



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Building recording of a former meat larder at the
former kennels of Norton Hall, Norton,
Northamptonshire**

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Building recording of a former meat larder at the former kennels of Norton Hall, Norton, Northamptonshire

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Summary

This former meat larder once served the now demolished Norton Hall, probably to supply the hounds housed there with food. Probably of mid-later 19th-century date, the present record accompanied a change of use of the room to a farm office.

Introduction

A small storeroom is to be converted into an office at Pant Yr Owen Farm, Daventry Road, Norton, NN11 2NB (NGR: SP 6090 6380; Daventry District Council Application DA/2015/1174; Fig 1).

The farm was formerly called 'The Kennels' after its former dual role in keeping the hounds for the nearby Norton Hall. The store to be converted was once the meat larder which served the hall's hounds.

A planning condition (3) was applied to the Planning Consent by Northamptonshire County Council, advising Daventry District Council, the scope of which was set as Level I recording of the single room prior to its alteration, and this was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd date 25 April 2016.

Level I recording comprises the most basic record of those outlined by Historic England (formerly English Heritage) guidelines and is fundamentally a photographic record supplemented by visual observations and notes.

The site was visited on 29 April 2016 in fine weather conditions. It is located in an area of open fields, currently farmed by the current owners who also live on the property in what was originally called the kennel keeper's cottage. The single room which is the focus of this report is located at the eastern end of a range of cart hovels and animal shelters to the south of that cottage.

Former meat larder serving Norton Hall

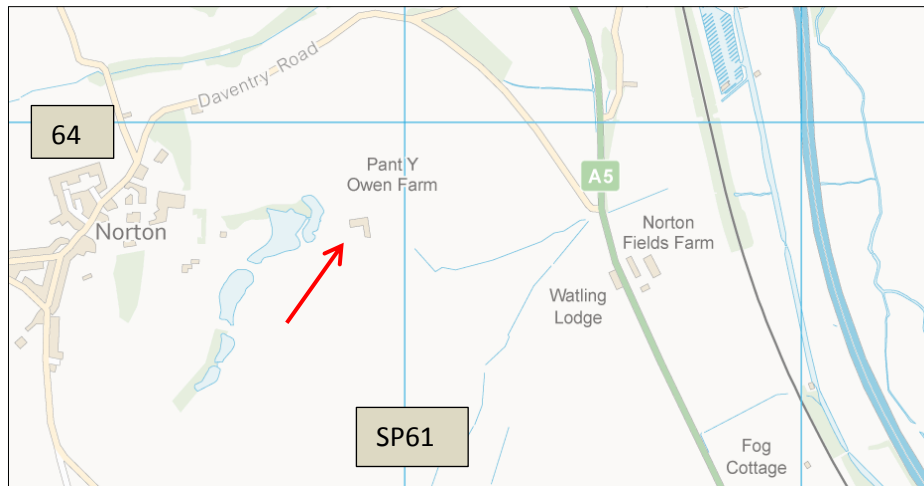


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2016

Background

Three separate manors of Norton were united by the Gent family in the middle of the sixteenth century (Heward and Taylor 1996). In 1588 that large new estate was bought by Sir Richard Knightley of Fawsley, apparently to provide for the children of his second marriage. On the death of Sir Richard in 1615 Norton was inherited by Seymour Knightley (d1640). Seymour had acquired Winwick Hall and moved there before 1619 and sold Norton to Nicholas Breton from Staffordshire in 1624. The last Breton died in 1798 and the manor was sold to Thomas Botfield, an ironmaster from Shropshire, in 1800.

He died the following year but the house was extensively rebuilt and enlarged by his son (local Antiquarian, Beriah Botfield) and his grandson (also called Beriah). Humphrey Repton and his son were consulted on designs for both the house and park although these designs were apparently not executed.

The house passed by inheritance to the Thynne family (Viscount Weymouth) in the mid-nineteenth century but was sold in 1947 by the 6th Marquess of Bath. It was apparently destroyed by explosives in 1952 although curiously Pevsner records the date of 1945 for this destruction (Pevsner and Cherry 1985). Whichever date is right, and the later seems to be correct given that a house sale catalogue for 1947 survives, the hall no longer stands and the estate was subsequently broken up.

