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Church House Farm, Wellington, Herefordshire : Historic Building Assessment

Rebecca Lane

Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment



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**CHURCH HOUSE FARM
WELLINGTON
HEREFORDSHIRE**

HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT

Rebecca Lane

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SUMMARY

This report presents the results of an investigation of Church House Farm in light of the recently-discovered wall paintings. The building was initially investigated by Duncan James, and his report forms an appendix to this report. His assessment found that the earliest phase of the surviving building is the cross wing which dates from the early to mid-16th century, but that small pieces of evidence indicate that this originally served a medieval hall which previously stood on the site. At some point in the late 16th or early 17th century the cross wing and the earlier hall underwent significant investment which included alterations to the cross wing and the addition of a decorative scheme in both the first-floor and ground-floor rooms of the wing. Subsequently the hall area was altered, probably first in the late 17th century but again in the early 19th century. Much of the earlier form of the cross wing was concealed by later alterations until recently uncovered during renovation work.

CONTRIBUTORS

The report was prepared by Rebecca Lane, with site investigation by Duncan James, Rebecca Lane and Stuart Mee. Additional documentary research was undertaken by Nick Molyneux. Descriptions of the decorative schemes identified in the cross wing are based on analysis by Kathryn Davies and Andrea Kirkham. Photographs are by James O. Davies, unless otherwise indicated in the text.

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Thanks are due to the owners, John Stevenson and Ben Andrews for allowing access to the building. The author is also extremely grateful to Duncan James for sharing his initial research, and his thoughts on site, as well as allowing us to reproduce his initial report on the site as an appendix to this report. All images are copyright of Historic England unless otherwise stated in the text.

ARCHIVE LOCATION

Historic England Archives (former National Monument Record), The Engine House, Fire Fly Avenue, Swindon, SN2 2EH

DATE OF INVESTIGATION

A site visit was undertaken in February 2019. This report was written in April 2019, and updated in light of further information in June 2019.

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INTRODUCTION

An assessment of Church House Farm was undertaken by Architectural Investigator Rebecca Lane at the request of Stuart Mee, Listing Advisor, to inform the current listing assessment of the site. Church House Farm is a grade II listed farmhouse (UID 1179793) which sits to the north of the main street in the village of Wellington, Herefordshire. The farm complex that it formed part of sits east of the church. The farmhouse itself sits on the eastern side of the complex, with its historic farm buildings to the west, now converted into housing and in separate ownership from the house. The Wellington Brook runs to the north of the house forming the northern edge of the holding, and then turns southwards and defines the eastern boundary of the farm complex, immediately east of the farmhouse.

The early history of the farm complex is not known. It appears that in the 16th century the farm may have been in the hands of the order of the Knights Hospitallers. Richard Hollins Murray (1936), in his account of Dinmore Manor states that at the time of the suppression of the order in 1540 Dinmore held 'The Church House (farm), a water mill and Adford's Meadow' in Wellington. It is not clear when, and under what circumstances, this property came into the hands of the Knights Hospitaller. As an order they were founded in the late 12th century, and are particularly associated with the Crusades. On the suppression of the Knights Templar in the early 14th century they received a great deal of property from the other order, although there is no evidence to suggest that their land at Wellington was from that source. The accounts of Dinmore survive in the Hereford Archives, but have not been consulted for this report. It is possible that they may provide more information about the nature of the Hospitaller's holding at Wellington.

Robinson (1888, 325) states in his account of the manor of Wellington that 'The Church House belonged to the Hospitallers of Dynmore, and was granted by Queen Elizabeth to Peter and Edward Grey and their heirs in 1577.' He cites Blount as a source for this statement. Thomas Blount was a late 17th century antiquary who compiled two manuscript volumes of history on Herefordshire. Blount's information appears to stem from a grant recorded in the Patent Rolls (Elizabeth I 19, part vii, 1575-8, m.) of land at 'Wyllington' in Herefordshire. This is part of a huge grant of land to 'the Queen's servant Peter Greye' and his son Edward, which includes parcels of land all over England – mostly from former church holdings – with a particular concentration in Herefordshire, including land in Goodrich, Kentchurch, Bristow and Brampton, as well as a chantry in the graveyard of Hereford Cathedral. The grant states that the land at Wellington was formerly in the ownership of Dinmore. Unfortunately consultation of the original patent role has not identified a specific source for Blount's information. Land at Wyllington is mentioned in the grant to Peter and Edward Greye, but the only detail of the holding is that of a land holding described as 'Burly Lessure in Willyngton formerly property of Dinmore preceptory in tenure of William Herdes and John Haworth alias Sanders' (Molyneux pers com). At present therefore the connection between Church House Farm and the grant to the Greys of the former Hospitaller land remains unproven.

If Church House Farm and other Hospitaller lands in the parish were granted to Peter and Edward Grey, then given the scale of the Queen's grant it is unlikely that they had any direct involvement in Wellington. It is possible that they sold some of these holdings on relatively quickly, as was often the case with large transfers of church lands to new landowners in the period. Alternatively they may have continued to hold the land, although it would almost certainly have continued to be tenanted. It has not been possible to identify any further information regarding the Grey family, although there are some records of a Peter Grey of Segenhoe in Bedfordshire, who died in 1577. His will records one of his sons as Edward and that he was to be gifted land as granted by the Queen (TNA PROB11/59). There is no detail of this land however. No further records relating to Edward Grey have been identified, and the subsequent history of the site is unclear until the 19th century.

By the early 19th century the Croft Castle estate appear to have held extensive land in the parish of Wellington, including many of the houses and farms in the village. It seems that Church House Farm did not form part of their estate however, as a newspaper advertisement of 1832 advertises the sale of six lots of land in Wellington, in the ownership of 'Tamberlain Gwillim, of Sleaford, Lincolnshire' (Worcester Journal 14 June 1832). The main lot was a 'Freehold Estate' comprising Church House Farm, with 300 acres of land and the house and associated farm buildings. No details of the house are provided. It notes that the farm is tenanted by Mr James Haynes on a 14 year lease with 4 years left to run. Other land forming part of the same sale includes a second farm 'St John's Farm' with 38 acres. There is a family of Gwillims or Gwilliams which appear to have been prominent in the area from the early 17th century onwards, including a number of individuals named Tamberlaine or Tamberlane Gwilliam (see for example a 17th century floor slab memorial at Mansell Gamage Church to Margaret the widow of Tamberline Gwilliam from 1675 (RCHME 1934, 144)). At present there is no evidence for when Church House Farm came into the Gwilliam family, but it is possible that they owned it from a relatively early date.

At the time of the Tithe survey (1842), the farm was in the ownership of John Harris, and tenanted by John Meats. Presumably Harris had bought the farm at the time of the sale in 1832. John Harris is still listed as a 'principal landowner' in Wellington in 1858 (Kelly's Directory), although he appears not to have been resident in the parish. Richard Gravenor is listed as farmer at 'Church Farm'. 'Representatives of the late John Harris Esq' are listed in the 1876-7 Littlebury's Directory and Gazetteer of Herefordshire, with Maurice Hart as the farmer at 'Church Farm'.



Figure 1 South elevation of Church House Farm (DP221705)

BUILDING ASSESSMENT

An analysis of the building has been undertaken by Duncan James, and he has produced a short report identifying the main phases of building development (James 2019) which is reproduced as an appendix to this report (see Appendix One). This analysis is subject to revision in the light of on-going works to the building. These works are likely to uncover more information which may alter the phasing suggested. His findings form the basis of the suggested phasing presented here.

The main farmhouse of Church House Farm sits on the eastern edge of the farm complex. It is orientated on a northeast to southwest alignment, with the main front facing slightly east of south. For the purposes of this report however it is presumed to be orientated on a west to east alignment with the main façade facing south. The farmhouse now presents a relatively uniform façade of coursed sandstone, which belies the complexity of its development (Figure 1). The main elements of this are the early cross wing which forms the western portion of the house, and the main range which occupies the centre and east (Figure 2). This can be better appreciated from the rear of the house, where the timber framing of the cross wing is still visible (Figure 3).

