



# Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**A heritage asset survey of Grange Farmhouse,  
Geddington Grange, Northamptonshire**

**September 2013**



# Grange Farmhouse, Geddington

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## A Heritage Asset Survey of Grange Farmhouse, Geddington Grange, Northamptonshire

Iain Soden BA MifA

### Summary

Grange Farmhouse, Geddington Grange was built between 1811 and 1817 on extensive and reliable map evidence. Externally there have been few alterations since at least 1900, although the interiors of its two service wings have been re-ordered on its ground and first floors. Three basic phases are discernible: 1811-17, pre-1886 (external) and 20<sup>th</sup> century (mainly internal).

### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Charlotte Walker for her archives work. My gratitude to Crispin Powell, archivist to the Duke of Buccleuch for his advice concerning the un-catalogued Boughton Estate archives. Thanks also to Mark Benns of Paul Bancroft Architects for permission to use their scale plans as a base for interpretation.

### Introduction/Background

Mark and Christine Sharman are seeking to alter rooms within their Grade II Listed home at Grange Farmhouse, Geddington Grange. The Local Planning Authority, Kettering Borough Council have asked that in support of the application for Listed Building Consent, they should supply a Heritage Asset Survey for the property, about which current knowledge is limited.

The present report provides a background on the date and origin of the farmhouse together with its former farm, and seeks to understand (without physical intervention) the development of the farmhouse and identify the extent to which it has previously been altered.

The following is the official listing for the farmhouse (Legacy Listing), which gives little information about the property.

GEDDINGTON

*SP88SE GRANGE ROAD*

*1337-0/5/254 Geddington Grange Farmhouse*

*II*

*Farmhouse. Early C19. Coursed limestone rubble with ashlar dressings, hipped slate roof and C20 brick stacks to rear. 3 storeys, 3-window range. Quoins. Central 6-panel door (upper 2 panels glazed)*

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*in moulded wood surround with hood. Sash windows (less tall to second floor) with gauged stone heads. Lower wing to rear. Interior not inspected. Listing NGR: SP8734182885*

The farmhouse has ceased to be associated with its former farm buildings, which have been converted to accommodation in recent years.

The farm was formerly of a type discussed in the HELM prescriptive document *Historic Farmsteads* etc (HELM 2006). There it fits sensibly into what is described as a Regular Courtyard E Plan (ibid 40-42). In some cases these were the unintentional forerunners of the so-called 'model farm' of the apogee of English farming in the 1840s-70s. Its establishment and courtyard type can be seen as being related to the massive expansion of the cultivated area of the East Midlands in the period 1790-1815, which was a direct result of two things – firstly the inordinate rises in grain prices brought about by the Napoleonic Wars and increasing government energy and interest in farming brought on in and continued by, the newly established Board of Agriculture in 1793 (ibid 6). At this time much of the former medieval Rockingham Forest land (at the southern edge of which lies the parish of Geddington and Geddington Grange) was lost to agriculture (op cit 38; Foard et al 2009; Partida et al 2013). Geddington had been considered part of the forest at least from 1299, when it was included in the official perambulation of the forest bounds as part of Brigstock Bailiwick (Partida et al 2013, 23 [fig 18]; maps 24M and 24EM).

### Historic Maps and documents

Geddington is well mapped from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the very good quality of the earliest relevant maps makes the absence of a depiction in 1808 and 1810 a clear indication that the farmhouse was built in the period 1811-1817. Geddington was inclosed in 1808 and much of the land changed hands as a result. The creation of the farm soon after was probably as a direct result of the demand on agriculture from the deprivations of the Napoleonic Wars.



Fig 1: Inclosure map of Weekley and Geddington, 1808 (on its side, north to top); the land was owned by the Maydwell Estate before the farm (location starred) was built. Parts of the medieval Mill Field and West Field predated inclosure and would later be extensively quarried for ironstone (Northamptonshire Record Office)

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Fig 2: The Eagle Map of 1810. The farm has clearly not yet been established (location starred)  
(Northamptonshire Record Office)



Fig 3: The 1817 Ordnance Survey Surveyor's Drawing depicting the farm for the first time  
(British Library)

The passage of the land from the Maydwell estate to the Dukes of Buccleuch at Boughton House probably provided the impetus and opportunity for the enclosure of the land and the creation of Grange Farm. The house remained in the ownership of the Boughton estate until 1979 when first sold to private owners and the farm buildings split off from the farmhouse and the land.

