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Modern living in an historic environment

## **A Level 2 building record of former stables at The Old Bakehouse, Maidwell, Northamptonshire**

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# Former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell

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## A Level 2 building record of former stables at the Old Bakehouse

### Maidwell, Northamptonshire

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#### Summary

The stables at The Old Bakehouse, Maidwell are probably late 19<sup>th</sup>-century in date and as stables were probably short-lived. One travis remains, but little else, except for scars and hints at former fittings. The building was constructed off an existing boundary wall to the plot and was once part of a longer range, cut down by 1900.

#### Introduction

The current owners of the Old Bakehouse, Draughton Road, Maidwell, are converting the former stable block on the property into domestic accommodation. The stables lie on the south side of the Draughton Road, west of the Parish Church but in the village core, at approximately NGR: SP 7485 7695; Fig 1.

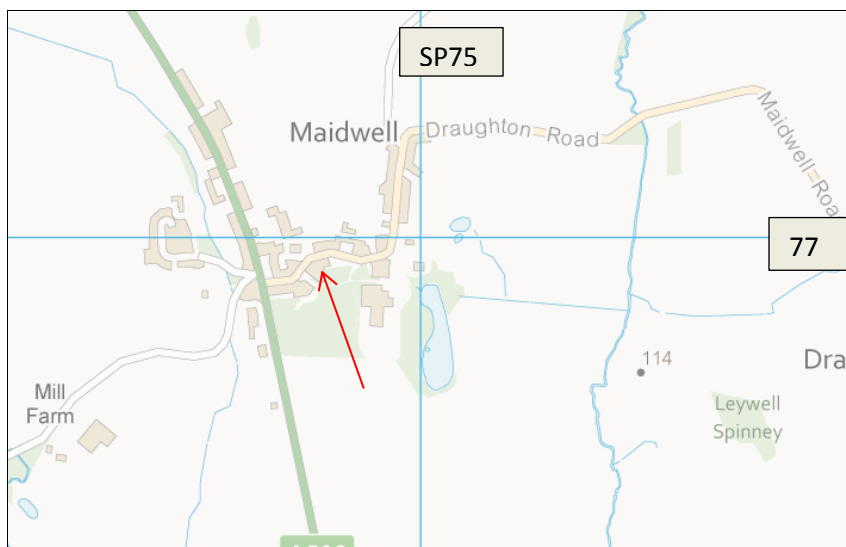


Fig 1: Site location; Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2015

The stables are Listed (Grade II) and the following is a legacy record ([www.britishlistedbuildingsonline](http://www.britishlistedbuildingsonline) )

GV II

*Stable. Probably late C18. Regular coursed lias with slate roof. 2-unit plan. 2 storey, 2-window range of plain casements with hayloft door between. 2 stable doors with 2 pitch holes and shutters alongside all under wood lintels. Included for group value with The Old Bakehouse.*

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## Former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell

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As will be seen below, the listing attribution of 'Probably late C18' is unlikely. It is also roofed differently from its listing description.

### Historic Maps

The relevant mapping for Maidwell begins with two maps in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but which are roughly contemporary. They might have been more useful as an estate map of 1884 also has a schedule to go with it, but Northamptonshire Record Office cannot open it due to its fragility.

As it is, the extant maps, which both appear to have the First Edition OS as their base, show firstly a period just before the current building was constructed (Fig 2), and then a period when the building in question also had a counterpart next door (Fig 3). Scars of this former counterpart are visible in the Old Bakehouse garden, but which are neither prominent nor indicative of the former building's use.



Fig 2: An estate map of 1884; the eastern half of the stable range only is depicted, suggesting the eastern building was slightly earlier than the current, surviving one (NRO YZ6835)