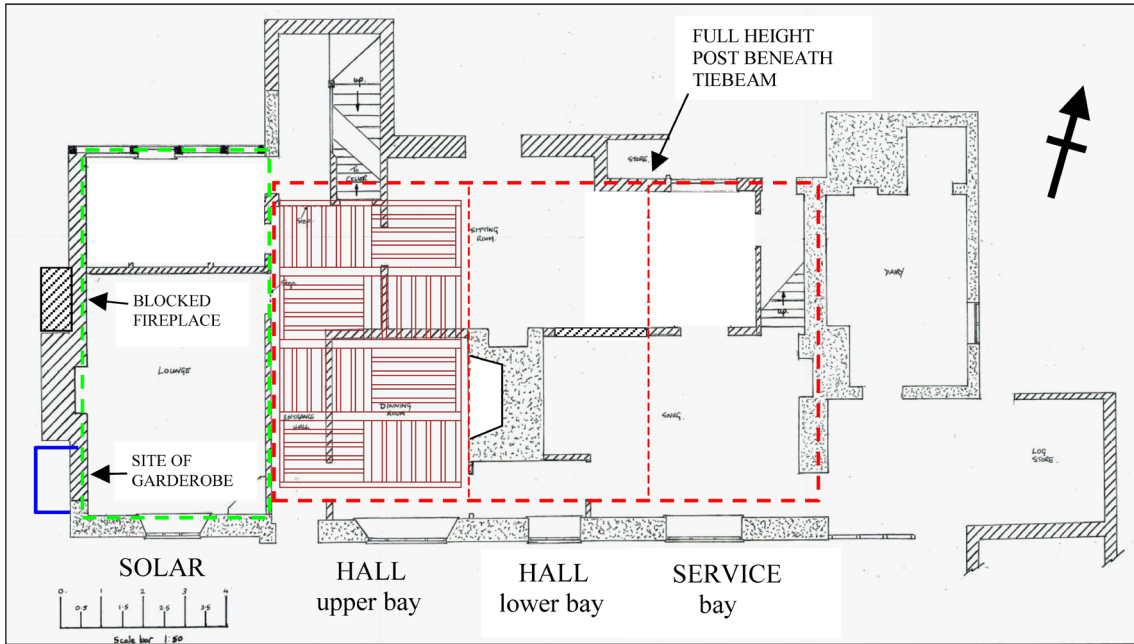


Figure 2 Ground plan of Church House Farm (prior to recent work) with early building sections outlined in green, red and blue. From James 2019 (see Appendix 1)



Figure 3 North elevation of cross wing (DP221702)

Phase One – medieval

The earliest extant fabric in the building relates to the early 16th-century cross wing now forming the western portion of the house. James has postulated however, that this is likely to have been constructed to serve a pre-existing ground-floor open hall, probably medieval in date (James 2019; see Appendix One). The hall would have sat in the same location as what is now the centre of the farmhouse, and on the same east to west axis.

The main evidence for the existence of this hall is in the arrangement of later features, which appear to have been designed to work in conjunction with a single-storey open hall structure. The principal evidence is the counter-change ceiling which now survives in the southern part of the building (see phase three below). This is structurally separate from the cross-wing and appears to have been propped up by timber posts relating to the later main range structure. This arrangement appears to relate to the insertion of the ceiling into a pre-existing structure, which has subsequently been taken down around it, leaving the ceiling in place.

A further corroborating piece of evidence is the presence on the east wall of the cross wing, within the later building, of weathering on part of some timbers. This suggests that when the cross wing was constructed the range to the east of it was lower than the two-storey structure now in place, and of a plausible height (and proportions) for an open-hall range. There is also evidence for a high-end bench arrangement built into the east elevation of the cross-wing where it would have formed the west wall of the open hall (see below). Cumulatively these pieces of evidence appear to confirm the presence of the hall, and to indicate something of its overall proportions.

Phase Two – early 16th century

The earliest extant fabric in the building is that of the early 16th century cross wing which now forms the western portion of the farmhouse. It contains a cellar level built largely of stone, with a two storey timber-framed structure above. As constructed this appears to have provided a single room at both ground- and first-floor level, lit from large windows in the west, north and (probably) south elevation, but with no heating arrangements. The cross wing appears to have been roofed in line with the main axis of the wing, that is north to south, and therefore at right angles to the principal axis of the later farmhouse (and the presumed earlier open hall).

All four walls of the cross wing appear originally to have been built of square-panel timber framing. This is now only visible externally to the rear (north), where the end is exposed with later brick infill to the panels; a short section of the west elevation is also visible (see Figure 3). The box frame of the north elevation comprises corner posts, with a girding rail at the same height as the first floor. The pattern of studs is different at ground- and first-floor level, with the ground floor divided into equal squares by a pattern of three studs with a mid-rail. At first-floor level there are two studs which run the full height of the storey, and a further lower stud centrally placed in the elevation. This variation appears to be to allow for the



Figure 4 Detail of studs in east elevation of cross wing, showing the residual peg holes for a high-end bench arrangement. Photo Stuart Mee

position of a large projecting oriel window in the centre of the bay at first-floor level. This is indicated by the survival of the sill, with the shorter stud below, and mortices visible in the pair of studs to either side, which would have supported the joints for the projecting part of the window. There is no indication of any window or door positions at ground-floor level in this elevation. Within the building the framing of the east and west walls of the cross wing is mostly exposed, and follows the same box-framing pattern as that observed in the north wall. The east elevation is now largely visible within the entrance passage to the main house, the ground-floor room and the first-floor room. This shows that the elevation is formed of five full-height posts which define the bay pattern of the elevation. This is of four full bays with a fifth, narrower bay to the south. It is not clear why there is one narrower bay, and it is tempting to speculate that the wing originally continued slightly further south, projecting out beyond the later south wall line. However the survival of a short corner brace, between the south post and the wall plate matching that at the northern end suggests that this was not the case. Within the bays the pattern of studs is regular in the central two bays, but more irregular in the north and south bays to accommodate the position of two ground-floor doorways. These have both lost their original door heads, but the position and height of the doorhead to the southern doorway is indicated by surviving peg holes in the post and stud to either side. Between the two doorways a series of redundant peg holes situated low down



Figure 5 Central post in west elevation of cross wing showing rebate on its northern side.
Photo Stuart Mee

on each stud indicate the position of a bench, which would have served the high-end of the earlier hall (Figure 4; see phase one above). At first-floor level the pattern of panels largely mirrors that at ground-floor level, including the slightly irregular position of studs in the bays with doorways. However, there is no evidence for original doorways in the east elevation at first-floor level.

The west elevation is now largely obscured externally by the later barn built up against the elevation. Internally however, the remaining framing of the ground-floor is visible, although the infill panels have been removed. Some elements of the first-floor frame are visible although much of this level is obscured by later plasterwork. The pattern of main posts mirrors that of the eastern elevation, five posts defined four large bays and one narrower bay to the south. There have been some later modifications however (see below) which have removed or modified much of the original studwork within the bays, although all of the main posts appear to remain *in situ* and some of the studs as well. At ground-floor level the central post is partly visible and has a large rebate on its northern edge, which stops around 0.5m from the ground (Figure 5). Just below this is a peg on the northern side of the post which indicates some form of rail extending northwards from this post at a relatively low level (ie below the level of the mid-rail visible in other bays). The most likely interpretation of this is pegging for a sill. The original outer face of



Figure 6 Exposed studwork of the west elevation of the cross wing at first-floor level with part of the doorhead for the garderobe visible on the northern side of the stud (DP221684)

the next post to the north of this is partially visible via a cupboard recess set into the wall. This appears to have a series of mortices similar to those observed externally around the window opening on the north elevation (see above). These two pieces of evidence suggest that there was originally a large oriel window spanning the whole of the central bay in the west elevation and lighting the ground-floor room, with

Figure 7 Tie beam of the original roof over the cross wing still in situ. Photo Stuart Mee



the rebate on the southern post suggesting that the window had an internal shutter arrangement.

Another feature partly visible in the west elevation at ground-floor level is a doorhead for a narrow doorway in the central southern bay. This appears to be original, but is of smaller proportions than those which provided access into the wing from the east. Another door of the same proportions is partly visible at first-floor level, directly above the ground-floor example (Figure 6). These smaller doorways probably provided access to a small projecting garderobe tower.

The south elevation of the cross wing is largely plastered internally. Both corner posts appear to survive, and other timber elements probably also survive buried within the later stonework. It is not known whether the elevation had the same box-framing pattern as the other walls. As this was almost certainly the principal façade of the house it is possible that it had close studding or more elaborate framing, as is sometimes seen in surviving examples. If the tie beam at the south end of the roof structure survives then it is possible this would also reveal something of the nature of this framing pattern.

Both of the existing fireplaces at ground-floor level and that at first-floor level are inserted (see below), suggesting that, as originally constructed, both rooms were unheated. The original form of access between the ground- and first-floor rooms in this original phase is also uncertain, but appears to have been from within the rooms rather than via an external stair structure. In the smaller northern room at ground-floor level there is evidence for a possible original stair position. In this

room the joists supporting the first floor are visible, and run across the bay from the northern wall and are jointed into the cross beam above the later cross wall. Towards the eastern side of the room, adjacent to a later cupboard, there is a short trimmer beam extending eastwards from one of the joists, approximately half way through the bay. This has empty peg holes in its bottom edge, and the adjacent joist has a series of empty peg holes running from the cross beam up to, but not further than, the trimmer beam, suggesting some form of partitioning below these two beams. Although later joists have infilled the space defined by these two timbers, there is no original mortice in the cross beam to receive the joists immediately east of the trimmer beam, indicating an original gap in the joisting associated with the trimmer. This suggests some form of opening in the floor, probably for a stair position, although the form and orientation of the stair are not clear.