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Fig 4: Extract from Bryant's map, 1827, with a formulaic depiction of the farm. This can do little more than confirm its existence (Northamptonshire Archaeology)



Fig 5: The farmhouse (and farm) in the first proper survey (1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 1886)  
(Northamptonshire Record Office)

Tenant farmers are known for the building during its late 19<sup>th</sup> century heyday (Rayne 1991, 55):

- -1888 Joseph Sheffield followed by his son
- 1888-1903 Robert Sykes
- 1903- Matthew Harker

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ironstone quarrying in the area increased and much of the land close to the farmhouse was quarried away, the farmers being compensated for the loss of their land (Rayne 1991, 57). As tenants only they had no choice but to acquiesce.

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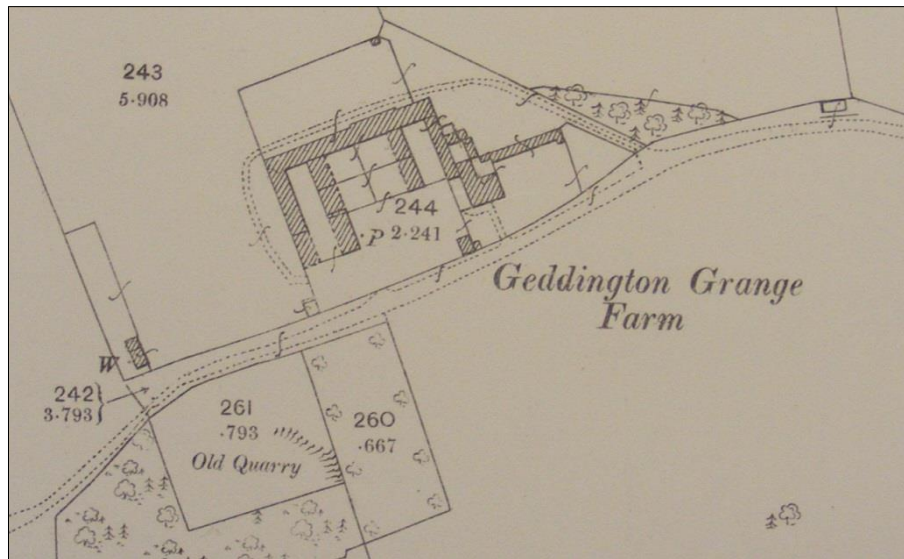


Fig 6: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey, 1900. The most detailed plan of the farmhouse to date shows it had already reached its greatest extent, farm buildings alone changing in plan thereafter (Northamptonshire Record Office)

By the time of the First World War the farm had clearly room to spare, suggesting that the farming for the moment had given way somewhat to ironstone quarrying. The farmer, Matthew Harker, was compensated for his loss of land at this time. With the seasonal pressure on the farm buildings alleviated, the farm was given over to billeting a squadron of cavalry, together with their horses (Rayne 1991, 58). Records note that their straw mattresses and detritus were to be seen lying around for quite some time after the war, again suggesting that there continued to be no great pressure to use the farm particularly efficiently as an agricultural unit any more.

