



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**A Level 2 Building Record of an outbuilding or
annex at Blisworth House, Church Lane,
Blisworth, Northamptonshire**

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A Level 2 Building Record of an outbuilding or annex at Blisworth House, Church Lane, Blisworth, Northamptonshire

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Summary

A small outbuilding or annex at Blisworth House in stone and brick was constructed after 1831, and subsequently altered and repaired. It has enjoyed probable uses for gardening and equitation, but its original purpose is unclear. There are no certain original fixtures or fittings.

Introduction

Dr and Mrs Daniel of Blisworth House wish to convert an existing outbuilding or annex at their home to living accommodation (South Northants Council Planning Application S/2014/0837, 0838/LBC). Blisworth House lies on the south side of Church Lane, leading south off High Street and adjacent to the Parish Church (Fig 1). The outbuilding lies at the east end of an agglomeration of service buildings which lie on the east side of Blisworth House (NGR: SP 7258 5336; Fig 2).

Since Blisworth House is a Listed Building a condition was applied to the Listed Building Consent for Historic Building Recording. This was carried out to Historic England (formerly English Heritage) Level 2 by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd on 17 June 2016 in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved by the Assistant Archaeology Officer of Northamptonshire County Council advising South Northamptonshire Council.

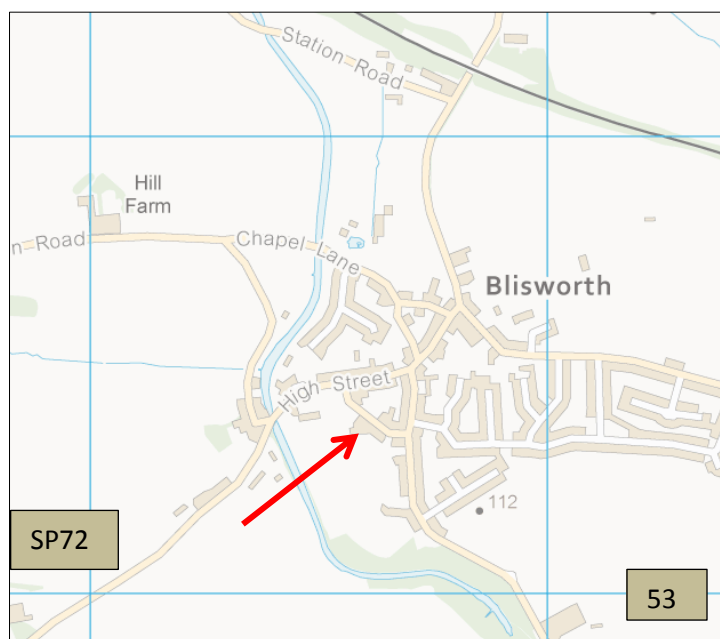


Fig 1: Site location (arrows). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2016

