further partitions creating seven stalls in all. The layout of the area west of this is not clear, although the provision of both a central and west doorway in the north elevation could suggest some further subdivision in this area.

At first-floor level any changes belonging to this phase are difficult to identify. It may be that some of the first-floor north elevation windows were inserted at this point, as there are two different sizes of opening. This may suggest some expansion of grooms' accommodation or other more domestic uses.



Figure 31: Detail of the fireplace in the 1st floor western room (DP166170 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

Phase Three – 19th century

The main feature of this phase appears to be the expansion of the grooms' accommodation at first-floor level, the insertion of the central stair and slight relocation of the central doorway in the north elevation that provided access to it. The stair was subdivided from the western stable by an inserted brick wall in rat-trap bond. This blocked both the north and south doorways in this position, and the surviving central doorway in the north elevation must have been inserted at this time.

At first-floor level the creation of these rooms involved the partitioning and ceiling of the majority of the first floor of the building, leaving a much smaller area for the storage of hay at the east end. It may be that there was some accommodation inserted in phase two, but if that is the case this seems to have been largely replaced in these changes as all the partitions appear of the same form. The two smaller windows towards the east of the north elevation at first-floor level may have been new insertions associated with this phase. The expanded quarters provided a series of at least four unheated rooms, with a larger, heated room at the western end,



Figure 32: Detail of 19th century stalls in the western stable area (DP166190 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

possibly a communal space or perhaps a room for a head groom or another senior staff member. The fireplace at the western end of the building appears to date from this phase (Figure 31). The associated chimney is clearly also an insertion, and the building must have been unheated until this date. As well as the extant rooms a further room appears to have existed at the west end of the current open eastern area, where there is an area of plasterwork associated with one of the inserted windows. The partitioning of this has later been removed, possibly to allow for better access to a feed chute, located in the floor within this former room area, or perhaps to allow for the creation of the bathroom (see below). The inserted southern window (or windows) may also relate to this phase.

At ground-floor level 19th century changes are represented internally only, with one section of stabling appearing to survive from this phase. The central section of the western stable has three 19th century stall partitions, two of which have been incorporated into later partition walls (Figure 32). These are plainer than the earlier examples (see phase two), with squared chamfered posts at their northern ends and no finials. Some associated hay racking also appears contemporary with the stalls.



Figure 33: Detail of door surround to east stable door (DP166146 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

A further significant alteration to the building was the work to address structural movement in the south wall, which also appears to date from this phase. A series of 19th century S-ties are visible on the gables of the south elevation (see Figure 5). The movement in this wall may have been caused by the original design of the roof, which did not bond the gables into the roof structure adequately. Severe movement of the south wall appears to have necessitated the insertion of timber and brick supports under the tie-beams at first floor level, presumably in order to prevent the failure of the roof structure (see Figure 22). The corbels supporting the southern ends of the tie-beams of the intermediate floor may also date from this phase and may have been inserted for the same reason. This was obviously not an ideal solution to the problem as the beams were probably originally trenched into the walling which would have helped spread their load. The concentration of the down force from the tie beams into the corbels has clearly contributed to the current failure of some of the ground-floor window lintels where they sit directly underneath the inserted corbels. This further supports the idea that this represents an *ad hoc* arrangement rather than a deliberate original design feature.

Phase Four – Late 19th and early 20th century

Externally this phase may be reflected in the replacement of many of the window frames, and possibly also the doors on the north elevation. It is suggested therefore that the creation of the distinctive framing to the doorways, including the relocated spandrels, may also be associated with this phase (Figures 33 and 34; and see



Figure 34: Detail of door surround to west stable door (DP166148 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

Figure 28). It is clear that the spandrels have not been subject to a huge amount of weathering, and it therefore seems likely that they belong to the latest significant phase of refurbishment in the building's history. The small case, presumably for a clock, which sits over the central frame probably therefore also belongs to this phase. Another notable external feature is the inserted venting along the southern side of the building. This supplemented the earlier, smaller, vents above the stringcourse. Internally these vents are stamped 'Musgrave's Patent, Belfast'.

The majority of the internal stalling appears to date from this phase, with the western stable, which was formerly probably open like that to the east, subdivided (retaining two earlier 19th century stall partitions within the walls) and two pairs of loose boxes provided in two of the three rooms created (Figure 35). A further pair of loose boxes was inserted at the east end of the east stable, although these were not subdivided from the rest of the stabling in this area. The loose boxes are formed of metal framing with horizontal and vertical timbers used to infill the lower part of the framework, and vertical railings used for the upper parts. Other fixtures and fittings, including the brick flooring in the whole of the western stable and the east part of the east stable, also date from this phase. Iron fittings including corner mangers also survive. Associated with this is also the provision of low-level water taps, set within metal lined recesses in the walling. As with the vents these are also stamped with 'Musgrave's Patent' indicating that much of the ironwork, and probably the stalling as well, were probably part of the same phase of refitting. The provision of internal taps also indicates that a piped water supply was also provided for the building in this



Figure 35: Detail of late 19th or early 20th century stabling in the central stable area (DP166188 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).

phase. Possibly contemporary with this therefore is the partitioning of at least one further area of the first floor to provide a bathroom. It may have been the insertion of this feature that led to the removal of the easternmost of the grooms' rooms.

