

THE OLD RECTORY,
UFFORD
CAMBRIDGESHIRE

A Report on the Historical Development of the House

by

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Historical Analysis & Research Team

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1. Introduction

The Historical Analysis and Research Team (HART) of English Heritage carried out a brief architectural assessment of the Old Rectory at Ufford in October 2000, following a request from the Regional Historic Buildings Inspector, Paul Edwards of the East of England Area team, for further information on the historical development of the grade II* listed house. English Heritage became involved with the case following the recent sale of the property and application by its new owners, Mr and Mrs Peel, for Listed Building Consent to alter parts of the house for new use. The analysis of the early house was carried out by Richard Bond, and the documentary research and analysis into its later development was by Susie Barson.

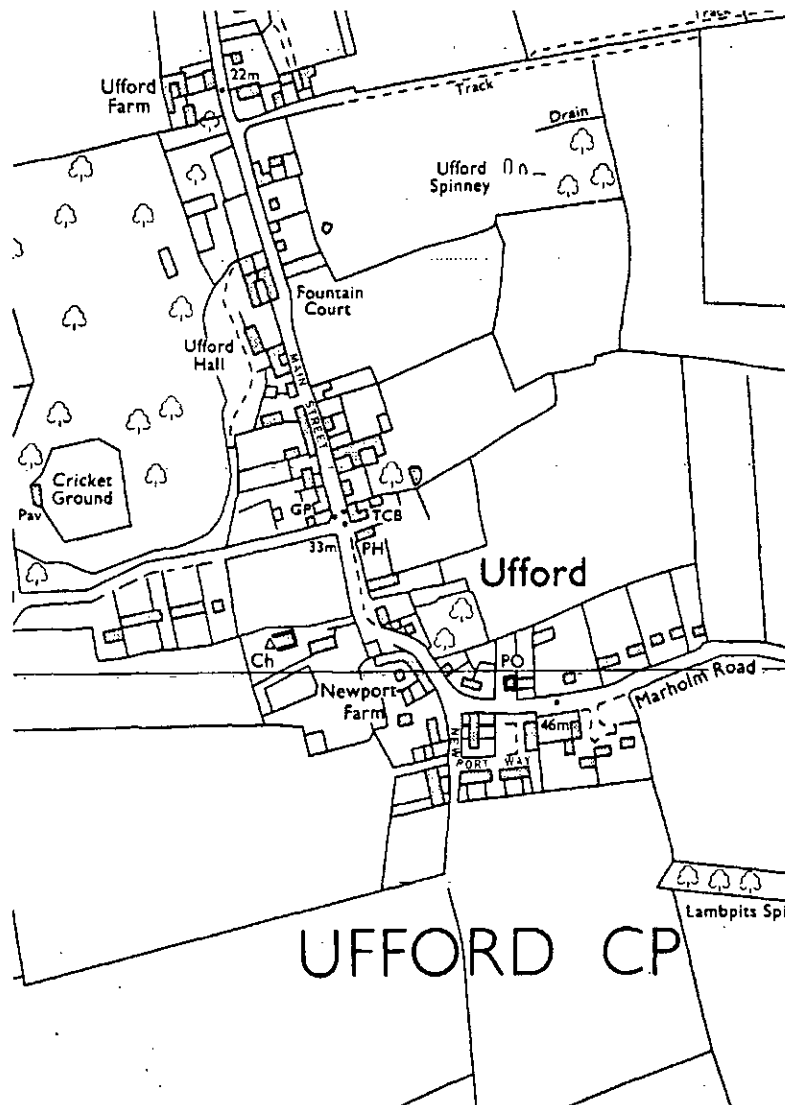


Figure 1 Detail of current 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey map

2. Summary

The village of Ufford is built on the northern slope of a ridge of high land, and has one main street running in a north-westerly direction, with the church and the rectory on the high ground at its south end. The house has an H-shaped plan with central hall and flanking cross wings. It is aligned east-west and situated north-east of the adjacent parish church of St Andrew's (nave and chancel thirteenth century, rebuilt fourteenth century, restored nineteenth century; tower, fifteenth century). The central section of the present house survives from the original building, with a three bay timber roof with cusped windbraces: the two western bays being slightly more elaborate than the eastern. There may have been cross wings, or the building may have continued to the east or west, or both, under the same ridgeline; alternatively it may have been just three bays from the start. Further examination of the outside faces of the two timber trusses may yield more information. The house underwent some alteration in the sixteenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with the porch being added in the second half of the twentieth century. The walls of the former rectory are built of coursed stone rubble; the steeply pitched roof is clad in Collyweston slate tiles.