At roof level, much of the original structure has been removed. It appears that the tie beams survive *in situ* however (Figure 7). The joists supporting the ceiling at first-floor level appear to be integral to the tie beams, suggesting that as constructed the first-floor room was ceiled rather than open to the roof. There is also a fragment of surviving flooring, formed of mortar mixed with small stones, and laid on laths. This may be original to the wing, allowing at least part of the roof space to be used for accommodation or storage. Further investigation of the surviving elements of the roof structure may well reveal more detail of this arrangement, and the original form of the roof.

Phase Three – late 16th century

Within a relatively short period after the construction of the cross wing a series of modifications were made which appear to have been intended to upgrade the accommodation available. This included the construction of a chimney and fireplace to heat the ground floor room, the construction of a cross wall on both levels to divide off the northern bay of the wing, and the painting of the decorative scheme in the first-floor chamber. As well as the changes to the cross wing the insertion of the counter-change ceiling into the former open hall also appears to have taken place at around this time. The stylistic and stratigraphic evidence suggests that all these modifications were made in the late 16th, or possibly early 17th, century. It is possible that all four are not directly contemporary, but took place over a few years or decades, but given their relatively narrow date range they have been phased together.

Construction of the chimney and ground-floor fireplace in the cross-wing

Possibly the first of these alterations was the insertion of the ground-floor fireplace into the northern central bay of the west elevation (Figure 8). This replaced the oriel window which had previously been in this location. The fireplace stack is formed of stone, and projects beyond the timber framing of the wing externally, although much of this is now concealed by the later barn structure built against this elevation. Internally the stack is largely flush with the earlier timber-framed wall. The fireplace jambs are formed of rubble stone, and the lintel is of wood, and apparently undecorated, although it is possible that it has been cut back or



Figure 8 Inserted fireplace in the west elevation of the cross wing, with later blocking. Photo Stuart Mee

that some form of fire surround was originally fixed to the front of the opening. The abutting of the later barn means that the chimney stack cannot clearly be seen externally and this, combined with the remaining plaster in the upper room, means that it is unclear whether the insertion of this fireplace was matched with the construction of one at first-floor level as well. It is possible that this uncertainty will be resolved if more internal plasterwork is removed from the first-floor western elevation.

There is some suggestion that the positioning of the fireplace, in the bay immediately adjacent to the cross wall, means that it pre-dates the construction of the cross wall, as that would be more logical in terms of being centrally located in the larger room. In the construction of the cross-wall, moreover, the western post butts up against the stonework of the inserted chimney rather than being jointed into or placed against the earlier stud wall, suggesting that the chimney was already in place when the wall was constructed. Alternatively it could be that the two were constructed at the same time, but the fireplace certainly is not later than the cross wall.



Figure 9 Doorway in the inserted cross wall between the northern and southern rooms at first-floor level (DP221674)

Construction of the cross-wall

Perhaps the most significant phase of alteration to the cross wing saw the subdivision of both the ground and first floors of the wing to form larger southern rooms and smaller northern rooms, by the insertion of a timber-framed cross wall dividing the northernmost bay from the remaining three bays.

Both of the inserted frames are formed of four posts with mid-rails. The westernmost posts at both ground- and first-floor level are not jointed into the adjacent west wall post, indicating that the cross walls are later insertions. At ground-floor level, as noted above, this may relate to the structure of the chimney stack which had been inserted into the central bay of the west elevation either at the same time as, or earlier than, the construction of the cross wall. At first-floor level the jowled top of the west elevation post appears to have necessitated the western post of the cross wall being set inwards.

At ground-floor level the position of a doorway between the northern and southern rooms is indicated by the peg holes for a doorhead in the central western bay. At first-floor level the doorhead of the original doorway survives in the central eastern bay (Figure 9). This is of a similar four-centred form as that of the original doorheads to the garderobe suggesting that the cross wall was inserted not long after the original construction of the wing. The first-floor doorway is also located



Figure 10 Main room in the first floor of the cross wing, showing exposed parts of decorative scheme (DP221673)

where the putative original stair position would have brought people out at first-floor level, perhaps further confirming that this was a stair and possibly that it remained in use during this phase, although replaced later (see below).

Decorative scheme to the first-floor chamber

A *terminus ante quem* for the insertion of the cross wall is provided by the surviving decorative painted scheme which has recently been uncovered in the first-floor room. This appears to have covered all the wall surfaces in the room, and comprises a series of figurative scenes and various ‘antiquework’ motifs set within a framework of architectural features. The painted scheme covers both the wattle and daub panels and the surrounding timber frame (Figure 10). In places, perhaps where a gap had formed between adjacent timbers, small fragments of canvas or strong cloth appear to have been used to bridge the gap and provide a surface for painting (Figure 11). Some of these survive, and others have been lost, leaving small gaps in the painted scheme. The motifs and the overall paint scheme are typical of the work of the late 16th century (Davies 2018).

The east elevation of the room appears at present to have the best survival with most of the wattle and daub infill panels surviving as well as the decoration on the majority of the posts, studs and rails (Figure 12). It also seems likely to have been the main focal point of the decorative scheme. The elevation appears to have been divided into seven panels of varying sizes, symmetrically arranged with a large central panel. The panels are divided by columns with decorative heads reminiscent of Corinthian capitals. The central panel is occupied by a large figurative scene,



Figure 11 Detail of junction in timber frame, showing detail of small patch of cloth used to cover the joint on the left-hand side (DP221695)

largely created from simple black lines on the pale background of the plasterwork (Figure 13). This has two large winged cherubs, who are holding what appear to be stems of flowers, possibly roses, in one hand and with the other supporting a large, centrally placed fleur-de-lys which they appear to be about to place on a central candelabrum. Flanking the candelabrum is a pair of winged grotesque creatures. To either side of this central panel appear to have been a pair of narrower panels with a geometric interlaced pattern, although the left-hand panel appears only as a slight shadowing on the plasterwork due to some later over painting. The right hand panel however survives in a slightly better state and comprises a pattern of intersecting circles and squares set on a pale green background. Many of the lines finish in shapes suggestive of foliage.

Further to the north of the northern geometric panel a surviving panel comprises a further central candelabrum supporting a vase with various fruits and leaves emerging, this is flanked by two winged creatures (Figure 14). The detail of the head of only one of these survives, and it has a protruding tongue, and, sitting above its head is a pot which it appears to be supporting. This is largely formed again of simple black lines, although with a dark red background. This was presumably mirrored on the southern side as the arrangement appears to have been largely symmetrical, but the corresponding panel towards the south is missing. Finally the southernmost surviving panel is a further narrow panel with the same geometric patterning as flanks the central panel, again with a green background (Figure 15). Again this was presumably mirrored at the northern end, although the northernmost panel has been destroyed by a later inserted doorway.



Figure 12 East elevation of cross wing showing the centre of the decorative scheme (DP221697)



Figure 13 Detail of the central panel of the decorative scheme (DP221690)



Figure 14 Detail of east elevation, northernmost surviving panel (DP221688)

The pattern of columns dividing the main bays of the decorative scheme rises as far as a large frieze which runs along the length of the east elevation. This has strapwork cartouches running along it, in various degrees of survival, alternating smaller panels with longer ones. The longer panels appear to have originally borne religious text. One to the south survives intact and states simply 'Love God' (see Figure 15). None of the rest are legible, although a partial inscription is visible towards the centre beginning 'Sarv...' (see Figure 13). The cartouches are of a bare plaster colour, with shadowing picked out in grey and some pale green colouring. The background to the frieze is a pale orange colour. At the base of the wall is a decorative skirted pattern formed of geometric shapes, although only fragments of this survive.

On the northern and western walls only small sections of the paint scheme have been uncovered, largely sections on timberwork. This is sufficient to show that both the doorway to the smaller northern room, and that to the garderobe are decorated, with columns similar to those on the eastern elevation flanking the door and the four-centred arch heads decorated with a foliate pattern. The remainder of exposed sections appear to echo similar arrangements to that on the eastern elevation, including some suggestion that the same frieze ran along the western elevation and to the north as well. A similar colouring is also visible, with the dark red



Figure 15 Detail of east elevation, southern panel (DP221693)

background the dominant colour, but also traces of pale green, and the pale orange colour used for the frieze. Nothing of the south elevation is currently exposed, but it is more than likely that the scheme covered the whole room. The significance of the wall paintings is discussed further in the conclusion to this report.