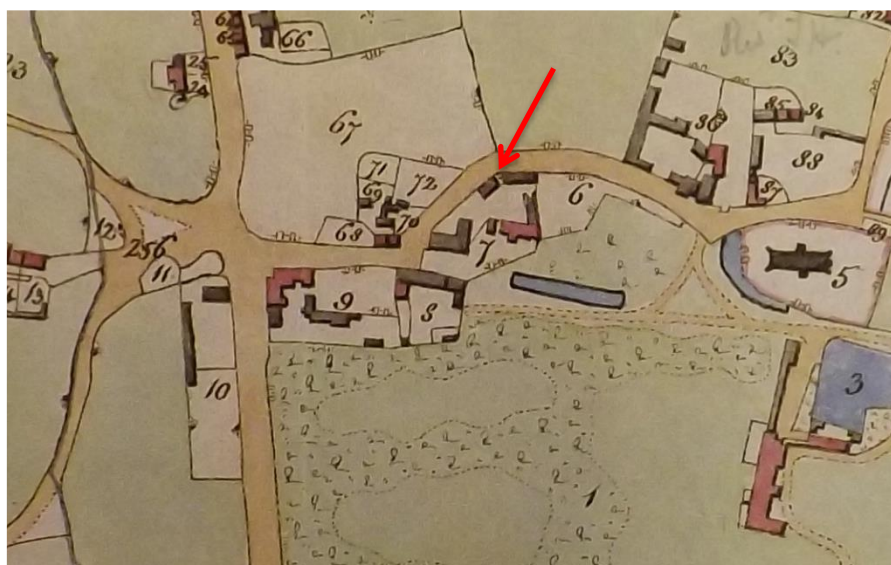


Fig 3: Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Parish Map; there are two halves to the building including that surviving (NRO Map 1715)

## Former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell

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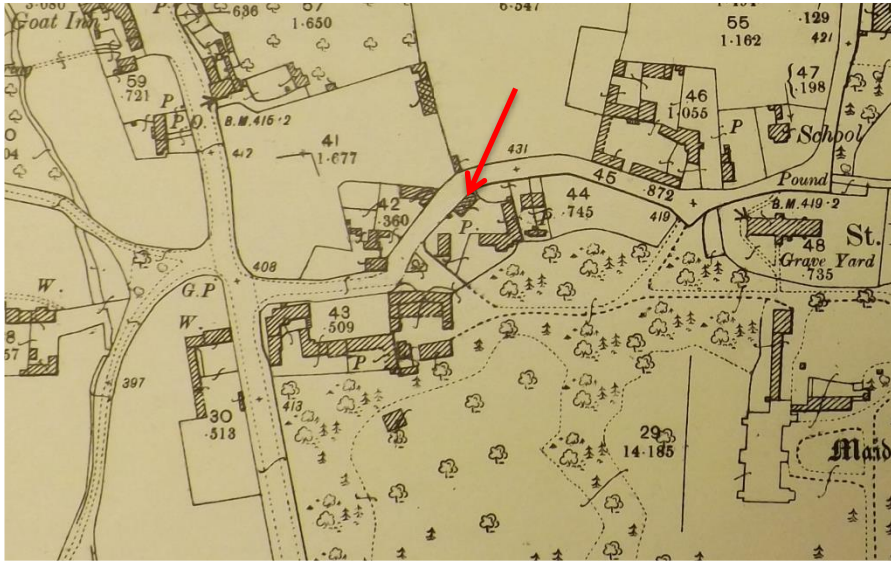


Fig 4: Second edition Ordnance Survey map 1900; building shown correctly 'as is' for the first time, with the eastern half lost. This is the layout which survives.

### The building

The listed former stable block at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell comprises a simple sub-rectangular block aligned approximately north-east to south-west along its long axis, but for the sake of clarity and brevity in this report the long side lying adjacent to Draughton Road will be described here as the north side with the other sides correspondingly east (the angled gable end), south (the long side facing the garden) and west (that facing the adjacent property, Fig 5).

The east end appears to have been built in an oddly-skewed manner due to the former presence of another building immediately to the east, present in one map-version of the 1880s but demolished by 1900, as depicted in the reliable Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. It is likely that the demolished building must have been in existence when the current stable range was built and the angled east end built as it was to respect the existing structure (Fig 2, 3 & 5).