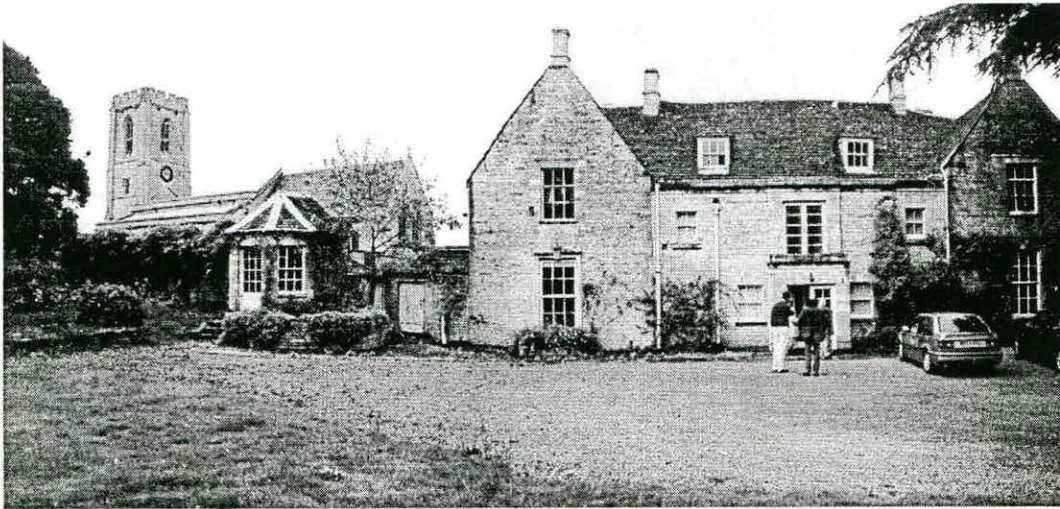


Figure 2 The Old Rectory and St Andrew's Church, Ufford

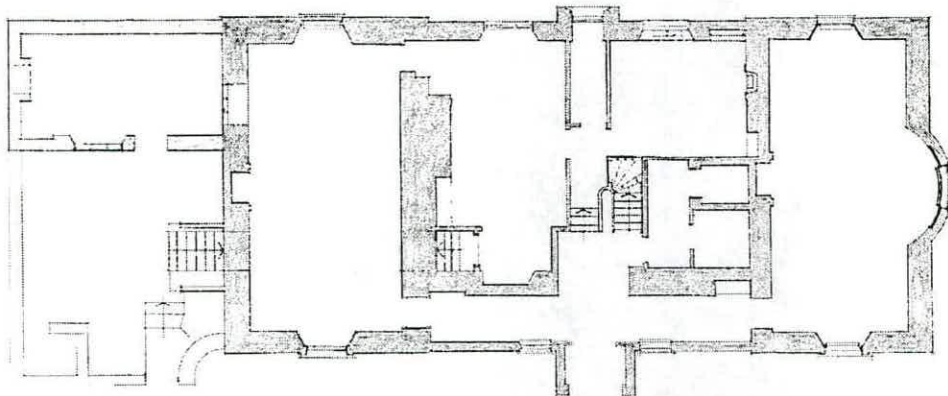


Figure 3 Ground plan of house as existing (drawing not to scale)

3. Architectural description

Phase 1: Fourteenth Century

The central hall range with its decorative, open timber roof probably dates from the fourteenth century. The roof is divided into three equal-sized bays by four arch-braced collar roof trusses. The roof is of clasped purlin type, the purlins being held in position between the principal rafters and collars of the main roof trusses. There are two tiers of purlins, the lower pair being hidden below the present attic floor. There are cusped windbraces above and below the lower purlin, and below the upper purlin, on each side. In addition to the side windbraces, each bay has a set of four corner braces, or wheel braces, set in the horizontal plane between the upper purlins and collars of the principal trusses, which are also cusped (*Figure 4*).

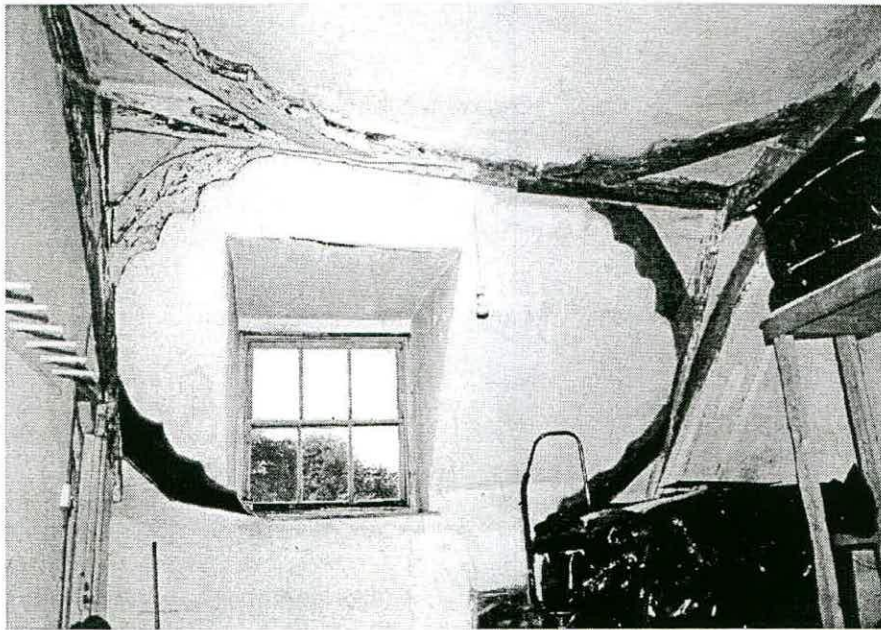


Figure 4 Interior of attic showing fourteenth century windbracing

The four principal roof trusses are of arch-braced type and have simple plain chamfers (*Figure 5*). As was common practice, the timbers were numbered (using a modified style of Roman numerals) in the carpenter's yard during the pre-fabrication stage to ensure the correct matching together of the various framing elements during the final assembly of the roof frame on site. The four principal trusses are numbered one to four on their eastern faces in a series running from west to east.¹ The windbraces and corner braces, by contrast, were numbered in different directions along each roof slope, with those on the south (front) slope numbered from west to east, like the main trusses, and those on the north side numbered from east to west. As constructed, the roof had a total of forty wind- and corner braces: the westernmost and middle bays each included twelve windbraces and four horizontal corner braces, whereas the easternmost bay had just eight (a pair of windbraces below the upper purlin on each side, and a horizontal brace in each corner).