The spandrels

One of the most distinctive features of the building are the three sets of decorative timber spandrels attached to the north elevation of the building within late 19th or early 20th century frames. These are matched with a set around the southernmost doorway on the west barn, and a further set which are currently in store but which previously sat against the archway on the 19th century cottages in the east range (Figures 36 and 37). All five sets are elaborately carved, with carving to the front of the panels only. Each spandrel has a centrally set rosette motif, with fern-leaf fronds extending towards the centre of the arch and downwards towards the post. Two sets (on the east and central doorways of the 'riding house') have animal masks set in the corners of the spandrel with further fronds extending from their mouths. Two sets (on the west barn and east groom's house) have scrolls in their corners and the final set (on the west doorway of the 'riding house') has human faces framed by wings. Four of the five arches have central drop pendants with grotesque faces. Although a suggestion for the date the spandrels were placed on the outside of the building has been put forward, no date for the spandrels themselves has been given. The evidence relating to these is conflicting, and on balance they have not been assigned to a phase within the evolution of the building. There are three possible options for the origins of these features:



Figure 36: Detail of spandrels over the stable doorway on the western range (DP166149 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 37: Former position of spandrels over doorway on the Grooms' House (DP166145 © Historic England, photograph: James O. Davies).



Figure 38: Rear of spandrel currently located inside the lobby of the Grooms' House, showing tenon with peg holes along the long side of the timber (© Historic England, photograph: Rebecca Lane).

1. That they are 17th century and relate to the timber arcade that appears to have been an original feature of the building
2. That they are 17th century but were brought to the site from elsewhere as part of the refurbishment in the late 19th/early 20th century
3. That they are 19th century copies, possibly of something that was known to have existed in relation to the original building

There are a number of pieces of evidence that need to be considered in relation to these options. One is that the two spandrels currently in storage, and therefore available for close inspection, have large redundant tenons along their upper edges, with five corresponding redundant peg holes (Figure 38). The sides of these spandrels show signs of also having had tenons which have been sawn off (Figure 39). The loose drop pendant similarly has a large tenon with two peg holes. These features clearly do not relate to their current positioning within later softwood frames, and strongly suggest that they were created to sit within a large, framed structure. A further consideration is that the spandrels are 0.99m in height, which is the same height as the largest of the redundant mortices in the *in situ* post within the current building. These two pieces of evidence strongly suggest that the



Figure 39: Side of spandrel, showing indications of a sawn off tenon (© Historic England, photograph: Rebecca Lane).

spandrels relate directly to the building, and were not brought in from elsewhere, as the coincidence of the proportions would seem to be too great. The correspondence in the measurements moreover suggests that they were part of the original 17th century arcade within the building.

However, this has to be balanced against the form of the carving on the front of the panels. Although potentially 17th century in form the carving is very thin, with little depth to the sunken areas of the design. The finish moreover is extremely fine, and they do not show much sign of the type of wear and tear one might associate with features that have sat within a working stable for a considerable period of time. There is also no evidence for how they might have been used, or why they might have been retained, in the period between the late 18th century reorganisation of the building and their relocation to the exterior of the building in the late 19th or early 20th century.

The timbers were assessed for their potential for dendrochronological dating, but the timber was found to be too fast grown to have the potential to provide any dating evidence. Without further evidence, either from the building itself or from documentary sources, it is not possible to definitely assign these features to a phase of the building's development.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main conclusion of this report is that the evidence from the building indicates that it was constructed as a stable range sometime in the period 1616-18 or very soon afterwards. Internally, the evidence, principally from the *in situ* post, indicates that there was some form of central timber arcade which would have defined the stalling provided against the north wall of the building. Whether the extant spandrels formed part of this original design is not clear, but if these are not original something very similar in form at least must have been provided.

Such a feature was typical of higher-status stable blocks of the time, although few examples now survive. A published illustration of a design by Inigo Jones shows a similar arrangement, although in a more classical style (Worsley 2004, 82). Two surviving examples are also illustrated in Worsley's book at Whitmore Hall, Staffordshire and at Peover Hall, Cheshire (Worsley 2004, 36-8; Figure 40). That at Whitmore is thought to date from the late 16th century (before 1597) and that at Peover is dated to 1654. These two examples therefore span the period in which the Wimborne St Giles stable block was constructed. More fragmentary evidence for similar arcades has also been identified at Cams Hall, Fareham, Hampshire (although the posts are thought to have come from near-by Titchfield Priory) and at Wherwell Priory, near Andover (Roberts and Grover 1997, 160-1). The latter comprises 13 posts which survive, without their associated arcading but with chamfers and scroll stops (Roberts and Grover 1997, 162). These bear a strong similarity with the surviving post at Wimborne St Giles, although the latter has a more elaborate chamfer-stop form.

The subsequent history of the building is difficult to precisely date, but at some point in the late 18th century the building was turned around, with the stalls placed against the south wall of the building and new windows and doorways created to the north. This may have been done at the same time as the conversion of some of the earlier barns to stabling, in order to provide a larger stable courtyard arrangement. Subsequent changes to the building largely relate to the improvement of facilities for horses and for stable staff, including the insertion of improved ventilation, at least two phases of upgraded stabling and the improvement to grooms' quarters at first-floor level. Part of the interest in the building undoubtedly lies in the extent to which these phases of alteration can be seen and understood, providing an insight into four centuries of stable history.



Figure 40: Stable arcade surviving at Peover Hall, Cheshire (Photograph reproduced courtesy of Angelo Hornack).

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