## Former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell

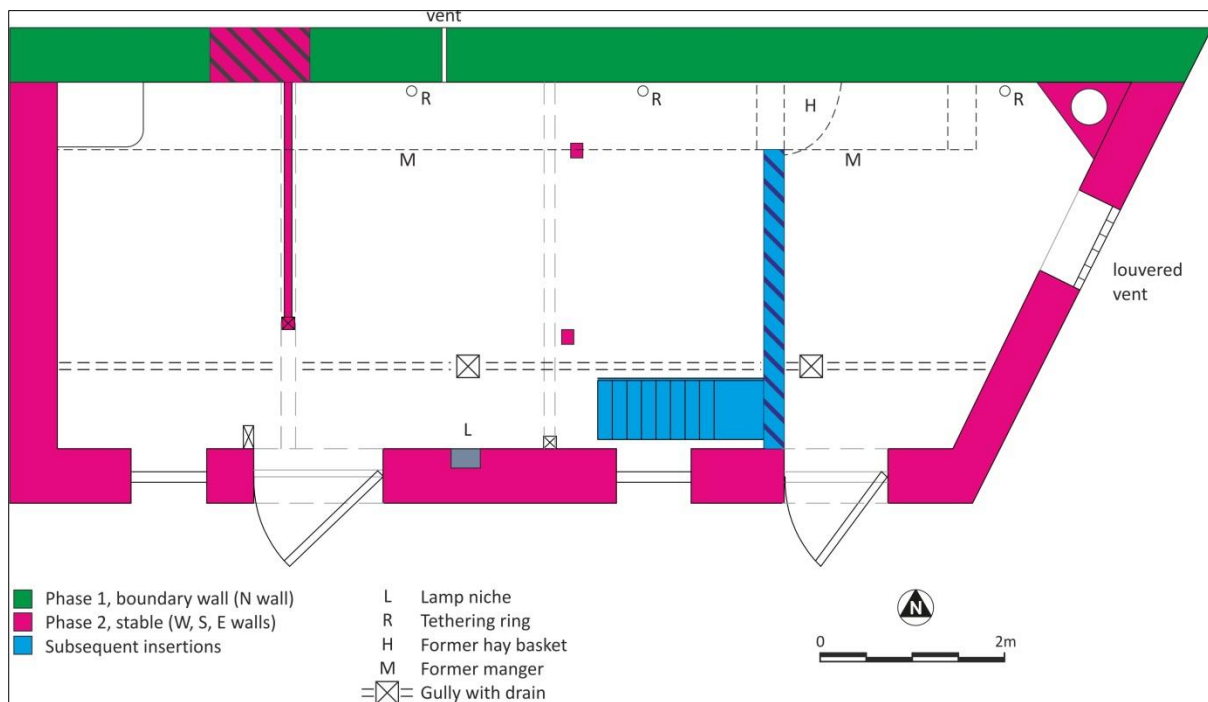


Fig 5: Phased plan, Ground Floor; the First Floor is single phase and without division or detail

### *The exterior*

The north wall which forms the boundary with Draughton Road is constructed of both Northamptonshire Sand with Ironstone and limestone bonded alike in lime mortar (Fig 6). The wall is clearly built in two stages and it seems most likely that the lower portion, built mostly of ironstone, was originally simply a boundary/garden wall with, towards the western end, a pedestrian gate or doorway since infilled. This part of the north wall is poorly built with irregularly sized and dressed pieces of stone laid in irregularly defined courses indicating that it was not a structure deemed to be of any great importance. When the present stables were built this boundary wall was retained and simply heightened, this time mostly in limestone to form the stable's north wall. It was probably at this time that the former pedestrian doorway was blocked since it performed no purpose in the new building.



## Former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell

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Fig 6: View south across Draughton Road. This shows clearly the two-phase north wall built off a former boundary wall with blocked pedestrian doorway; scale 1m

The east, south and west walls were constructed to create the present building and just as the lifting of the north wall is mostly limestone, so too are the remaining three sides to eaves level though with occasional pieces of ironstone too. The north wall incorporates no features such as windows or doors, presumably partly for security but also, more apparent from the interior, due to the layout of the stalls which were accessed from the south side. The only aperture is a small cast iron ventilation grille (Fig 5).

The east wall, whilst appearing to be built at an odd angle, is apparently a response to the former range (see above) and is constructed in a similar fashion to the heightened section of the north wall in mostly ironstone with occasional ironstone, bonded in lime mortar. The dressing and coursing of the stonework is of a similarly workmanlike quality as was observed in the north wall. The only feature within this gable wall is a single reveal at ground floor level fitted with a vertically slatted timber ventilation grille comprising a fixed row of slats and a second adjustable row (Fig 7). The type is not uncommon in agricultural buildings of the later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