¹ In fact, due to the existing paint and plaster finishes, only the carpenter's mark on the second truss from the west is presently visible. The carpenter's marks were always applied to the 'upper' face of the timber, i.e. the side which, as it was laid out in the carpenter's yard for pre-assembly, was set facing uppermost and given the best decorative treatment and finish. During the final assembly of the timber frame on site, it was usual for the roof trusses, and the cross frames of which they were part, were placed so that the upper face was addressed towards the dais, or 'high' end of the hall.

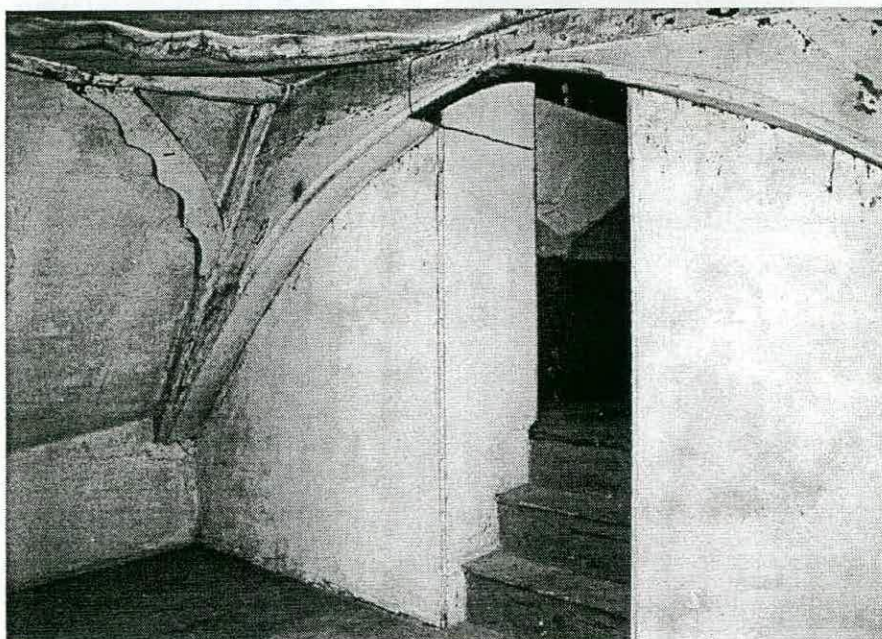


Figure 5 Arch-braced roof truss

At present the inner return faces of the two end roof trusses are concealed behind the 19th and 20th century plaster and panel wall surfaces. Without seeing the trusses at first hand it is impossible to say for certain whether the house originally comprised a free-standing single hall structure (i.e. terminating in full height gables at each end), or if it included cross wings from the outset. Although outwardly the building would seem to be a classic example of a medieval hall and cross wings house (albeit with a central hall range refaced at a later date) the structural evidence inside the building suggests a rather more complex development.

For example, to judge from the disposition of the windbracing in the roof, with the most elaborate being confined to the western and middle bays, it would seem more likely that the lower or service end of the house was originally at the eastern end, and was moved to its present position at the west end during the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century when the house was extensively remodelled. Indeed, this would seem entirely logical for the house to have been built with its private chambers nearest the church, and its kitchen and other service buildings nearest the road and presumed site of the medieval village. On the other hand, the 'upper' or best finished side of the roof trusses (traditionally placed facing towards the superior or high end of the house) are addressed to face the eastern end of the building.

Secondly, instead of the end trusses (nos. 1 and 4) being closed (i.e. infilled with secondary studwork and lath and plaster infilling) which would normally have been expected had the house included cross wings from the start, the trusses appear always to have been open (i.e. the same as the intermediate trusses, nos. 2 and 3, at the centre of the range). One explanation could be that the hall originally terminated in a pair of stone gables, with the arch braces of the end trusses framing a pointed window at each end. Alternatively, the hall may have formed the centrepiece of a longer structure with a solar bay to the west, closest to the church, and service bay to the east, the end bays having been taken down at a later date and replaced with the existing cross wings. Clearly the evidence as it stands is not conclusive, and a deeper investigation into the surviving fabric is needed to establish the original medieval plan².

² The three-bay single range house -sometimes with a rear extension- was relatively common in the later medieval period, with the same basic plan type being adopted widely for priests' or chantry houses. Whilst the building of houses for chantry priests reached its zenith in the 15th century (as did the rebuilding of many priests lodgings on many monastic sites- another closely related type), a number of earlier examples have been recorded, for example that at Muchelney in Somerset, dated to the early fourteenth century (see Margaret Wood, *The English Mediaeval House*, 1965, p.193-4)

Phase 2: Late Sixteenth or Early Seventeenth Century

It is not clear how much of the original walls of the medieval building survive because there has been much rebuilding. The two blocked mullioned windows which are both in the west cross wing indicate that this wing at least was here by the end of the 17th century. The corner flues in the cross wings are a typical 17th century feature, but could also be earlier. There is no evidence now of the former medieval cross passage, suggesting a wholesale remodelling of the house, and with it the loss of the original entry to the central hall range. Unfortunately no documentary evidence has revealed the extent of the rebuilding in this period.