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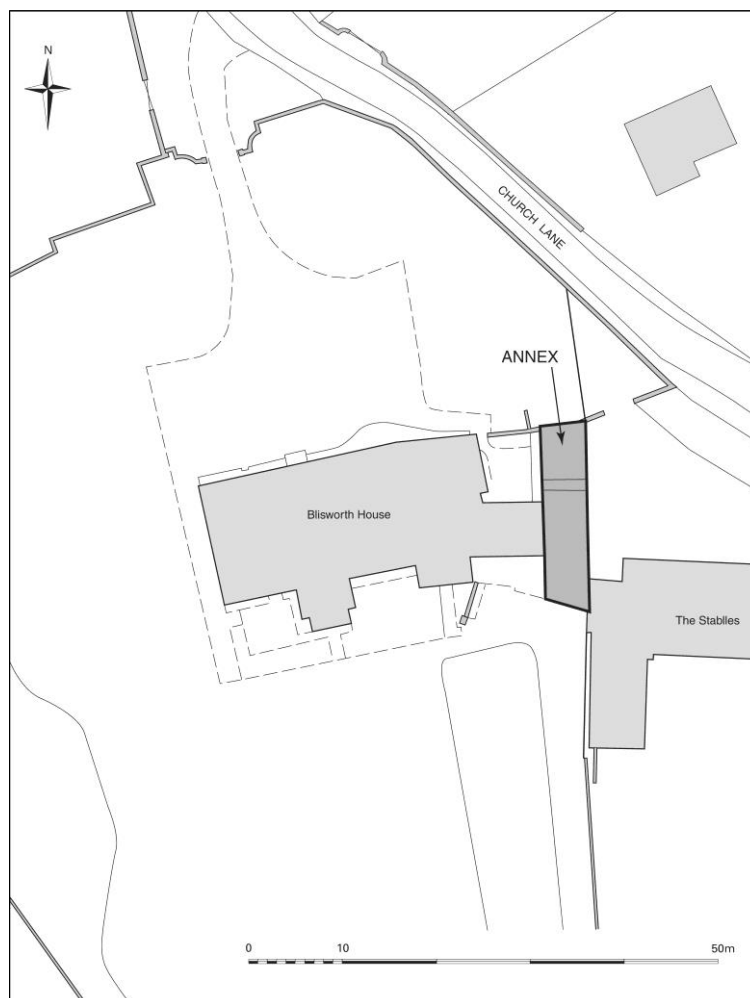


Fig 2: Blisworth House and the outbuilding/annex (Andy Isham, with grateful acknowledgement to Alex Dalton)

Existing knowledge

Blisworth House is a Listed Building (Grade II). The following is the legacy listing description from the National Heritage List for England

SP 7254 BLISWORTH CHURCH LANE (South side) 10/3 Blisworth House 01/12/51

GVII

House. Dated 1702, doubled in depth and roof-pitch altered, early C19. Rendered stone with ironstone dressings, slate roof, brick end and ridge stacks. 3-unit plan, now double-depth. 3-storey, 7-window range. Central C20 door in moulded stone surround with moulded stone cornice. 2-light windows to all floors, all with moulded stone sills. Surrounds and keyblocks. Quoins, moulded 1st floor string course, and datestone above door inscribed P/WE 1702 in upright oval moulded stone surround. Single-storey extension to left. Early C19 range to rear has 12-pane sash windows with flat-arched heads, interior has ogee stop-chamfered spine beam fine dog leg staircase from ground floor to attic, with turned balusters. Tudor-arched stone fireplace and early C19 vein marble chimneypieces.

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As can be seen, this description relates to the main house only. The outbuilding which is the subject of the current report is not mentioned but for planning purposes is considered to be listed by curtilage.

An existing and very thorough Desk-Based Assessment has been carried out which took in the exceptional variety of historic maps that exist for Blisworth, an unusually large selection for an ordinary parish (Dalton 2011). That assessment report set out the beginnings and growth of Blisworth House in some detail.

These maps indicate that the outbuilding which is the subject of the current report was constructed during the years 1831-8, between two clear episodes of mapping. There is nothing in the built fabric of the structure which would contradict this assertion. None of the maps suggest a use for the outbuilding or its parts at any time.

An archaeological watching brief in 2011 monitored test-pitting related to the current proposals to upgrade the building. They found no evidence of earlier buildings on the site (Wilson 2011).

Building survey

The outbuilding comprises a superstructure of principally Blisworth Limestone and a small amount of Northampton Sand with Ironstone, with some brick and blockwork in the western portion. The roof throughout is of Welsh slate, hipped at the south end but with a plain gable at the north. Floors are of quarry tiles, but with some modern replacement in concrete. In terms of its proportions its plan is divided into three roughly equal thirds which appear to be original, or at least long-lived.

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Fig 3: The outbuilding, phased (Andy Isham, with grateful acknowledgment to Alex Dalton)

The southernmost third is a single space with an awkwardly-angled south end which appears to be original. It seems originally to have been divided into two portions: Facing south was what may have been an implement shed for the gardens, which has double doors opening outwards. Such a slightly south-west facing aspect maximises light ingress through summer evenings, suggesting its use

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through a long working day. A pedestrian door in its west side has been blocked up. Here the floor, of 220mm-square unglazed quarry tiles, has been fully re-laid in modern times. Other than by opening the double doors, the room was lit by a window high up in the east wall, which, but for a probable internal partition, now lost, probably also lit the room next door.