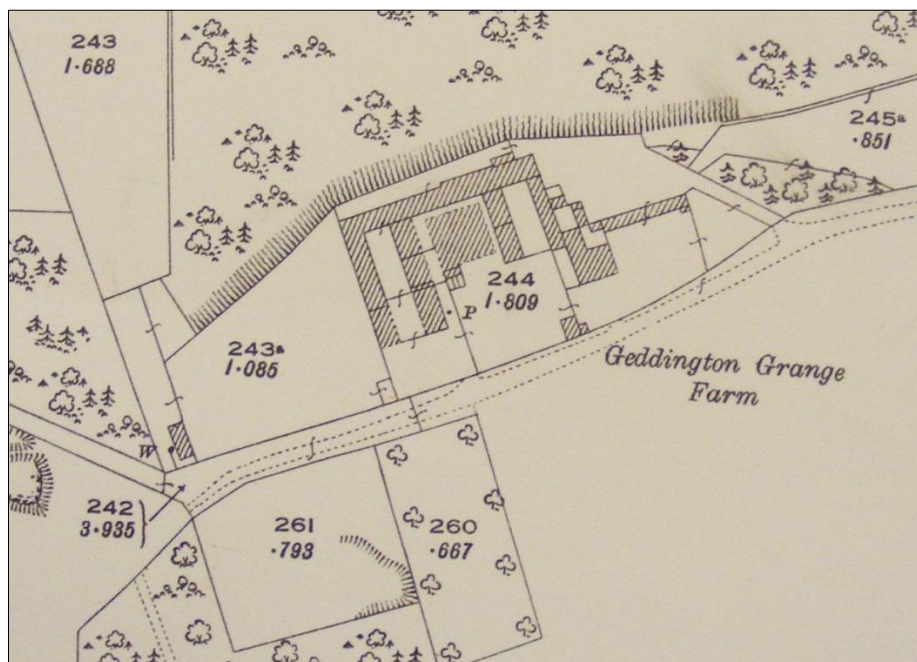


Fig 7: 3<sup>rd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey, 1926. The farm buildings at their greatest extent. The land behind (north) was all reconstituted quarry by this time (Northamptonshire Record Office)

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## The fabric of the farmhouse

As the Listing description (above) begins to suggest, the farmhouse may be described as follows, now in some detail:

### Exterior

The farmhouse is of three storeys and is constructed of coursed limestone rubble with dressings, beneath a hipped slate roof. It also has some ironstone used at the rear. It is of three bays and basically balances a reception room to either side of a central entrance hall with stairs occupying the central portion. A cellar lies beneath the front rooms of the house. The windows are of a suite throughout the Front Range (its side faces too) and comprise simple sashes, largely very simply-horned. These are likely to derive from updated, later 19<sup>th</sup>-century or 20<sup>th</sup> century replacements of original un-horned examples. However inside the Front Range the working shutters fold back well into their boxes and may be original.



Fig 8: Geddington Grange Farmhouse; the main (south) front

To the north and west lies a two storey rear wing, apparently of the same original build, with its own side-facing hall, forming a service entrance facing the farm. For all that, there is no loss of build quality in its stonework, just a loss of embellishment. The west-facing fenestration is a replacement, using casements with substantial timber mullions and transoms and window furniture, proportions redolent of the decades either side of the First World War. However, in deference to the principal face this service range lacks the dressings to the window jambs which characterise the front.



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Fig 9: Geddington Grange Farmhouse; west face with side entrance and rear wing

Facing east and north is another range, of just a single storey. Again it appears to be an original build, contemporary with the Front Range, but has undergone some changes on the rear, which are discussed below. Facing into the garden is a shrub-covered blocked window and a much smaller round headed window. Both appear to be original to the wing, and therefore to the construction of the farmhouse. The current owners believe that the wing was originally built as a dairy, which will be discussed below in relation to the phasing of the building and the interiors.



Fig 10: Geddington Grange Farmhouse; east face, its rear wing behind shrubs

The rear aspect of the farmhouse is far more mundane in terms of its construction and marks the service areas. The taller, two-storey west- and north-facing wing (the kitchen wing) has been little altered on the outside, but for the addition of a large rear out-shut (Figs 11 and 12, below). The former end of the wing can still be seen in the re-aligned ironstone quoins and the current exterior doorway is completed in brick. In addition, the kitchen window on this side has been renewed, with

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the stonework all around it altered. When the proportions of the buildings are compared between the 1886 and the (much more detailed) 1900 Ordnance Survey Maps, it is clear that the added out-shut was in place by 1886. It was probably built as a scullery, its location dictated by its interdependence with the kitchen.