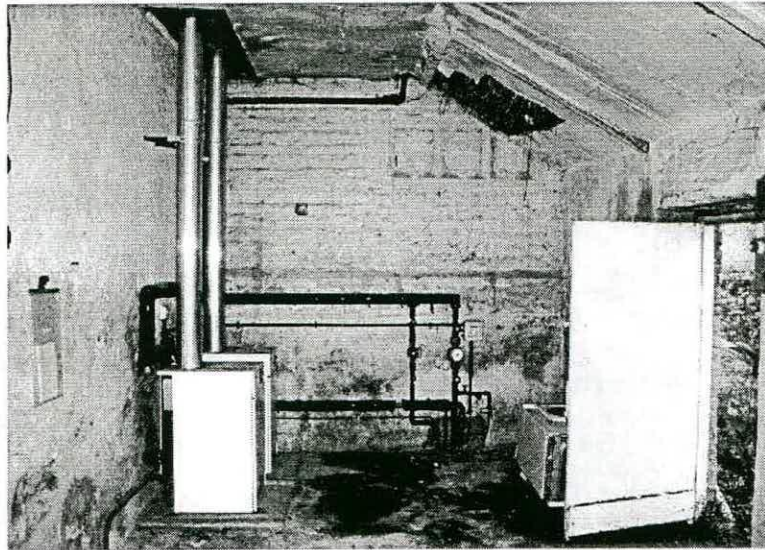


Figure 6 Interior of single-storey west addition, showing blocked window at east end

At the west end of the house in the front (south) wall of the cellar is a mullion and transom window with ovolo-moulded stone cross members. At ground floor level, towards the north (rear) end of the exterior side wall of the same wing is another three-light stone window with ovolo-moulded mullions. The window is set a high level, possibly to avoid an extension or lean-to on this side of the house (*Figure 6*). Adjoining the west wing is a later single-storey structure (the plinth of the cross wing being continuous along the entire length of the wall) aligned N-S, i.e. at right angles to the west wall of the wing. This is probably a later 17th century addition - possibly a brewhouse - which, like the wing itself, also includes an ovolo-moulded stone window in its south front wall.



Figure 7 Single-storey addition at west end of house

Phase 3: Eighteenth Century

The two window surrounds with moulded architraves with keyblocks on the south gables of the cross wings are typical of late 17th century or early 18th century work. Many of the chimneypieces in the cross wings follow types common in the 1720s and 1730s, which perhaps suggests that both cross wings were built and fitted out by the 1730s. The glebe terrier (an account of land and property belonging to the church) from 1726 refers to a 'good strong parsonage house now in very good repair.'³ Such phraseology may be taken to imply some substantial rebuilding or refurbishment in the recent past. The terrier of 1733 adds a little more information: 'A good strong parsonage house in good repair, barns, stables, garden four acres of meadow and the chancel of the church in good repair.' The rector at the time was Launcelot Smith. The aggrandising alterations would have reflected the growing status of the clergy in the early eighteenth century.



Figure 8 Bedroom fireplace, c.1720. West wing, first floor, south room

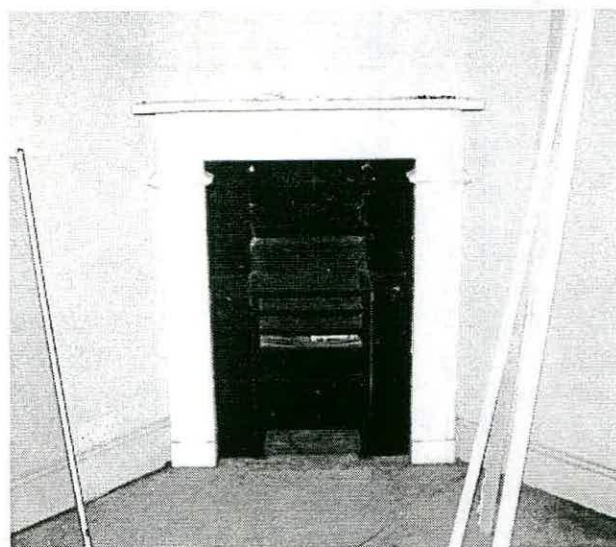


Figure 9 Bedroom fireplace, c.1720. West wing, first floor, north room

³ Ufford Glebe Terriers 1632-1798, Northants County Record Office, Acc.19, box X 600

which dates from 1846 and deposited in the county record office, shows the north elevation as it appears today (Figure 11). Between the 1799 enclosure map and Clark's drawing of 1846, there was a major rebuilding of the house but it is not clear if it took place all at once or in stages.