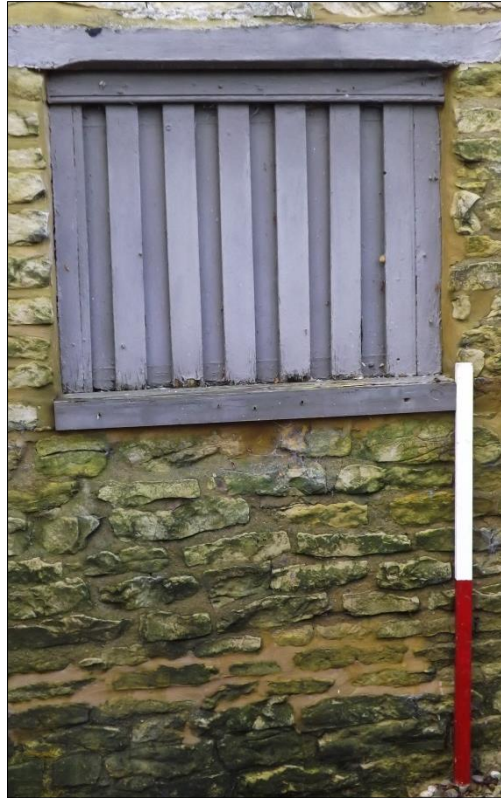


Fig 7: Ventilator, only feature in the east wall; scale 1m

The south elevation faces the former Bakehouse and incorporates two doors and two windows at ground floor and one door (hayloft) and two windows at first floor (Fig 8). The two ground floor windows retain their timber frames, painted but probably oak, fitted with modern painted pine frames containing fixed double-glazed panes. Each window also retains external shutters which appear to be modern replacements and which are constructed of vertical softwood planks, ledged and braced with strap hinges hung on iron pintles driven into the oak frames. At first floor level the hayloft door is centrally positioned, fitted with a vertically planked painted pine door hung on strap hinges set within a painted oak frame. It has a simple iron drop latch and a modern galvanised iron draw bolt. The two windows retain their painted oak frames and each has two-light fixed glazing. Iron pintles set in the frames indicate that previously these windows were also fitted with external shutters.



## Former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell

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Fig 8: The south wall; scale 1m

The roof is covered in red clay pantiles. Although this form of covering may well be original it is known that the building was re-roofed circa 2003 when underfelt was added; it is understood that the existing pantiles were re-used.

### *Interior, ground floor*

The ground floor is divided into two parts of unequal size; that part entered by the western doorway occupies roughly three quarters of the area whilst the remaining part, originally only accessible via the eastern doorway occupies the remaining quarter (Fig 5). The dividing wall is of brick, and has been inserted; it was not part of the original stable layout, and was built to respect the presence of a manger along the north wall, against which it once butted up.

At an unknown date, though almost certainly during the twentieth century, access was made allowing internal access around the north end of the dividing wall, but could only be effected by removing the former stable manger, strongly suggesting that the access was only put in when either the number of animals stabled there was reduced, or actually after it ceased to be used as a stable altogether.

The whole of the floor is paved with common red brick laid on bed (size c220mm x 110mm x 60mm) and which slopes gently from the north wall towards the south with a slightly recessed single brick width drainage channel lying parallel to the south wall (Figs 5, 9 and 10). This relatively standard Victorian brick size almost always dates after the full 1850s repeal of the Brick Tax. The drainage gully falls towards two drains, each retaining a simple cast-iron pierced cover. This form of drainage would allow excess liquid to percolate away through the bedding keeping the feet of the horses reasonably dry. The use of common bricks for the flooring suggests that this was not a building on which a great deal of money or effort was expended. The use of ordinary bricks was common on farms and low status buildings and had little to recommend them apart from cheapness as they

## Former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell

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were porous and liable to wear unevenly (Worsley 2004, 242). Most preferable during the nineteenth-century was hard wearing clinker brick which had the advantage of having moulded surfaces which provided both drainage and helped prevent slippage although the only disadvantage was cost. Staffordshire blue engineering brick or Broseley brick was also sometimes suggested.



Fig 9: The interior, western part, looking south-west, showing the common-brick floor, with travis and door in background; scale 1m



Fig 10: Interior, western part, looking north-east. Note the floor of common bricks laid on-bed, with simple integral drainage gully

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## Former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell

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This western part retains a single stall division comprising a simple square-section heel post into which are fitted rails between this and the north wall onto which are nailed vertical planks to form the travis or stall division which forms a loose box (Fig 9). The top of this travis slopes downward from north to south above which the partition is further enhanced by the addition of vertical, round section, iron bars to prevent the horses from biting each other over the timber division. At the southern end of the travis a door constructed in the same fashion, and of the same materials, is hinged onto the heel post. Within this loose box there were no manger or hayrack remains although there are faint indications that the rack was a simple sloping affair set against the north wall. It is likely to have comprised a top and bottom rail, the top rail set approximately twenty inches away from the wall with the bottom rail set against the north wall. Between the two rails timber slats would have been fitted thus creating a triangular space into which hay could be deposited from above allowing the horses to pull the hay through the gaps between the slats. The manger would have been situated below the rack and it is unclear how it was constructed here since no clear evidence remains but seems most likely to have been a timber trough since there is no scarring on the floor or wall to suggest that it was brick or stone built. There appears to have been no permanent provision for a water trough within the stall and most likely a bucket was provided. There is a single iron tethering ring set into the north wall. The overall arrangement as it may have looked can be seen at a comparative site with surviving features recorded by IS Heritage in Warwickshire in 2012 (Fig 11).