Fig 11: north-west wing, east face. Out-shut added to right, inserted kitchen window on left



Fig 12: north-west wing; north face, the out-shut

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The north-east wing, of a single storey, has been altered on the exterior. As has been noted an original, large east-facing window (now mostly obscured by shrubs (Fig10) has been blocked in stone, while a tiny arched window adjacent also appears to be original. As will be seen, these probably always lit different rooms in the same block.



Fig 13: North-east wing: north wall.

The door is a former window and the window is in a blocked former doorway



Fig 14: Infilling a passageway between the two wings created what is now a pantry and built a bathroom above; note the stone quoins of the dairy. 1950s pantry and kitchen windows match.

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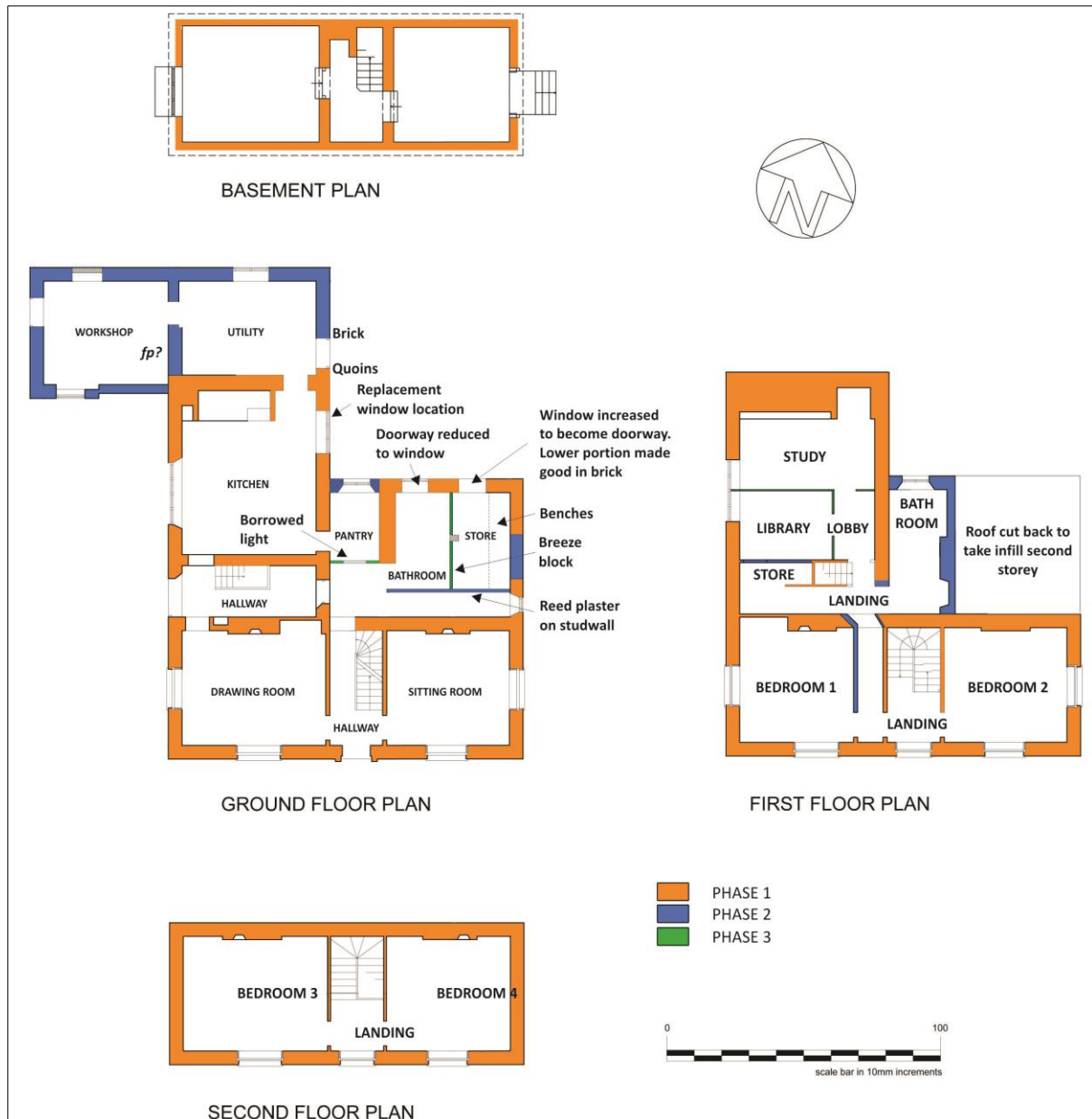