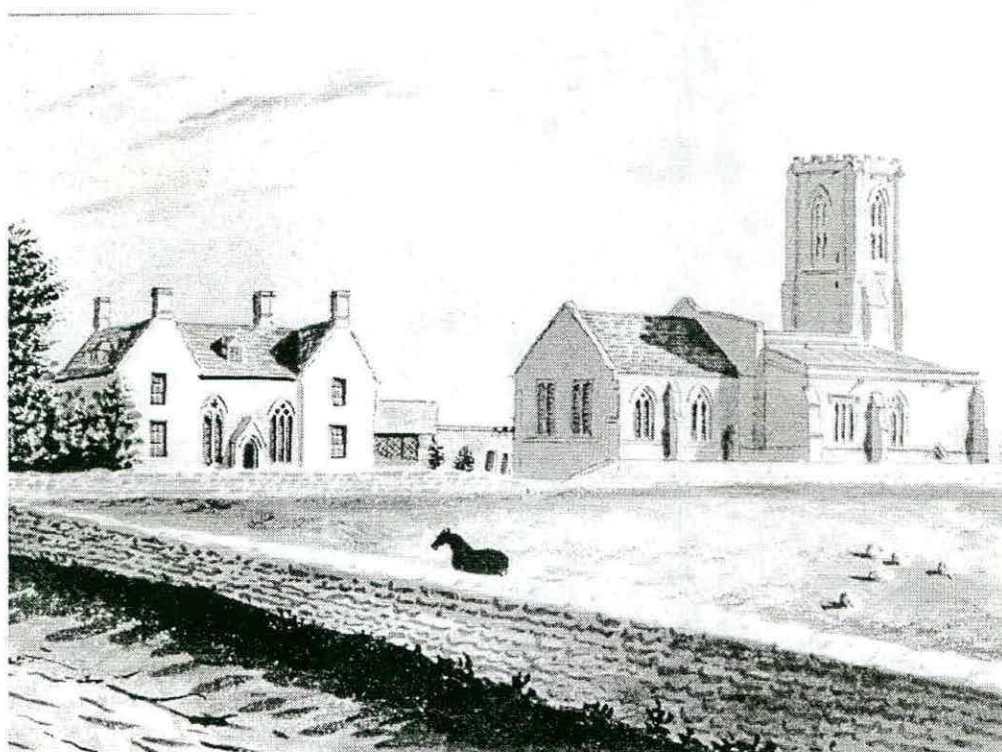


Figure 11 *Ufford Church and Parsonage* by George Clark, 1846

In 1817, the rector Robert Boon applied for a faculty to make alterations to the house, and to demolish some surrounding structures. This document is entitled, 'A faculty for taking down and altering part of the rectorial premises at Ufford in the County of Northampton', and is held at the Northamptonshire Record Office.⁴ It makes clear Boon's intention 'to take down several old and ruinous buildings formerly used as a roadhouse, stable and part of a barn', and 'to take down and remove detached and attached offices and walls on the north and north west sides of the rectorial house and premises, and build upon other parts of the said rectorial premises, south of the said offices, as might be necessary for the occupation of the said premises, and which might not be included in the body of the house, as shown in the plan to the said petition and these presents (*sic*) annexed, and also to contract the bow window at the east end of the said house, and take down and remove the present dovecote which is in a very ruinous state and to build another dovecote on a smaller and more compact scale, and to remove and rebuild the greenhouse.' Boon was granted the faculty for these works.

Attached to the faculty are two plans showing both floors 'when altered' and they go some way to explaining what was proposed. They show the north central wall on both floors and the south central wall at ground floor level moved out so that it is flush with the cross wing gables. The faculty stated an intention to 'contract the bow window'. This may have been because the walls above were failing; there is some sign of cracking here. On the plan, in the middle of the house, the kitchen, two pantries, two cellars and a larder are shown (Figure 12).