Examination of historic maps has not significantly added to the understanding of the development of the complex of farm buildings at Pant Yr Owen. The c1815 Ordnance Survey preparatory map shows a building in the location of the present complex but the detail is poor, such that no further information can be gleaned.

By the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 the two ranges of buildings which survive to this day are present. They both lie at the end of a track which extends across the park surrounding the hall to the east of a group of ornamental lakes which remain to this day (see Fig 1).

The current owners of the kennels have lived on the site since the 1960's.

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The building survey

The former meat larder, used for hanging game hunted on the estate or other slaughtered meat produced there, lies at the eastern end of a range of brick-built farm buildings aligned approximately east-west to the immediate south of the kennel keeper's cottage (Figs 1 and 2).



Fig 2: The brick range containing the former meat larder which is located in the foreground behind the arched window in the gable wall. Looking south-west; 1m scale.

The exterior

The whole range is built of red brick bonded in white lime mortar. Initially it appears to be of a single build, but closer inspection reveals that the central four arched bays, originally all open to the north, are the earlier and the single room at the east end which houses the former meat larder, together with two animal shelters and attached pig sties at the west end of the group, are both added. The evidence for this is a change in the colour, but not size, of the brickwork and the presence of 'closers' indicating the former corners of the earlier central section (Fig 3).



Fig 3: The 'closers' indicating the former south-east corner of the central arched section, directly in line with the scale bar. Looking north, original building to the left; 1m scale.

The bricks of the original section of the building are a paler orange colour and have a slightly finer texture whilst those of the added sections are generally very slightly redder and have a coarser texture. Both sets of bricks are of the same size and are laid in exactly matching courses with mortar that impossible to distinguish, although many areas have been re-pointed.

The former meat larder consists of a single room, roughly square in plan, accessed via a single door in the north wall (Fig 4).

Former meat larder serving Norton Hall



Fig 4: The north elevation of the former meat larder looking south; 1m scale.

Much of the north wall has been rebuilt within the last forty years, the meat larder being in very poor condition and roofless when the current owners took up residence (pers comm. Stephanie Goulden). However, the wall has been rebuilt using the original bricks and the timber frame and door retained and re-set. The doorway opening is formed beneath a shallow segmental arch and this, along with the jambs, are formed of bullnose bricks. This type of brick is generally regarded as being introduced around the middle of the nineteenth century and was thereafter much used in agricultural buildings as well as domestic dwellings on doorframes and window jambs to reduce the likelihood of damage, particularly by (and hurt to) livestock, on sharp corners.

The door within the frame is of standard late nineteenth-century four-panel configuration, the lower two filled with timber, the upper two formerly fitted with zinc fly-mesh, tiny fragments of which survive around the edges where they have been cut out or have degraded naturally over time. These two upper panels are currently fitted with modern corrugated plastic sheet. There is part of a simple iron drop latch used to close the door; there is a keyhole which indicates that there was a lock which no longer remains on the interior.

At the eaves there is a simple cornice formed by the offset of two courses of bricks. The slate roof covering is modern, as are rainwater fittings.

The east gable wall is built in the same way and retains a single arched window (Fig 2). The tall arched window has both jambs and the semi-circular arch edged with bullnose brick; the sill is of plain walling brick. From the exterior none of the frame can be seen, the whole opening being covered in modern corrugated plastic sheet.

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The interior

The interior comprises a single room entered via the doorway in the north wall. The arched window in the east wall retains its timber frame comprising an arched outer frame fitted with a single mullion and transom also of painted wood, most likely pine (Fig 5).



Fig 5: The arched window in the east gable wall, looking south-east with semi-circular hanging rail above.

Each half of the frame is fitted with round-section vertical iron security bars fitted into the top and bottom of the frame passing through the transom. Originally each section of the window was fitted with the same zinc fly mesh observed in the door. Here too it has mostly been lost.

The internal surface of the wall is lime-washed. Above the window is a horizontal, semi-circular iron bar used to hang meat close to the ventilated window. The two ends of the bar are set into the brick wall whilst a second brace fixed to the collar supports the loop of the bar at its furthest point from the wall. The collar appears to be part of the original roof structure; the remainder, including the purlins and rafters, is part of the modern replacement.

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The south wall contains a single window set beneath a shallow segmental arch (Fig 6).