Fig 15: The farmhouse – Floor plans, phased

## The interiors

The farmhouse originally was accessed via its front door and hallway, which could, if required, lead directly through between the two wings to the rear courtyard. No direct access into the north-east wing was originally intended from the house, except from this open passageway. The north-west-kitchen wing was accessed internally from the secondary, service hallway, which was provided with its own set of stairs for servants. There may originally have been a second doorway into the kitchen, under the service hallway stairs, and connecting more directly with the front of the house, although this is not clear on current evidence.

The rooms of the Front Range have been altered little, but for their décor, although the fireplace grates, where they survive, are mostly Victorian or Edwardian replacements for Regency originals.

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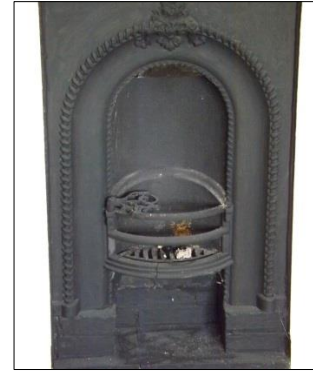
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Sitting Room



Bedroom 1



Bedroom 3

Fig 16: Victorian and later fireplaces in the Front Range

The principal stair in the front hall is a fine example of a Regency open string stair, typical of the 1811-17 period and would not look out of place in any London town house of the period.

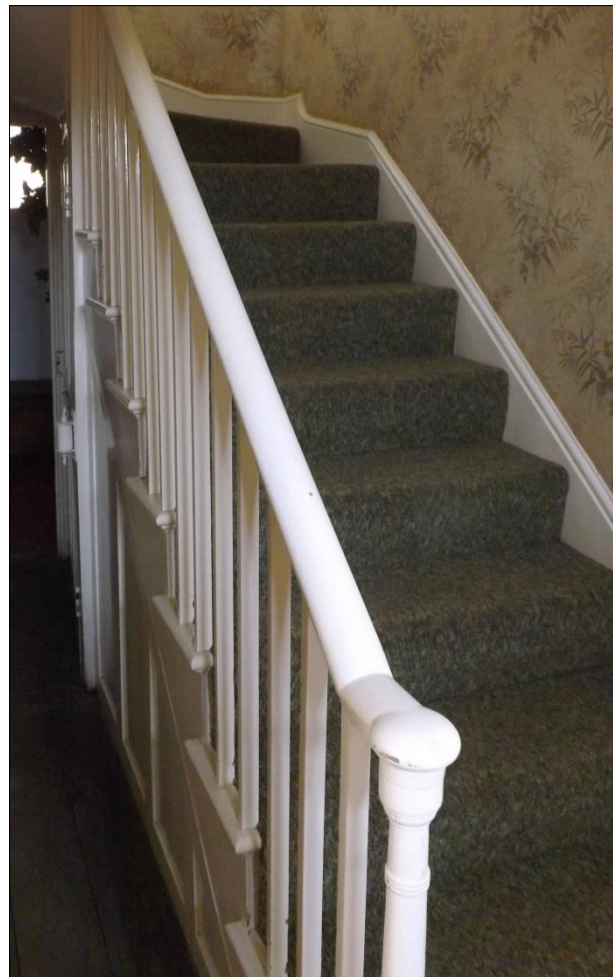


Fig 17: The open-string principal stair with deep nosings; a restrained original of 1811-17; the handrail would not originally have been painted, nor possibly the decorative post.