⁴ Faculty, 1 November 1817 Doc. 331P / 36

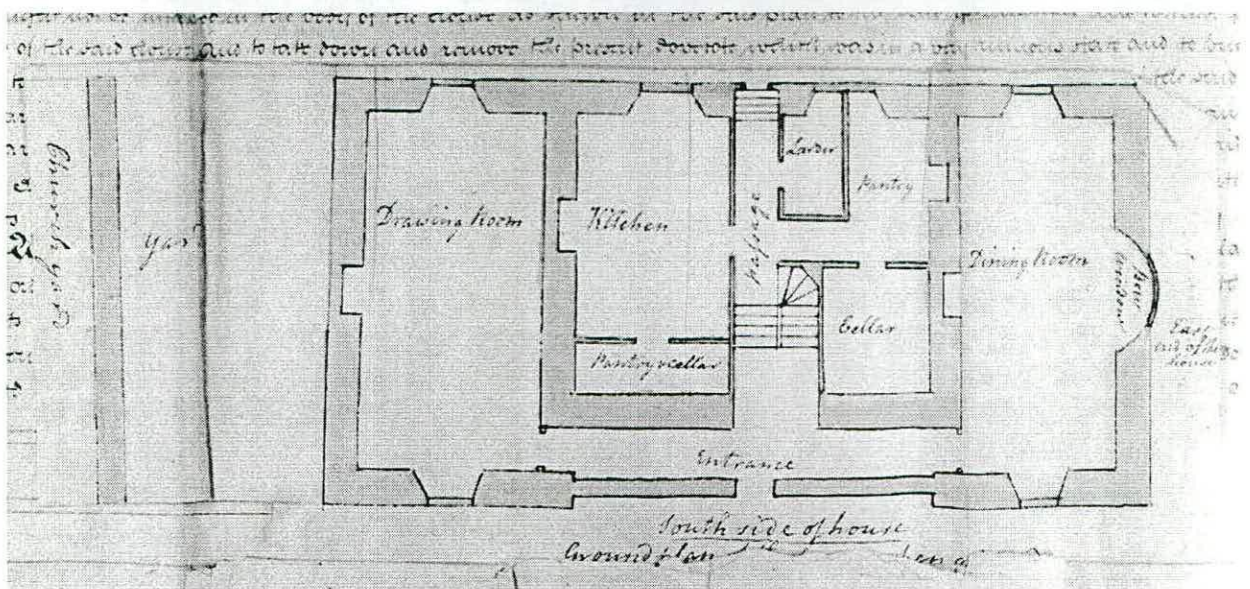


Figure 12 Faculty plan of ground floor of house, dated 1817

On the first floor are shown two bedrooms in the cross wings, a bedroom and library in the central portion of the house and the staircase (Figure 13). Whether the staircase replaced the old one in the same position is not known; it may well have originally been attached to an external wall.

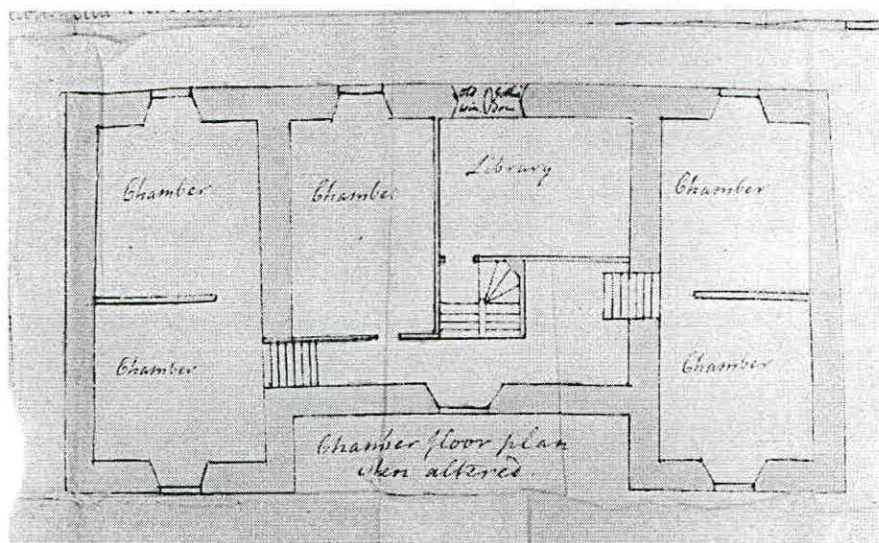


Figure 13 Faculty plan of first floor of house, dated 1817

In the external wall on the north side of the room called the library is the inscription 'old Gothic window' with a mullion dividing it into two lights. This is puzzling, because it does not show the north front as now, with two large Gothic windows. The windows themselves and the arched door surround appear to be early 19th century copies based on designs of c. 1300. If this is the case, then the plans could be taken to indicate that alterations or repairs were intended for just one of the windows at this time.

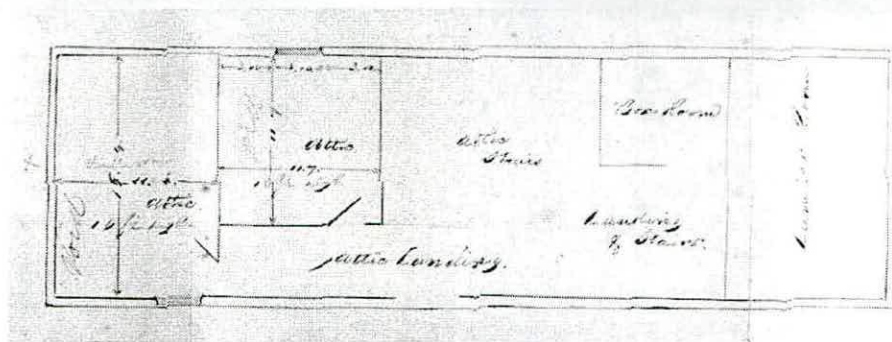


Figure 14 Faculty plan of attic, dated 1817

Another alteration that may date from this phase, i.e. before 1830, is the enlargement of the windows of the south gables, and the insertion of all the sashes with thin glazing bars and no horns. A close examination of the north front suggests that the whole of it was refaced at the same time, and given a more or less regular and symmetrical appearance. Internally all the joinery (skirting boards, doors, window embrasures and staircase) all appear to be date from this early nineteenth century phase.