Decorative scheme at ground-floor level

There is evidence for a further decorative scheme in the ground-floor cross wing room, although it is not clear if this is directly contemporary with that surviving at first-floor level. The scheme is very different – what has been termed a ‘plain scheme’ (Kirkham 2010). This principally appears to have comprised the painting of the timber studs in the room with a dark red paint, interposed with white paint used on the infill panels, creating a striped pattern running around the room. The principal evidence for this scheme are the fragments of red paint surviving on the exposed timber studs of the west wall (Figure 16). Further evidence was identified during the repair of the south wall, when the jamb of the original south window was briefly visible through the later lath and plaster covering. A small section of a red band with a white panel was partially visible (Figure 17). The east elevation is covered by a later lath and plaster wall, but targeted exploration using a drill and an endoscope suggest that the scheme survives intact on the original wall surface



Figure 16 Detail of stud in west elevation of cross wing showing surviving fragments of dark red paint. Photo Stuart Mee

behind, including both red timbers and white infill panels. Sometimes the top or base of these schemes could include more decorative flourishes, but not enough of the walling on this side has been exposed to determine whether this was the case in this scheme.

One further very small fragment of decoration in the ground-floor room might also tentatively be associated with a late 16th or early 17th century decorative scheme for the room. This is the very small section of ceiling plaster which is visible against the western elevation, where the later plasterwork covering the elevation has been removed and there is a small gap between the later ceiling and the timber-framed wall (Figure 18). A small section of plaster is visible running up to the timber-framed wall, suggesting that it dates from a period when the timber frame of the wall was still exposed, which suggests that it is relatively early. It also has fragments of the same dark red paint as the timbers towards its edges, suggesting the two were in place and visible at the same time. It is too small to accurately date on stylistic grounds, but it has a decorative edge formed of incised lines, and there is some suggestion that this decoration returns where it meets the south-western post of the south elevation. This is evocative of the panelled plaster ceilings of the late 16th or early 17th century, and it may be contemporary with the painted scheme on the walls of the room.

Figure 17 Detail of paintwork exposed during restoration of the south wall. Photo John Stevenson.



Figure 18 Detail of surviving section of decorative plaster ceiling. Photo Stuart Mee





Figure 19 Counter change ceiling inserted into the original hall, and retained in subsequent rebuildings of the range (DP221699)

Insertion of the counter-change ceiling into the former open hall

Another major phase of modification to the building was the construction of the counter-change ceiling which now sits to the east of the cross wing (Figure 19). It is presumed that this was inserted into the earlier open hall, and retained when that hall was demolished at a later stage (James 2019; see Appendix One). The ceiling abuts the cross wing, but does not appear to be contemporary, because, as James has noted, it is not in any way structurally attached to the cross wing. Counter-change ceilings are known from the late 16th and early 17th century, and given this it seems likely that the insertion of the floor was part of the significant upgrading of the building in the late 16th century.

As surviving, the counter-change ceiling is formed of four narrow bays defined by cross beams running north to south, with each bay subdivided into two, forming eight panels. It runs up to, and is almost certainly contemporary with, the large fireplace stack which sits immediately to its east. This was probably inserted into the lower end of the hall, and the ceiling into the upper bay, confirming the hierarchical arrangement suggested by the position of the cross wing – ie that the cross wing was built at the upper end of the earlier hall. The cross beams forming the eight bays are relatively plain, with only a steep chamfer on their outer edges and no chamfer stops. The joists within them are finished with simple chamfers with scroll stops.

The construction of the ceiling would have marked the moment when the upper parts of the original open hall were ceiled off, and probably used as first-floor chambers. It is therefore possible that, in association with the insertion of the



Figure 20 North elevation, showing stair turret, mostly reconstructed in the 19th or 20th century but with an early stone base (DP221701)

ceiling, the small outset stair wing to the north of the house was constructed (Figure 20). Although modified and extended further north, this has a stone plinth which suggests it originally formed a more modest-sized stair tower. Given the modification it is extremely difficult to date this accurately, and it may belong to this phase, or to the subsequent remodelling of the hall range in phase four.

Phase Four – 17th century

James (2019) has postulated that, subsequent to the insertion of the first floor into the former hall, the entire hall range was reconstructed, in order to provide a full-height first floor. The surviving evidence for this is relatively slight. It comprises an extant post which is now visible within the later brickwork of the north elevation, towards the eastern extent of presumed hall range. This rises the full height of the current building. Although partly obscured by a downpipe, various peg holes are visible on the timber, suggesting that it originally formed part of a timber-framed north wall to the building. This may therefore form part of a reconstruction of the hall, prior to its reconstruction in stone and brick in the 18th century (see phase six below), as it is likely that the original medieval hall was somewhat lower (as suggested by the possible roof line visible in the weathering pattern on the cross wing east wall – see phase one above).

A further post sits at the northwestern corner of the counter-change ceiling, the presumed northwestern corner of the original hall range. Despite modifications in



Figure 21 Detail of roof structure, showing reused timber elements, some with charring. Photo Stuart Mee.

this area to extend the building further north and provide a stair, the post has been left in place as it supports the corner of the ceiling, and first-floor floor structure above. The post itself has also been altered in various ways, including some cutting back at the point where it engages with the ceiling structure. It appears to have formed part of a timber-framed north wall which would have run along the northern side of the bay with the surviving ceiling.

James has suggested that confirmation of the existence of this reconstruction phase is found in the roof structure, where the later roof reuses a significant amount of timber of the 16th and 17th centuries. Some of this timber is charred, but the pattern of charring suggests this occurred prior to its reuse in the current roof configuration (Figure 21). James has postulated that this charring relates to a fire which may have been the reason for the reconstruction of the building in a later phase. Further investigation of the roof may confirm more of the original form of the re-used timbers and provide support for this theory.

Phase Five – late 18th or early 19th century

A major phase of modification appears to have occurred in the 18th century. This saw the reconstruction of much of the former hall range, and the refronting of the cross wing to create the stone-faced building as seen today (see Figure 1). This



Figure 22 Detail of reused 17th century beam in the southwest room of the hall range. Photo Stuart Mee.

phase also involved the re-use of significant amounts of timber from the earlier building.

The hall range was entirely reconstructed (apart from the one or two posts which survive in the north elevation), with a coursed rubble stone front (south) elevation, and brick used for the other elevations. This appears to have included the refronting of the cross wing, and the infill of the cross wing timber-frame panels with brick (see Figures 3 and 20). As built the hall range was arranged with a symmetrical façade, with the cross wing slightly recessed, appearing as a subsidiary feature. The hall façade focused on a centrally placed front door (now a window), which opened into a lobby directly in front of the earlier chimney stack, creating a lobby-entry plan which may echo the earlier, phase four, timber-framed arrangement. Flanking the doorway are large ground floor windows which light two principal rooms. A spine wall running to the rear of the chimney stack east to west through the building created a double-pile plan arrangement with further rooms to the rear, almost certainly including the kitchen which was still in this location in the 20th century.

The first floor was accessed via the principal stair located in an outshut to the northwest of the hall range (see Figure 20). It is possible that this reflected an earlier stair position (see phase three above) but in its current configuration it appears predominantly to belong to this phase. A subsidiary service stair rises from the northeast corner of the hall range, although it is not clear when it was inserted and it may be a later feature.



Figure 23 Fitted corner cupboard in ground-floor room of cross wing. Photo Stuart Mee

At first-floor level the double-pile arrangement appears to have continued with a central corridor running east to west through the building giving access to rooms to the north and south. Some reused 17th-century material is visible in the southwestern bedroom in the hall range. This includes a central spine beam with scroll stops which appears to have been reused as it is now supported on a bracket projecting from the west wall of the room (the east wall of the cross wing; Figure 22). The door to this room also appears to be earlier and has a pair of strap hinges which terminate with what Hall describes as a fleur-de-lys design (Hall 2005, 51).

The cross wing appears to have continued to provide two large rooms with two smaller subsidiary rooms to the north. The earlier wall paintings were covered by layers of plaster laid on laths nailed to the earlier wall face. At ground-floor level the fireplace was moved to the south by one bay, to position it centrally within the room. This has a recently installed marble fireplace surround of early 19th century design. A fitted corner cupboard sitting in the southeastern corner of the room may also relate to this phase (Figure 23). At first-floor level the wall paintings on the east elevation were hidden behind a re-facing of plaster laid on split-laths nailed to the principal posts (which projected out from the earlier wall line by a few inches) and a series of inserted studs. These have largely, by default, protected the earlier

decorated wall face, although in places the original wattle and daub panels have been cut back in order to accommodate the studs of the inserted wall facing.