The kitchen is typical for a farmhouse, and is dominated by the large inglenook on the north wall. This would have held a large cast iron range for most, if not all of its history. This is currently filled in

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with stone, probably in the 1970s or later, with a boiler projecting. It is unclear whether any historic features survive behind this stonework without opening it up. The rest of the kitchen has been fitted out in a relatively modern style, probably in the 1970s. Scrutiny of the haphazard exterior stonework suggests that originally the east-facing window did not exist (Fig 20), although it may have been a doorway, where it would have exited next to the farmhouse well, the location of which is still marked by a stone cover visible in Fig 14. The north doorway, if not original, has certainly been there since the construction of the out-shut, before 1886, while the slightly narrow doorway in the east wall is probably of the 1950s to serve the divided-off pantry.



Fig 18: The kitchen – in-filled inglenook. To the left, the original (splayed) window location, to the right, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century inserted window.



Fig 19: The kitchen – east wall with 20<sup>th</sup>-century inserted window and narrow door to pantry



Fig 20: Inserted kitchen window (matching the pantry), with tell-tale mortaring repairs around; the coursing below is awkwardly re-set, suggesting a former doorway direct to the outside well-head

The ground floor of the north-east wing is reputed to have been a dairy. This is entirely in keeping with a farm of this date, and in what is now a store, the vestiges can be seen of benches against the east wall, beneath the blocked window. Such internal arrangements would be in keeping with this use. It is otherwise stripped of all traces of internal fixtures, fittings, and even plaster. Only a quarry-tile floor survives of its early use.

Part of the north-east wing is separated off from the main room in a partition which inexplicably falls well short of the ceiling, perhaps having been cut down. It is of reed-plaster but appears to be a later insertion as it is not integral to the structure and may have replaced something which was part of the dairy fit-out. The use of such plaster is not unknown as late as the 1930s in Northamptonshire and it is possible that it post-dates the disuse of the dairy, out of the space of which it seems to have been created. By partitioning, a long narrow room was created which is lit by the surviving tiny arched window seen on the east side. It is very likely that this dimly lit room was intended as a larder or pantry. The tiny window is almost obscured on the outside by shrubs. The room is today a WC and store and is an awkward inclusion which makes the majority of the former dairy unusable.

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Fig 21: Rear lobby -the original, formerly external doors of the passageway to (left) 1980s bathroom in the former dairy, and (right) a WC in the former pantry/larder.

Half of the dairy space has now been taken up by the creation of a downstairs bathroom, probably in the 1980s. Its structure is formed in breeze-block/block-work and its creation involved turning the original north-facing doorway into a bathroom window, and dropping an original north-facing window to provide what was left of the dairy (now a store) with a new access to avoid its total isolation.

Before 1886 the passageway between the two rear wings was stopped up. Downstairs, one part is today a pantry, now with both a north-facing window (probably of the 1930s-50s, and matching the east-facing kitchen window (Fig 14, centre) and a borrowed light (again, probably 1930s-50s) which throws light from the pantry perhaps slightly awkwardly into what might otherwise be a dark interior space (the so-called rear lobby – Fig 21).

Above the in-filled passageway a new first floor room was created, necessarily cutting back the roof over the dairy to accommodate it. This is today a bathroom, but this may have begun life as a bedroom, since it contains a simple fireplace, for which any related chimney has since been taken down. Its window is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century leaded casement, the only one surviving in the house (Fig 22).



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Fig 22: The 19<sup>th</sup>-century window, possibly original in what is now a bathroom

At some point the use of the first floor generally has changed, to facilitate access between the sleeping quarters at the front and the rear, north-west wing. It is suggested that this may have been to accommodate access for a nurse or children's governess, for whom the current Bedroom 1 would have been the obvious nursery.

Access from the Front Range to the north-west wing may originally have been to the left of the fireplace in Bedroom 1, through a walk-in wardrobe, into what has been for some time a store (Fig 23). This was replaced by a passageway, made by subdividing Bedroom 1 and cutting through the north wall of the Front Range, requiring an angled turn and steps down to marry up the levels (Fig 15). In the north-west wing, the main bedroom, in a location often given over to the Cook/Housekeeper (over the kitchen), was then subdivided to create what is today a study, library and lobby. These alterations comprise simple boarded partitions and are probably early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in date (Fig 24). Effectively, however, this rear wing, with the original room over the passageway (before it became a bathroom), may have served to provide two or three bedrooms.