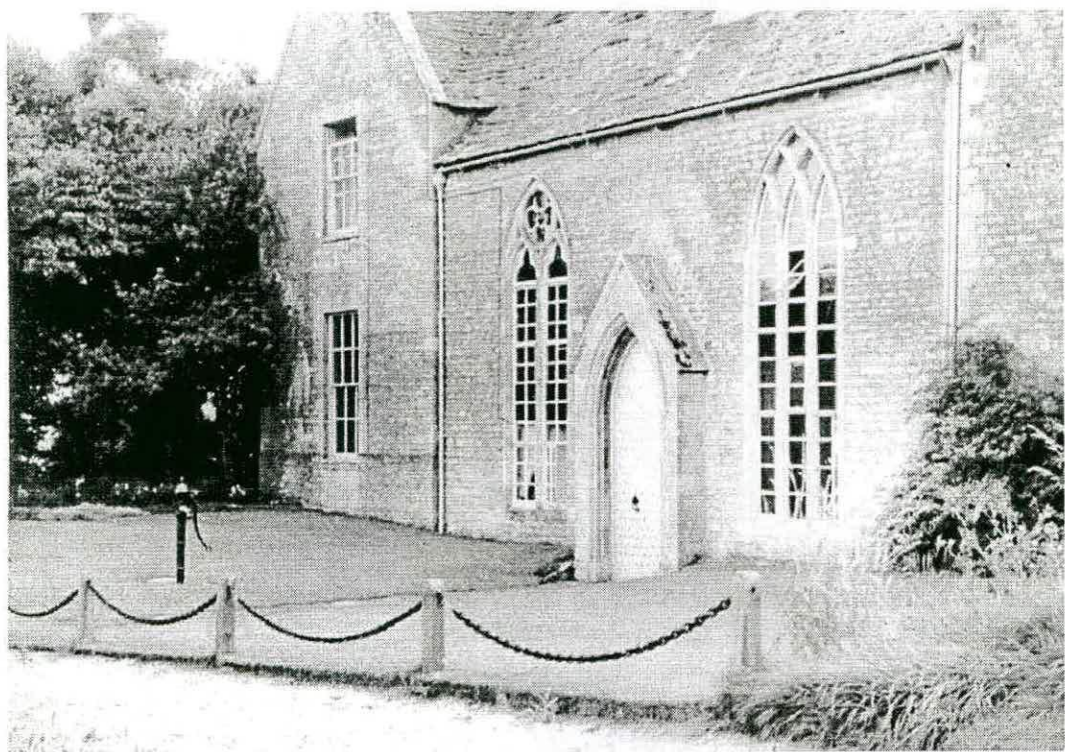


Figure 15 Photograph of north side of house taken in 1958

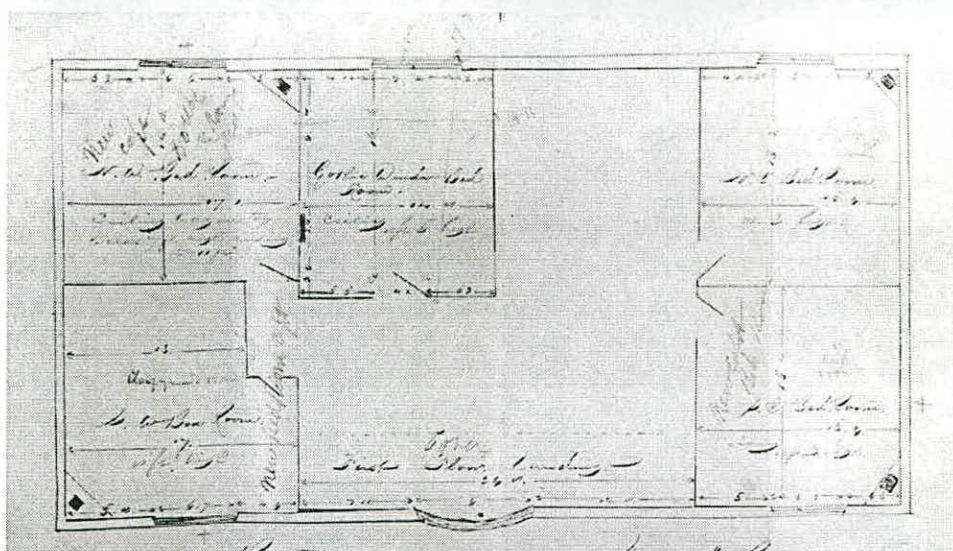


Figure 16 Undated plan of first floor of house, probably late nineteenth century

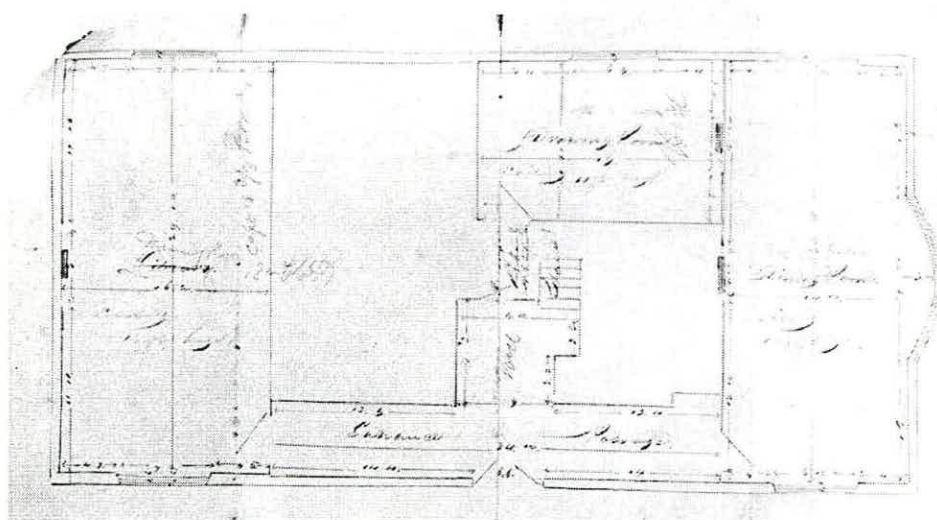


Figure 17 Undated plan of ground floor of house, probably late 19th century

Some time between 1817 (faculty plans) and 1958 (the date of a photograph taken of the south front) the front wall of the hall range was taken down and rebuilt on a new alignment further outwards to create a symmetrical, balanced composition with the cross wings. At the centre of the wall at first floor level, the earlier (presumably medieval) wall line was maintained to create a central recess above the main entrance (Figure 19).