The roof structure over the entire building was renewed, and the cross wing reroofed in line with the main range, although the tie beams of the earlier cross wing roof, which ran north to south, were retained. As noted in phase four above, this roof structure reused a considerable amount of the earlier timber, including some which has charring from fire damage (see Figure 21). This has been used to create a large hipped roof, with a variety of truss forms, but principally of a queen strut and raked strut type. The roof structure does not appear to have provided any accommodation or storage (unlike the suggested earliest phase of the cross wing), as there was no apparent means of access to the attic space. Neither the principal stair nor the secondary service stair appear to have continued beyond the first floor.

Phase Six – further alterations

After the major phase of updating only minor, more piecemeal alterations appear to have been made to the building. The most apparent of these relates to a reorganisation of the circulation space, with a secondary door inserted into the front (south) elevation immediately east of the cross wing. This appears initially to have functioned at the same time as the principal door further east (as evidenced by an early 20th century photograph showing both doorways in use). Internally it is likely that the corridor it led into was created at the same time, subdividing the space defined by the counter-change ceiling. The corridor provided access to the rear rooms of the house and the staircase. This may relate to the typical 19th-century process of trying to separate out access to individual rooms within the building, as opposed to the earlier practice of rooms leading off each other.

Twentieth-century alterations included the insertion of services including bathrooms, one of which was added into the ground-floor north room of the cross wing. At some stage the principal front door to the hall range was blocked to form a window, with the secondary door adjacent to the cross wing instead made the main entrance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Church House Farm is a complex building, of which the cross-wing represents the earliest and most intact section of the pre-18th century house. The majority of the original framework of the cross wing is *in situ*, including the tie beams at roof level, and this makes the original form of the wing relatively straightforward to discern. It also makes several of the subsequent phases of alteration to the wing easy to identify, including the insertion of the fireplace in the west wall and the subdivision of both the ground and first-floor rooms. It is likely that any further work on this section of the building will uncover more evidence to help refine the phasing suggested in this report.

Other, more fragmentary, evidence survives to help identify the complex series of reconstruction phases of the associated hall range. This includes the very subtle evidence for the presence of a medieval open hall, the evidence for the insertion of a first-floor into that hall, and then the evidence for a reconstruction of the hall as a two-storey range, probably initially in the 17th century and then heavily reconstructed again in the late 18th or early 19th century.

Of the earlier phases of the hall range the survival of the counter-change ceiling represents the most intact and legible element of the structure. This feature can be compared to a series of other examples of this type of ceiling in the Marches, in both Herefordshire and Shropshire (Moran 2003). These largely date to the late 16th or very early 17th century. In this context the Church House Farm example is relatively plain, as many have heavily moulded cross beams and joists (see Moran 2003, 311). This, and the relatively steep form of the chamfer, may suggest a relatively late date within the date range they are usually ascribed.

The first-floor wall paintings

The most significant element surviving from the early phases of the house is the decorative wall painting scheme which has been partially uncovered in the first-floor south room of the cross wing. This appears originally to have covered all four wall surfaces in the room, although the south wall has not been exposed. In its original form it represents a scheme which comprises figurative elements with antiquework and various geometric patterns (see description in phase 3 above).

Davies (2018) has identified several comparable examples of antiquework schemes from other buildings in the Marches, and further afield, which provide some of the broad context for the patterns that were used at Church House Farm. The owners have also identified a print source for the strapwork cartouches used in the frieze, which are based on two cartouches by a Florentine painter, Benedetto Battini, published as ‘Vigilate quia nescitis diem neque horam’ in Antwerp in 1553 (reproduced in Wells-Cole 1997, 21). This source has been identified by Wells-Cole as being the basis of elements of several decorative schemes, particularly at Siston Court, and South Wraxall Manor, both in Gloucestershire and in both cases used by stonemasons as a basis for elaborate fireplaces. Battini cartouches also made their way into a pattern book used by the Abbott family, plasterers in North Devon, and in the case of Church House Farm in painted form, indicating the breadth of their use and appeal (*ibid*).

The precise meaning of the figurative elements of the scheme is unclear at present, and the evidence from the wall paintings themselves is somewhat contradictory. Kathryn Davies' assessment of the wall paintings and their significance (Davies 2018) draws attention to the simple textural message 'Love God' surviving in one of the cartouches, and associates this with other surviving secular wall paintings with a religious message often associated with Protestantism (see also Davies 2008, 112). There is certainly a notable trend, particularly in the Welsh Marches, of wall paintings with Christian messages, often quotations from the bible. These could form whole decorative schemes, as at the Ledbury Town Council Offices, where an uncovered first-floor wall painting scheme contains a series of biblical quotations, and appears explicitly related to the house's use in relation to the market in Ledbury (Davies 2008, 140). Religious figurative scenes are also not unknown, although these are usually again direct evocations of biblical stories, particularly from the Old Testament, rather than anything allegorical (Hamling 2010). Certainly the simple message of the cartouche, and the antiquework and grotesques used on the majority of the wall surfaces seem entirely typical of the secular wall painting tradition of the late 16th century. This is one possible interpretation of the scheme at Church House Farm; that the figurative scene and patterned sections of the scheme are purely for decoration, with only the cartouches used to give a simple religious message.

James however, has identified several elements in the figurative element of the wall painting which appear to have Catholic symbolism (Duncan James pers comm). The focus of the scheme on the eastern wall of the room, and possibly of the whole scheme, is a central scene of two figures gesturing towards a large fleur-de-lys symbol which sits, or is being placed, on a candelabrum. The fleur-de-lys as a symbol is particularly associated with the Virgin Mary, and as such might be taken as a coded reference to Mary, a figure who in the Protestant late 16th century was clearly associated with Catholicism. The prominence given to the symbol certainly suggests that it is highly significant in the scheme, and there appears to be no direct comparable examples for this element, unlike the other more schematic motifs employed.

Notwithstanding the uncertainty over the precise meaning of the figurative scene it is clear that this scheme represents a particularly high-quality example of the period. Davies (2018) has drawn comparison with the wider use of wall paintings in the Marches during the late 16th century, and they were a common decorative feature in larger farmhouses and minor gentry houses of the period. It is clear from a comparison with other surviving examples however that the Church House Farm example represents a scheme of a much higher quality than is typical, both in the quality of the artistry and in the colour and forms used. Most antiquework schemes of the late 16th century are typically black and white, which makes the wide use of pigments in this example extremely unusual. The quality of the execution of the paintings, particularly of the figurative scene, also appears to be exceptional in a Marcher context. Although there are damaged areas, the relative legibility of the scheme also makes it exceptional in this context.

Further research on the wall paintings might be done by exploring the use of religious symbols in this period more widely. The evidence of ownership is also crucial. From the known documentary history of the site (see above), we have an indication that the site was transferred from the Knights Hospitaller to the Crown on the suppression of the order in 1540, and in the hands of the Gwillim family by the early 19th century. Much of the work immediately post-dates the suppression of the Knights Hospitaller and the likely grant of the farm to the Grey family or to others. It may well be that new ownership, or an associated new tenancy, were the catalyst for the works.

No comparable examples for the figurative scene at the centre of the Church House Farm scheme have been identified however, and this, together with the high quality of the work, makes the surviving scheme exceptional in form and quality.

The ground-floor decorative scheme

The fragments of paint surviving in the ground-floor room of the cross wing, together with the better surviving elements currently concealed on the eastern wall appear to relate to a decorative scheme for the room very different in style from that at first-floor level. This forms part of what has been termed a ‘plain scheme’, that is one that uses simple patterns, in contrasting colours, often to emphasise the timber framing (Kirkham 2010, 58). Plain schemes have a long history, with the earliest examples known from the 14th century (*ibid*, 62). As well as emphasising the framing they may sometimes have imitated some types of striped textile hangings (*ibid*, 66). Kirkham’s work on the East Anglian examples has identified various trends. There appears to have been a hierarchy of colour in such schemes with blue and green being the more expensive and therefore higher status colours – and are less frequently found. Red and other earth-based colours were more often found in Suffolk, although the survival of any such scheme is of course rare.

Plain schemes have less frequently been identified outside of East Anglia, although this may be to do with a failure to recognise the more subtle surviving evidence rather than a lack of their employment. Kirkham has identified examples in urban areas in the west of England, including examples in Tewkesbury and Gloucester (*pers comm*). Rural examples are more rare, but some have been identified, including at Harvington Hall, Worcestershire (Davies 2008, 183–4 Inventory numbers 168 and 169), and Brick House, Adforton (*ibid*, 143 Inventory number 50). F.W.B. Charles identified three examples in Worcestershire at Shell Manor, Hibleton, Worcestershire, Rectory Road, Tibberton, Worcestershire and The Old Pheasant, Worcester (Charles 1991 quoted in Kirkham 2010, 204).

Plain schemes with contemporary plaster ceilings are known, and it seems likely that the fragment of plaster ceiling visible at Church House Farm is part of the same scheme as the wall decoration. The form and extent of the ceiling is uncertain however. Sometimes a simple comb-edge border around the panels of the ceiling was the full extent of the decoration (Molyneux *pers comm*), and at other times it could be richly decorated (Kirkham 2010, 187).