Fig 11: for comparison: timber manger and hayrack at a stable in Warwickshire

The walls are limewashed throughout and the only aperture in the north wall is a small iron grille to provide a degree of ventilation, noted above. Internally it can be seen that the reveals to the windows and doors are faced in the same red brick used to build the dividing wall and floor the building. To the east of the western doorway is a lamp niche built into the thickness of the wall. As its name suggests this small recess was situated in such a position to allow a lamp or enclosed candle to be set and provide a low level of light when feeding or checking on animals during darkness. As is most usual, it is placed just inside an access doorway, as far from combustible hay and bedding straw as possible (Fig 12).





Fig 12: Lamp niche in the south wall; scale 30cm

The remainder of the space in this western part appears to have originally contained a second travis thus creating two further stalls though nothing now remains of this second partition apart from the scar of the heel post in the brick floor.

The smaller, eastern portion of the ground floor is separated from the larger part by a brick wall and, as has previously been mentioned, accessed only from the exterior, though since the hay rack and manger was removed, a doorway has been created adjacent to the north wall allowing internal passage between the two sections. The flooring is the same as in the main part and the walls are similarly lime-washed. In the north-east corner a former iron 'copper' or water heater has been set into the internal angle of the walls to create a permanent water trough (Fig 13). Scars of a wall-fitted hay rack of the same design as the one previously described can also be seen and it is assumed that there was also a manger beneath (Fig 14). It seems that this separate provision, especially as it appears to have been provided with a fitted water trough might have been designed to provide a dedicated space for sick horses, or a foal, thus keeping them separate from the other animals. This compartment has the slatted ventilation grille in the end wall.

## Former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell

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Fig 13: Corner trough; scale 50cm

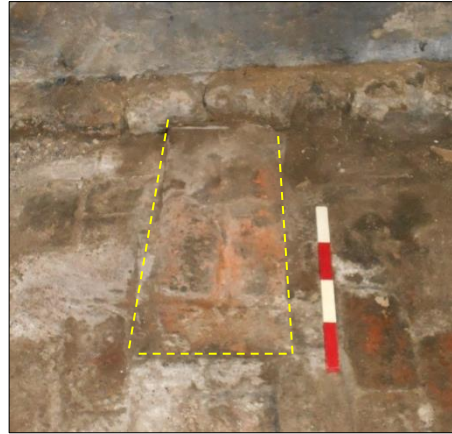


Fig 14: scars of manger-support; scale 50cm

### *Interior, first floor*

The first floor is accessed via a steep, fixed pine hayloft ladder; it is a modern structure though might be a copy of a former feature. The whole of the upper storey flooring is modern apart from the principal beams; all of the joists and floorboards are modern replacements. At the top of the ladder a simple rail prevents the likelihood of falling through the access hole. There are no historic features at this level apart from the three roof trusses which are of queen post construction (Fig 15). The underside of the roof is covered by insulation board but is unlikely to cover any historic features since it is known that the roof has been re-covered.



Fig 15: The upper storey; fully plastered out.



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## Former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell

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### Conclusion

The former stables at the Old Bakehouse, Maidwell are typical of a small purpose-built stable block constructed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, partly built on top of an existing boundary wall. The bricks used throughout are redolent of a later 19<sup>th</sup> century date, not one in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the listing has suggested. The mapping does appear to corroborate this. The relatively workaday quality of materials used in the walls, floor and roof covering indicates that this was a purely utilitarian building with none of the architectural finesse often found in stables connected to houses of a higher status. However, it contained all the features necessary for caring for horses but at the most basic level, reflecting the fact that it was simply to provide serviceable shelter. The horses were presumably used to collect raw materials and then deliver bread from the adjacent bakery. That the simplest materials were used and that the stalls divisions were of the most basic construction suggests that money was a primary consideration. It does not appear to have been in use as a stable for a prolonged period since there is relatively little wear to the soft, common, bricks used for the flooring, a consideration which often counted against their use due to the fact that they were prone to damage when used in this situation. Little remains of the internal fixtures and fittings on the ground floor and nothing at first floor level apart from the principal roof trusses.

### Reference

Worsley, G, 2004 *The British Stable*



IS Heritage, 3/2/2015