Fig 23: Bedroom 1, walk-in wardrobe where there may once have been a doorway direct (through what is a wafer-thin partition) to the north-west wing, before a passageway was created out of this same bedroom adjacent to the stairs



Fig 24: Board-partitioning (right) of the first-floor bedroom above the kitchen. The boarding bisects the only window. At top left the borrowed light into the store.

In the Front Range, the second floor is made up, like the floors below, of a room either side of the stairs, which are boarded in at their foot for privacy and segregation of householder from servants. Both are simple, unprepossessing bedrooms. Bedroom 4 has a plaster or lime-ash floor to deaden the sound of servants' feet early in the morning from the principal bedroom below (Bedroom 2).

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Both second floor bedrooms retain their fireplaces, smaller than elsewhere in the house, as befits servants' rooms. That in Bedroom 4 is probably original, while the one in Bedroom 3 is Victorian.



Fig 25: Probably an original fireplace and grate of 1811-17 in Bedroom 4

### Conclusions

Geddington Grange Farmhouse was built between 1811 and 1817 on newly enclosed farmland, as a local response to a nationwide need and response for a massive expansion in agriculture, much of it to do with the pressures of the Napoleonic War. It is well mapped for its entire history.

The exterior of the farmhouse has changed little since it reached its apogee by 1886, when its ground plan appears already what it does today. It is a simple and unprepossessing building, built with purpose and solidity.

Inside the décor contains many old, if not original features, notably the suite of excellent fenestration and working window shutters. Although not all survive, the fireplaces throughout the Front Range are 19<sup>th</sup> century, at least one original.

The décor of the Front Range is in keeping with the period, although it is suspected much has been re-set, or imported tastefully in the style of the farmhouse as its purpose changed only little.

The open-string main stairs are a restrained but fine example, probably of 1811-17.

The cellars are very likely as built in 1811-17, with only minor alterations to the floor surfaces. No wine or beer bins or benches survive and the cellars are currently unused spaces.

A probable dairy in the north-east-wing has long since been lost, with only scars of historic details surviving and leaving a building which has no clear purpose today (half is an awkwardly-inserted modern bathroom, while another part has been awkwardly separated off and is now a WC).

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The north-west wing retains no original or early fixtures or fittings on the ground floor, other than its stairs and a large under-stairs cupboard. On the first floor the bedroom over the kitchen has been awkwardly subdivided, sharing the one, west-facing window.

The in-filling before 1886 of the former open passageway between the two original rear wings created a rather dark but useful storage area. It is currently split in two, used as a pantry and a rear lobby, but the windows of both (one a borrowed light) are probably 1950s (and no earlier than 1930s). Neither may have had a predecessor and this space may not always have been divided in two.

At first floor that same infilling allowed an additional bedroom to be built, which retains a probable original window (original to the addition, that is). The window, which is of traditional 19<sup>th</sup>-century leaded-casement form, may have been re-used from elsewhere.

The roof space was not accessed. However both the structure and covering over the north-east wing must have been cut back to build the bathroom over the former passageway.

In summary, therefore, the character of the historic building lies in the almost untouched plan-form which it acquired early on and which was never really altered. Externally it is probably very much as it was within a generation of construction.

Internally most of the rooms retain few of the original features which characterised the house as the centre of a well-to-do farming estate of the Dukes of Buccleuch, partly because it was only ever farmed on a tenancy, and then the agricultural work was supplanted by stone-quarrying, depriving it at a salient period (in farming terms) of its focal position and standing in the landscape. Its occupancy by cavalry during the First World War shows how far this had gone, when farms generally had to be in full production. This resulted in what might be described overall as 'arrested development'.

Some interior features remain, which hark back to the original house and its early years, as described above. However, the loss or degradation of much else, just by natural decay, inappropriate insertions (such as the downstairs bathroom) and alterations (tongue and groove partitions) and the attrition of redundant spaces (the dairy), has left most of the rest of the interiors ripe for the introduction of good quality materials and fresh design.

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