Dating the two schemes

Davies (2018) has suggested that the first-floor scheme is of the late 16th century, on the basis of stylistic comparison with other known examples. Kirkham (pers comm) has suggested that the ground-floor plain scheme could be of the early 17th century. There do appear to be some similarities between the two schemes in the type of red used on the timbers in the ground-floor room and the architectural detail in the first-floor scheme, although whether this relates to the original pigment form is unclear. As both dates are based on stylistic grounds it remains possible that they are contemporary, with the later examples of the type of decoration seen in the first-floor room likely to overlap with earlier examples of the type of plain scheme seen in the ground-floor room. Moreover, even if they are not directly contemporary they are likely to have been on display together for some considerable period, as neither appears to have been concealed until the 18th century.

The very different treatment of the two rooms may tell us something of the use of these spaces. The use of a simple red pigment in the ground-floor room, as well as the plainer decoration, suggests that this room was still a public room, but of lower status than the first-floor room, which must have formed a principal chamber. More research would be needed to establish the precise relationship between the two schemes.

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APPENDIX ONE

Church House Farm, Wellington, Herefordshire, HR4 8AZ.

NGR: SO4980348221

Lat/Long:- 52.130010, -2.734705

RCHME 3



Fig.1. Church House Farm, south

Introduction

This brief report was originally prepared in advance of a meeting on the 5th Oct 2018 to discuss the recently discovered painted decoration on the walls of the first floor room in the crosswing of Church House Farm, Wellington, Herefordshire. The report was then updated in April of 2019 following the exposure of further structural elements. A final detailed report is in preparation for the owners.

Church House Farm is, as the listing description¹ suggests, an 18th century remodelling of earlier fabric. The building is listed for its group value (GVII) although in the light of recent discoveries within the building, this will probably need revision. The building was listed as Monument 3 within Wellington parish in the survey by the Royal Commission, published in 1932. The entry was brief, with a hint that there was earlier fabric within:-

“Church House Farm, house, on the N. side of the road, 60 yards E. of the church, has been much altered late in the 18th or early 19th century. Inside the building is a re-used moulded ceiling-beam and on the first-floor one room has a 17th-century plaster moulding round the ceiling.”²

A planning application (Herefordshire P132135/L) dated 5th August 2013 relates to alterations to windows and the internal layout.

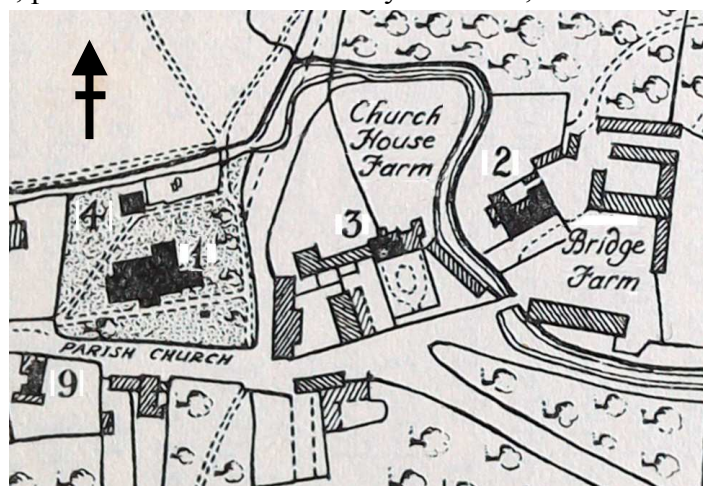


Fig.2. Extract from the RCHME map (1932) showing the east end of Wellington village with Wellington Brook looping around the site of Church House Farm.

The Site

The present building is laid out on an approximate east-west alignment set back from the main east-west road through the village.³ Figures 1 & 2. Attached to the west end of the range, and on the same alignment, is a timber-framed barn (listed as 18th century) recently converted to domestic accommodation. This is associated with other former farm buildings arranged around a courtyard all of which are now in domestic use. The satellite view in Figure 3 shows the site before this took place.



Fig.3. Church House Farm, satellite image (c.2010).

To the west of the house and its associated group of former farm buildings, standing on raised ground is the Church of St Margaret. To the north of the church is the Wellington Brook flowing west to east which passes

along the back of the Church House Farm plot before turning south past the east end of the building. There is an access road into the village leading in from the north, fording the Wellington Brook and passing the west side of the site.

To the east of the Church House Farm and on a similar alignment, is Bridge Farm, which contains the remains of a hall house and crosswings, that are likely to be of 15th century date.⁴



Fig 4 Church House Farm, c.1900.

Brief Description – the exterior

The house in its present form is the result of a major remodelling in the late 18th or early 19th century. It is of two storeys beneath a slate roof with hipped ends. There is a single storey, former dairy set back at the east end. Beneath the west end of the range

A Brief Report Concerning Church House Farm, Wellington, Herefordshire.

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there is a cellar accessed both from inside the house and from the back of the range. The west end of the house incorporates timber framing.

The southern façade is of coursed, semi-dressed stone, the principal part being a symmetrical arrangement of windows on each side of a central doorway that would have formed a lobby entrance. It is now blocked and has been converted into a window. On the first floor, above the blocked door, is a recess with a semicircular arch. The position of this feature, adjacent to the central chimney stack, suggests that it could not have functioned as a window but may have had a false window painted on for decorative effect.

There is a string course between the two levels. The windows have segmental arched lintels in dressed stone although the blocked front door (now a window) is less smartly dressed as its segmental arched lintel is in brick although the jambs are of dressed stone. It is possible that this is because the lintel was formerly hidden by a projecting hood, possibly removed when the doorway was demoted.⁵

To the left of the main composition is a recessed bay with stone facing and a single window on each floor. Here, due to the recess, the eaves project, supported by about a dozen joists. A replacement doorway, with smartly dressed stone jambs and now forming the principal entry to the house, has been inserted adjacent to the recessed bay, disturbing the symmetry of the main part of the front. The door has two flush panels below the lock rail and two tall glazed panels above.

An earlier photograph of the front (Figure 4) shows this doorway in place, possibly as a 'back door', and a plain, double-leaf main door still present but not obviously in use. The windows on the front of the building are casements but the earlier photo shows sash windows on the front of the wing.

There are three chimney stacks, one to the east of centre, one on the east end and a larger stack, with a double shaft, at the west end.

The east end of the main range is of stone and partially hidden by the single-storey former dairy that is set back from the front of the house. In the return there is a



Fig.5. The rear elevation of Church House Farm seen from the north-west.

doorway alongside the chimney stack, giving access into the house. Another door leads into the dairy. Figure 8.

The back of the house is of brick, with a timber-framed section at the right-hand end, which is infilled with brick. Figure 5.

The Interior

The earliest surviving part of Church House Farm appears to be the east-west two-storey, timber-framed crosswing, parts of which are visible within the west end of the house. The front of the wing is behind the recessed west side (on the left side) of the stone façade. Figure 1. The framing of the crosswing (formerly a gable end) is visible externally at the back of the building. Figure 5.

The timber-framed east wall of the wing is internal and substantially complete (Figure 6) as is the internal cross-frame in the wing. (Figure 7).

The west sidewall of the wing also retains some of the primary timber framing although two fireplaces (one blocked) on the ground floor and one on the first floor and their associated stacks of brick and stone have displaced some of the timber framing. On the ground floor the present fireplace in the west wall approximately central to the room, as is that on the first floor. However, the blocked fireplace on the ground floor, which has an arched brick support in the cellar for the lost (?) hearth stone, is adjacent to the cross-frame – indicating that it predates it. (Figure 8) Above the site of this blocked fireplace, at first-floor level there are, on the exterior face of the framing (recently exposed), mortices that suggest it was the site of an oriel window in the side wall of the crosswing. This would also conflict with the site of the cross-frame.