Fig 6: The window in the south wall, looking south.

The south window is of the same configuration as that in the east wall apart from having a shallow segmental arch, partly re-built. It contains the same quartered frame with painted pine outer frame and a single mullion and transom, originally fitted with zinc fly mesh, now covered externally with corrugated plastic sheet. The upper two panels also have plywood fitted to the interior surface. The wall is lime-washed.

The west wall, formerly the exterior east gable wall of the original range, is unadorned. It is lime-washed.

There is a second re-used collar on the west side of the room attached to the modern roof purlins. It retains a single iron meat hook (Fig 7).

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Fig 7: The meat hook on the west collar, looking south-west.

There are no other fixtures or fittings within the room to indicate the presence of further meat storage or shelving and it may be that other, portable racking or temporary frames were utilised if needed.

The floor is laid with the same brick used in the construction of the walls set flat rather than on edge. In the north-east corner is a single drain fitted with a (now broken) pierced cast iron cover (Fig 8).



Fig 8: The floor and drain with cast iron cover.

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There are no drainage gullies indicating that the presence of the drain was for general washing down and not to collect specific areas of liquid.

There are no fixtures or empty sockets within the walls which indicate that there was provision for benches or other surfaces for butchering.

Conclusion

The former meat larder is a simple room provided with well-ventilated windows and a single door to house meat, presumably mostly game hunted on the former Norton Hall estate. The room is not part of the original range of four open-sided cart hovels but was added at an unknown date to the east end of the group, along with other livestock provision at the west end of the same range.

The style of the brickwork and the material used indicate a date in the second half of the nineteenth century, most obviously the widespread use of bull-nose bricks throughout the range. If this is the case it most likely relates to the expansion of the hall under the ownership of the Thynne family who inherited mid-century. Given the widespread use of the bull-nose brick it seems more likely to have been built as part of their ownership and probably upgrading of the estate, perhaps as a response to the increasing popularity of hunting and shooting at this period.

As an example of a meat larder it is particularly plain and its location, away from the main house, precludes it from having any decorative detail. Where such structures are located close to the main residence, greater care was generally taken over appearance, whereas here it is purely functional. Given this fact it is probable that the larder was used primarily for the storage of meat to feed the hounds housed in the kennels adjacent to the cottage rather than for the hanging of game for the kitchens at the hall. This would have been an essential function at a period prior to the provision of mass-produced dog food. Storage of game for the kitchens would more likely have been undertaken close to the house where the condition of the meat could be monitored more closely by the cook.

The larder has undergone significant repair and retains only fragments of the original roof. These retain what may only part of the original meat-hanging elements attached to the retained collars.

Most of the north wall has been rebuilt although the current owners have been careful to re-use the original doorframe and door.

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Glossary of architectural terms

Closer – A reduced (cut down) brick, narrower than a header, which is inserted close to a corner, door or window opening to leave a complete and therefore stronger brick adjacent to that opening or corner.

Bullnose brick – A brick with one rounded edge. Used primarily in agricultural buildings on corners, door and window jambs to prevent livestock damaging itself on sharp corners.

Collar – In a roof, a horizontal member tying together a pair of inclined members, usually a principal rafter, common rafters or sides of a truss

Gable – The triangular upper part of a wall supporting the end of a ridged roof.

Header – The end of a brick.

Jamb – The side of a doorway, window or fireplace.

Purlin – A horizontal beam running parallel to the ridge of a roof and carrying the common rafters.

Rafter - A sloping timber beam within the framework of a roof rising from the eaves to the ridge. Principal rafters are those which carry the purlins. Common rafters rest on the purlins and carry the laths supporting slates or tiles.

Segmental arch – A shallow arch comprising a segment of a larger radius.

Bibliography

Heward J, and Taylor R, 1996 *The Country Houses of Northamptonshire*

Pevsner N, and Cherry B, 1985 *The Buildings of England Northamptonshire*

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Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	Norton Hall meat larder
OASIS ID	Iainsode1-251469
Project Type	Building Recording
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Joe Prentice
Previous/future work	No
Current land use	Store
Development type	Change of use
Reason for investigation	Planning Condition
National grid reference	SP 6090 6380
Start/end dates of fieldwork	29 April 2016
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archive
Study area	50 sq m



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