Fig 4: The double doors in the angled south end



Fig 5: The two doors to the former implement shed (right, blocked in brick), and the produce store (left, blocked on the inside); scale 1m

That room 'next door' no longer exists in its own right but is now part of the southern third, and today contains a sauna cubicle. Although the floor here is also of 220mm-square unglazed quarry tiles, here they have not been re-laid and show a pattern of wear through the doorway in the north wall to the middle third of the building. Another former doorway in the west wall, from the service yard adjacent to the house, gave independent access from that yard. Unlike the doorway surround

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into the garden implement shed, which has perpendicular reveals, this doorway surround is heavily splayed, indicating that it was designed to maximise light coming in through the open door. Otherwise the only light intended to come in was from half of the window high in the east wall, shared with the adjacent garden implement shed. It is likely that this room was intended to store garden produce, in dark surroundings, to ensure they kept through the winter. In houses where there was a substantial orchard, this was often termed the apple store, although such storage often extended to some root vegetables such as carrots also, which tended to be pulled up for storage in order to preserve them from frost; most other root vegetable types, such as turnips, parsnips and potatoes, could be left *in situ* much longer and later on buried for longer keeping in an outdoor straw-lined clamp. The only light needed in a built store was that admitted on entry to inspect and turn the apples (or whatever) at intervals during their storage.

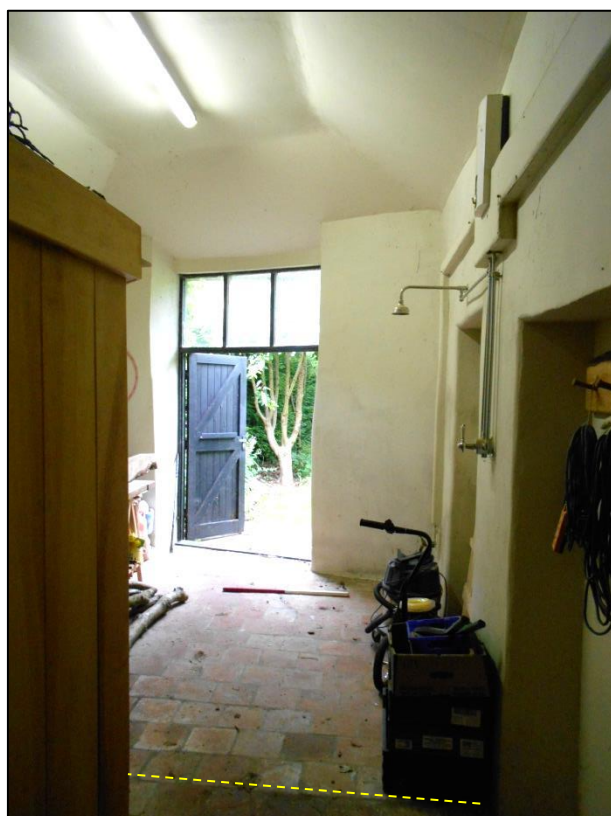


Fig 6: View from the possible 'apple store' through the implement shed; the dashed line indicates the location of the former partition

The central third of the building comprises three rooms, formerly two. The biggest room looks east, away from the house, marking it as relating to outside service. Since it is heated, well-lit via an east facing window (a direction often intended for early-risers) and has a decent black and red six-inch (150mm) quarry-tile floor of c1900, it may have been either the gardener's office, or that of the groom, since it opens onto what was formerly a stable yard.

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Fig 7: ?Gardener's office; scale 1m



Fig 8: ?Wash-house; scale 1m

Late 19th-century maps indicate that a well and pump stood just outside the range to the east, in what is now an adjacent property, but what was formerly the stable yard. Pump and well still survive. Therefore both the gardener's room and an adjacent passage from the service yard, had direct access through to the water supply.