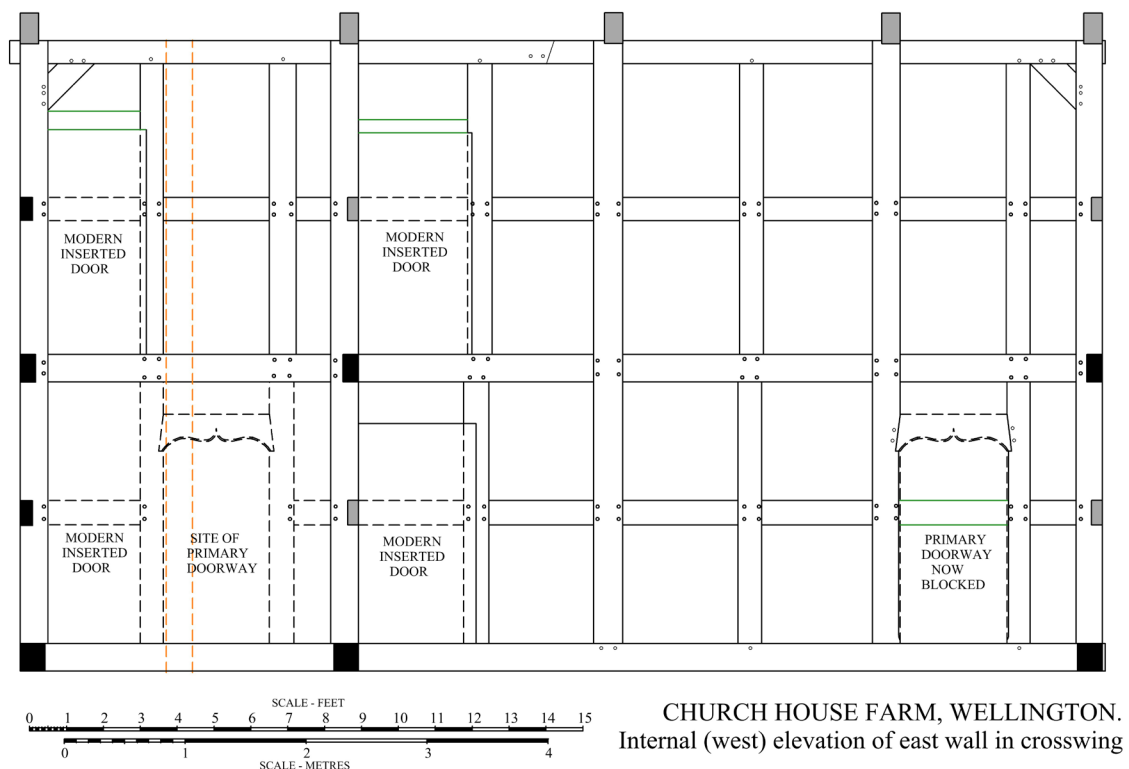


Fig.6. The surviving timber-framed east wall of the crosswing (west elevation).

There is evidence in the west wall, towards the southern end of the frame, for a narrow (blocked) doorway on the first floor and below it on the ground floor a similar,

equally narrow doorway, also blocked. It is likely that these relate to a lost garderobe tower formerly attached to the outer face of the wall. This is indicated on Figure 8.

The wing is divided on both floors by a secondary lateral cross-frame forming a small room to the north, and a south room that is more than double the area of the north room. Figure 8.

Beneath the crosswing there is a cellar divided into two spaces on the line of the cross-frame above.

The roof over the entire building was totally rebuilt in the 18th or early 19th century, but there is evidence to indicate that the crosswing roof was a four-bay structure, possibly, in the primary phase, open to the ridge at first floor level.

There was a primary doorway in the cross-frame (partition) on both the ground and first floors linking the two rooms at both levels. Figure 7. It is highly likely that the smaller, north room contained a staircase. One doorhead, a nominally four-centred Tudor arch, survives on the first floor. It will be noted that the posts on the left end (west) of the frame are set alongside the wall post. This is further evidence to indicate that the partition is likely to be a later insertion.

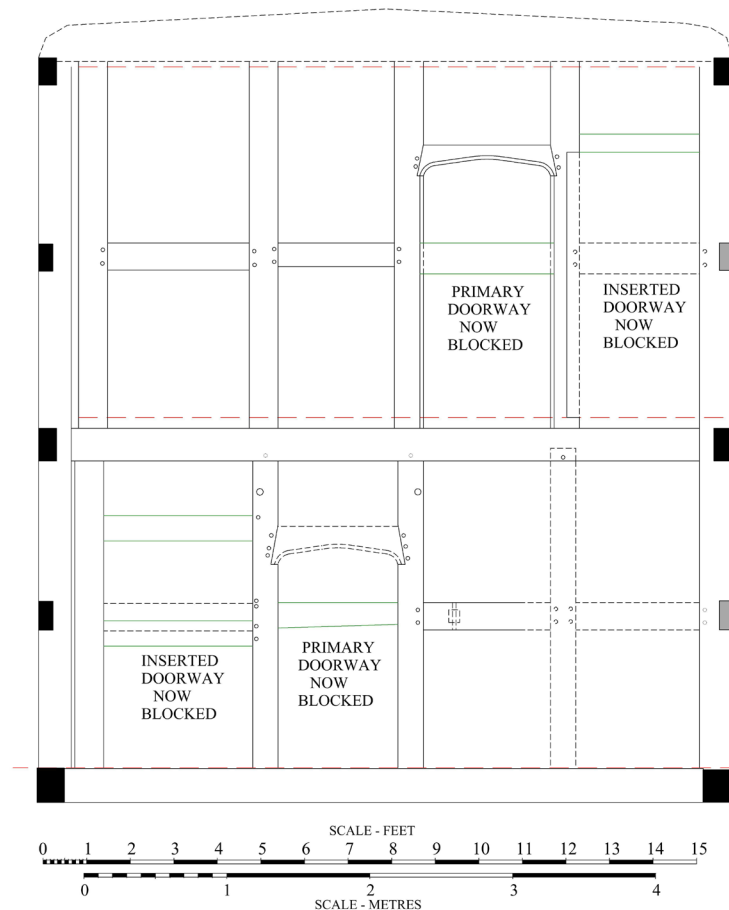


Fig. 7. The cross-frame in the crosswing (south elevation).

There is evidence for two primary doorways in the ground-floor east wall, which, by their positions, indicate that the crosswing formed the solar accommodation to a lost hall. Figure 6. The doorways have lost their doorheads but these were large (ie. deep) and probably were decorated with a more elaborate profile than a Tudor arch, possibly a double ogee. The position of these doorways indicates the likely width of the lost hall range, while the absence of primary doors in the east side of the first-floor of the crosswing shows that the hall was unlikely to have been of two storeys and as a single storey open hall was, almost certainly, of earlier date than the crosswing.⁶

From structural, decorative and timber conversion evidence⁷ it is highly likely that the crosswing was built in the second half of the 16th century (1550-1600) and that it was constructed to replace an earlier solar that was either in the form of a crosswing or, more likely, a single axial bay in line with the hall range. There is evidence, on the east elevation of the east sidewall, of mortices and pegholes that probably secured a 'dais' bench at the upper end of the hall. Further evidence for an open hall can be seen on the east side of the frame at first-floor level (in the Middle Bedroom) where there is a diagonal weathering mark showing the slope of the lost hall roof.⁸

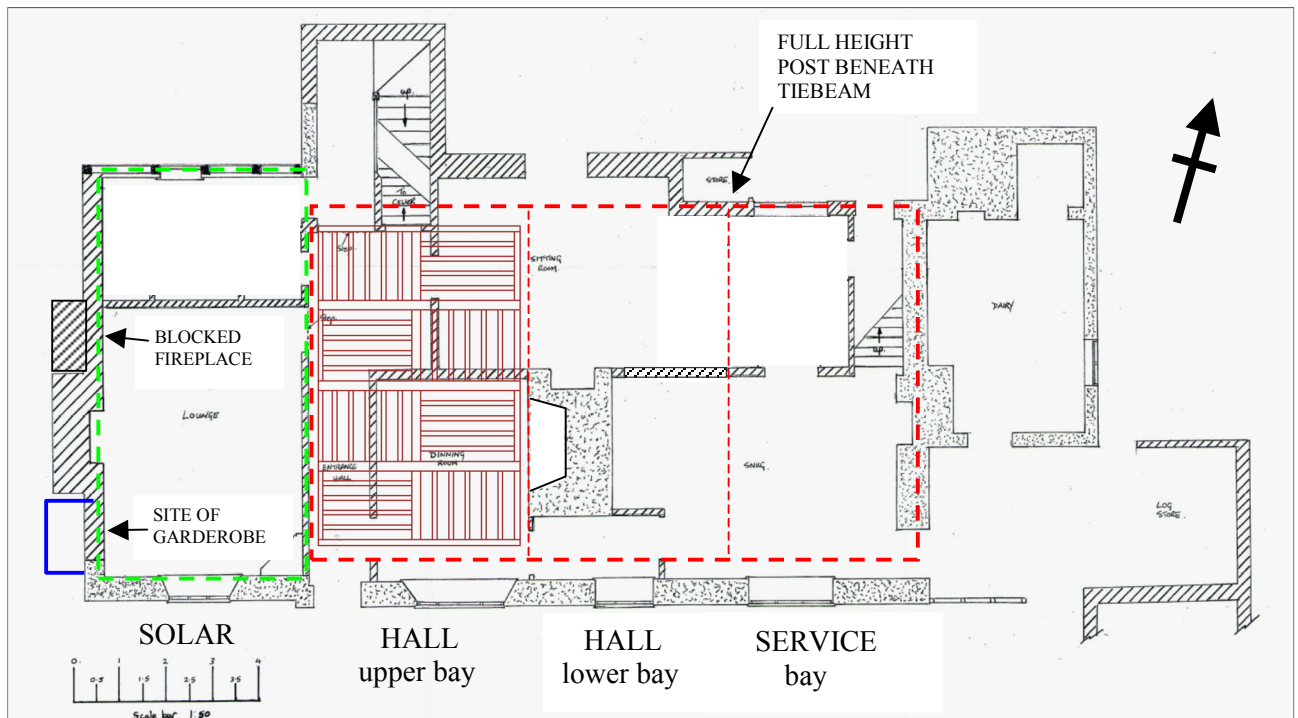


Fig.8. A modified recent ground-plan with the probable layout of the three bays of the lost hall range indicated in red dashed lines. The inserted counter-change ceiling is shown in red with the two lost panels restored. The crosswing is shown outlined in green dashes. The crosswing partition is of timber framing and timber framing survives in the north and east walls and much of the west wall of the wing.