Other features may be part of another phase of alterations, possibly linked with three undated plans for the house, but perhaps dating from the late nineteenth century (figures 16 and 17). These plans show a number of proposals, only some of which were carried out. A puzzling feature of the plans is that, although the front wall of the hall range is depicted as being flush with the wings, there is no sign of any central recess to the hall range. Also, they show a room called the 'Gothic window bedroom' on the first floor, but not in the same position as the drawing on the 1817 faculty shows it. In fact this particular drawing may be a red herring: the proposals were certainly not fully carried out because the centre of the south front remained recessed until after 1958, nor was there a bow window inserted here. Some of the repositioning of the doors on the bedroom floor tally with the present arrangement, which may date from then.

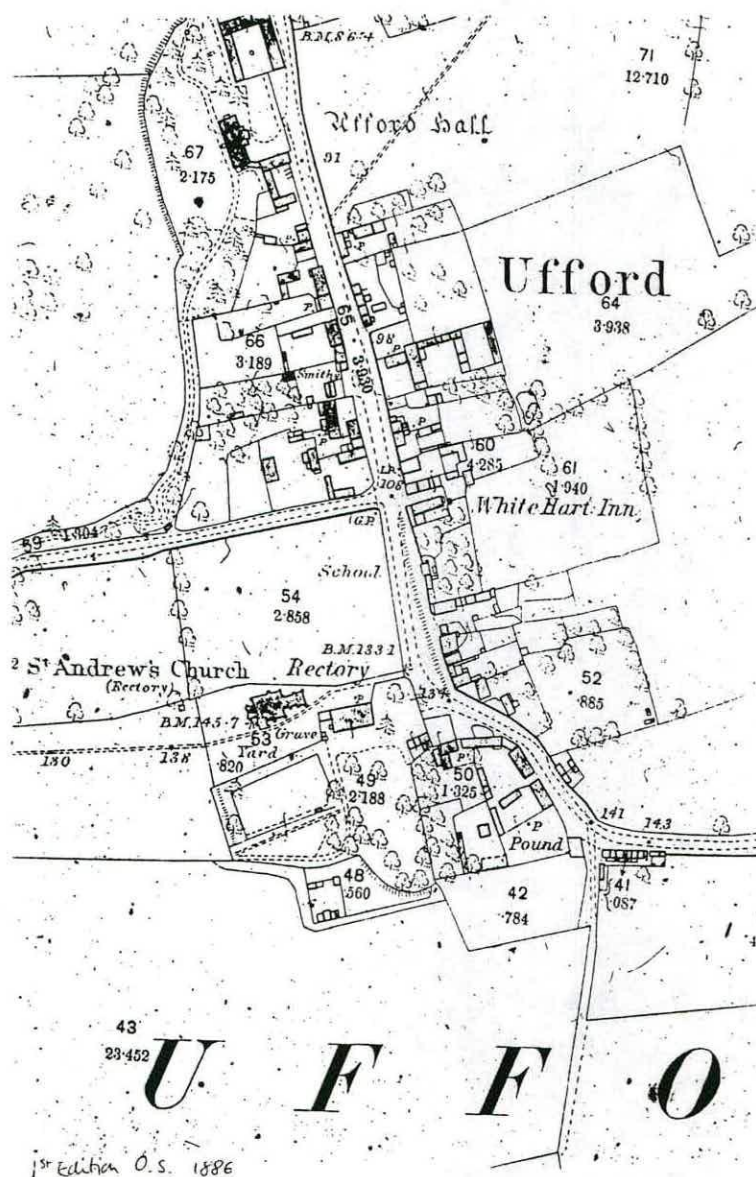


Figure 18 Detail from 1st Edition 25" Ordnance Survey map of 1886

Phase 5: The Twentieth Century

An inventory dating from 1922 lists, on the ground floor, the dining room, hall, drawing room and morning room, kitchen, back kitchen and back yard with a lean-to greenhouse and an iron pump over a spring on the north side. Three bedrooms, a bathroom and water closet, and a landing are listed for the first floor, and finally the attics.⁵

The south front has undergone significant changes since photographs were taken in 1958 (Figure 19). The area in the central part of the house on the first floor has been infilled to create a small room, which gives

⁵ Inventory of Fixtures at Ufford Rectory in the property of Rev. W.S.Wood, 27 October 1922 ref. 331P / 43

out through French windows onto a projecting stone porch. (The original door contained double doors, with glazed panels and marginal lights on the upper part). Flanking the porch are new window openings to increase the light into the lateral passage and entrance hall beyond.



Figure 19 Photograph of south front of house taken in 1958

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Victoria County History *Northamptonshire* Volume II, 1906