Fig 9: The stable yard pump still survives on the adjacent property (Photo: Alex Dalton)

The smaller room of the central portion of the building is today divided into a utility- / washroom and a WC. Both functions are modern in this location and there is no indication of what they were formerly used for. There is direct access into the service yard of the house, so it must be assumed they related to the servants who worked in the house, rather than the garden or the stables.

The northern third of the outbuilding is today used as an implement shed, but has had at least two earlier functions. Originally it seems to have been open-fronted and included a door into the stable

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yard. As such it may have been a carriage-house. The window has only a wooden shutter, so probably there was never a need to heat the space, but the passage of air was important.

The northern gable end has been substantially rebuilt in brick and blockwork, so retains no historic interest. The front and inner side wall, which made a passageway out of the approach to a door into the stable-yard, is of Victorian red brick, measuring on average 225mm x 110mm x 70mm.



Fig 10: The northern, brick-infilled third, with passageway to the stable-yard; scale 1m

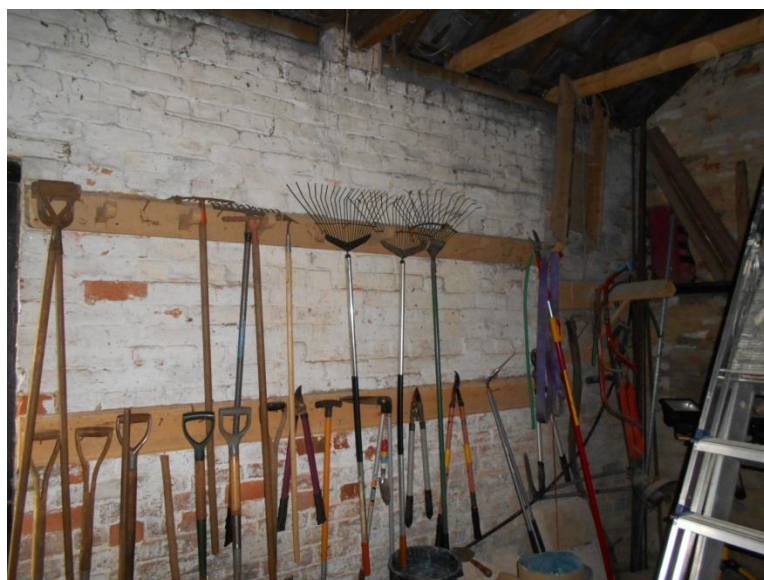


Fig 11: garden implements hung on a row of wooden bridle-hooks, battened to the west wall

The only clue to a second former use is a set of saddle- and bridle-hooks fixed to the walls, so the interior has been used as a tack room at some point. However, in the absence of any match-boarding or similar lining or a hearth, both usual pre-requisites for a proper tack-room, this function seems to have been secondary and perhaps half-hearted.

The building contains no other fixtures or fittings of historic significance.

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Conclusions

This small outbuilding or annex, constructed during a seven year period, 1831-8, was built to serve the gardens and the stable-yard of Blisworth House. It may have begun as a carriage house and gardener's or groom's office, with garden rooms attached. Changes in use saw the previously open-fronted carriage house infilled, interiors opened up, and historic fixtures and fittings lost. An intermediate tack-room usage characterised the northern room for a while.

The importance of the building and its very distinct east- and west-facing service aspects, towards 'house' in one direction and towards 'stables' and 'gardens' in the other has been lost during the 20th century and the building is now little-used except for storage.

Bibliography

Dalton A, 2011 *The evolution of Blisworth House*

Wilson N, 2011 *Report for archaeological monitoring and recording, at Blisworth House, Blisworth, Northamptonshire, NGR: SP 7258 5337, A1 Archaeology Ltd*

Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	Outbuilding at Blisworth House
OASIS ID	Iainsode1-256186
Project Type	Building Recording
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	No
Current land use	In use as a building
Development type	Small residential
Reason for investigation	Planning Condition
National grid reference	SP 7258 5336
Start/end dates of fieldwork	17 June 2016
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archive
Study area	100 sq m



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

30 June 2016