In common with many open halls, one of the first stages in modernisation was the introduction of a fireplace and chimney stack to replace the open hearth. This cleared the way for the insertion of a floor to create an upper storey and at Church House Farm this addition has survived in the form of a counter-change ceiling.⁹ This was installed in the upper bay of the hall.¹⁰ The ceiling had eight coffered panels each with the joists installed in different directions creating a chequerboard effect. The floorboards would also show a similar pattern as they were therefore laid in alternate directions above each panel. Typically these ceilings date to the second half of the

16th century, however, it is almost certainly later than the crosswing. Had it been coeval with the wing, it would have been attached to the framing using face-pegs to secure the half-beam along the west side. It is however, supported along that side by a massive beam and a series of ad hoc brackets. Had it been in place before the construction of the crosswing then the latter would have had provision for access at first-floor level.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this ceiling is that it serves to confirm the width of the lost hall and the likely size (i.e. length) of the upper bay. It may also have prompted the construction of a staircase tower on the site of the present, possibly enlarged, brick structure that houses the main staircase.

The present roof of the house has been rebuilt. It has not, so far, been studied in detail but appears to contain evidence for a significant phase of the development of the building because it incorporates re-used beams from an earlier roof, many of which are heavily charred, with areas showing extensive fire damage, none of which was incurred within the present roof. The tie beams have been extended in length with scarfed-in sections to bridge the width of the present building.

The Painted Room

The most remarkable and important feature of this house is the recent discovery of large areas of painted decoration on the first floor of the crosswing. The majority of the surviving decoration is on the east wall where it had been protected by a later, probably 18th century, lath and plaster partition constructed just a few inches away from the painted surface. Both the west wall and the south face of the partition were also painted with a continuation of the same scheme but only fragments survive on the timber framing, that on the panels having been lost. The south end of the room has lost its framing so the painting there does not survive.

This decorative scheme is probably of late 16th century date and it awaits further detailed study and analysis.

The Development Sequence

From evidence in the roof and elsewhere it is possible to propose a likely sequence of development.

1) 15th century. An axial hall house on the site. A two-bay hall with a single bay solar at the west end and a single service bay at the east end. Laid out on an east-west axis. Evidence for the approximate width is preserved by the inserted ceiling. The footprint of the bays can be inferred from the footprint of the present building. The pitch of the roof can be seen at first floor level in the ‘ghost’ marks on the side-wall of the crosswing. The fact of a single-storey hall is shown by the lack of primary first-floor doors in the sidewall of the crosswing. It is very possible that the hall was cruck-framed.

2) 16th century. The single bay solar of the hall range was demolished and the crosswing built as an upgrade to the upper end accommodation. This had oriel windows on the north end and on the west side; possibly also on the south end. It also had a pair of ground-floor doors in the east side, adjacent to the side-walls of the hall, that would have provided upper end access into the crosswing. There was a cellar below the solar. A garderobe tower was built against the southern end of the west wall. The crosswing was probably open to the ridge at first-floor level.

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- 3) 16th century. The oriel window on the west side-wall was removed and a chimney stack built, with a fireplace on the ground floor.
- 4) c.1575-1600. The hall was upgraded by the insertion of the counter-change ceiling in the upper bay. By this time the central chimney stack was probably in place having replaced the open hearth.
- 5) Late 16th century. The cross-frame was inserted in the crosswing, dividing it into two rooms. First-floor ceilings were inserted and the larger first-floor south room was decorated with an elaborate painted scheme on all four walls. A plaster floor was laid in the attic over the smaller, north room.
- 6) Late 16th/early 17th century. The hall range was demolished and a full, two storey range built in its place and on the same footprint. The full height post in the back wall of the building is a surviving, *in situ* fragment as are the reset beams in the present roof. It is possible that phases 5 and 6 were coeval.
- 7) 18th century. A fire destroys or damages part of the house such that it is rebuilt in stone, stepped forward on the south side from the line of the earlier front, and built in brick at the back. The present roof structure, with its shallow pitch and hipped ends is made by re-using many of the damaged timbers and extending the tiebeams to bridge the increased width of the house. The new roof would have entailed removing the gable ends and primary roof structure over the crosswing in order to form the hipped ends. It is possible that the loss of the north-east panels in the counter-change ceiling is attributable to this fire.

It is relevant to note here that, on the evidence of the way in which the re-used timbers were originally converted, they were all 16th or 17th century re-used timbers.

The house was remodelled to form a three-bay symmetrical facade in stone with a central (baffle entry) doorway. This front wall has been set forward of the earlier front so that the crosswing (formerly projecting) now appears to be recessed and does not disturb the (approximate) symmetry of the main front. The wide central doorway has been blocked and a narrower doorway adjacent to the crosswing and giving access to a corridor has become the principal entrance.



Fig.9. The south elevation showing the blocked doorway on the right and the later new position for the principal doorway on the left.

The original central doorway has dressed stone jambs but unlike the windows and the other doorway, it lacks a smart, dressed stone, segmental-arch lintel with

keystone. There is no evidence in the adjacent stonework to suggest that the present, inferior arched-lintel is a repair, so it may be that the doorway had a hood of some sort that was supported on timbers set into the wall at each end of the arch where there are infilled holes of appropriate size. A door hood would have masked the inferior lintel.

It is almost certain that the present front door is a later modification when the interior layout was modified.

A note about tree-ring dating.

It is suggested that should tree-ring dating ever be considered, it would be of value to sample the walls of the crosswing to establish a date for this significant phase, then to attempt to date the cross-frame which is, from structural evidence, a later insertion. A date for the counter-change ceiling would also be of value particularly in view of how few of those in the County are dated. Finally, a date for the fire-damaged timbers in the roof might help to establish a date for the construction of phase 6; this is of course on the assumption that the roof timbers have been sourced from this phase.

Duncan James – 04-10-2018 – revised 09-04-2019.

End Notes

¹ Farmhouse. Probably late C18 remodelling of earlier fabric. Coursed sandstone rubble, hipped slate roof, large local type external stack to each end, ridge stack to right of centre. Two storeys. South elevation: string course between storeys, 1:3 windows in slight set-back to left hand side all under one roof with deeply projecting eaves, outer windows of three window-part are wider; segmental heads, apart from blind semi-circular headed first floor window to centre of three-window part; C20 casements, that beneath blind window is in a blocked door opening. Entrance door to left of centre, also under a segmental head, has four panels and is c1900.

² Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, England, *An inventory of the historical monuments in Herefordshire. Vol. 2, East* (1932), H.M.S.O., 203.

³ The alignment places the upper end of the range towards the south-west quadrant which accords with the usual practice in Herefordshire. D. James, 'An Investigation of the Orientation of Timber-framed Houses in Herefordshire'. *Vernacular Architecture*, vol. 34 (2003), pp. 20-31.

⁴ *Op Cit.*, Monument 2, p. 202. The listing note gives a more detailed, partially analytical, description.

⁵ On each side of the brick arch there appears to be an infilled area of the correct size to have housed the ends of supporting beams for a hood.

⁶ There are many examples of the replacement, or rebuilding, at different times, of one or other of the three basic units of a hall house rather than the total demolition and replacement of the entire structure.

⁷ James, D. 'Saw marks in vernacular buildings and their wider significance.' *Vernacular Architecture*, (2012).

⁸ This line also crosses a panel that has been replaced, probably due to weathering, and there is water damage to timber on the edge of the lost panel as can be seen on the west side.

⁹ Two panels above the former sitting room have been lost.

¹⁰ It was common practice to fit these fancy ceilings in the upper bay of the hall. Counter-change ceilings are a feature of Herefordshire and Shropshire houses where there are over 30 examples but they are relatively rare or even unknown in other counties. They belong to the second half of the 16th century.



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