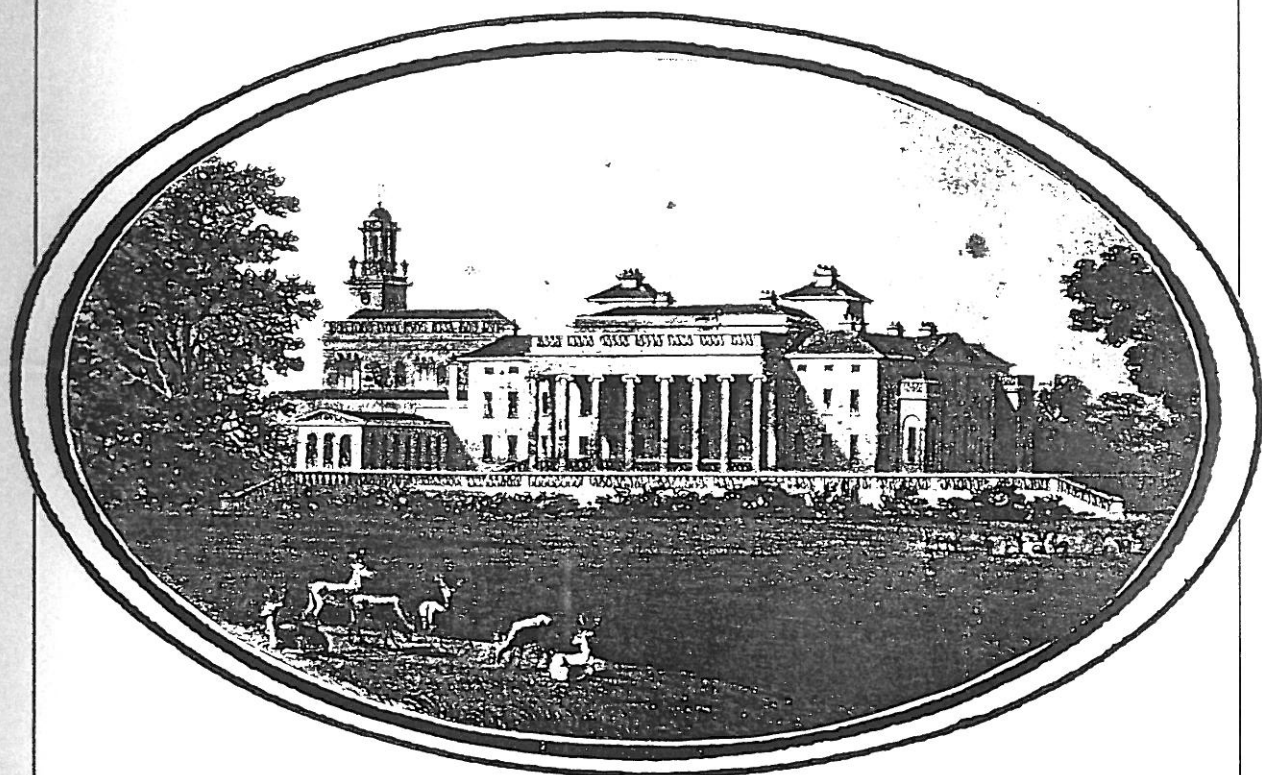


City of Hereford Archaeology Unit

WITLEY COURT
GREAT WITLEY
HEREFORD & WORCESTER



**A REPORT ON THE PROPOSED
ROOFS IN 1837**

February 1996

Hereford Archaeology Series 271

This report is produced by the

City of Hereford Archaeology Unit

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The City of Hereford Archaeology Unit (Director: Ron Shoesmith) is the operating branch of the City of Hereford Archaeology Committee, a registered charity (No. 504243) founded in 1974. The Unit has a core staff of five, and makes extensive use of specialist contract personnel. Besides dealing with the buried archaeology of Hereford and the surrounding areas, the Unit specialises in the archaeological recording and analysis of standing buildings throughout the Midlands, the West of England and the Welsh Marches. Work is usually on a commission basis on behalf of bodies such as English Heritage, the National Trust, and the Landmark Trust. The Unit also accepts commissions from local authorities and private developers as part of the planning process.

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cover: South-east view of the court in 1843

WITLEY COURT
HEREFORD & WORCESTER

(NGR SO 77 65)

**Plans, specifications and estimate
for roofing work in 1837**

Text

Ron Shoesmith *FSA*
Dr. Pat Hughes

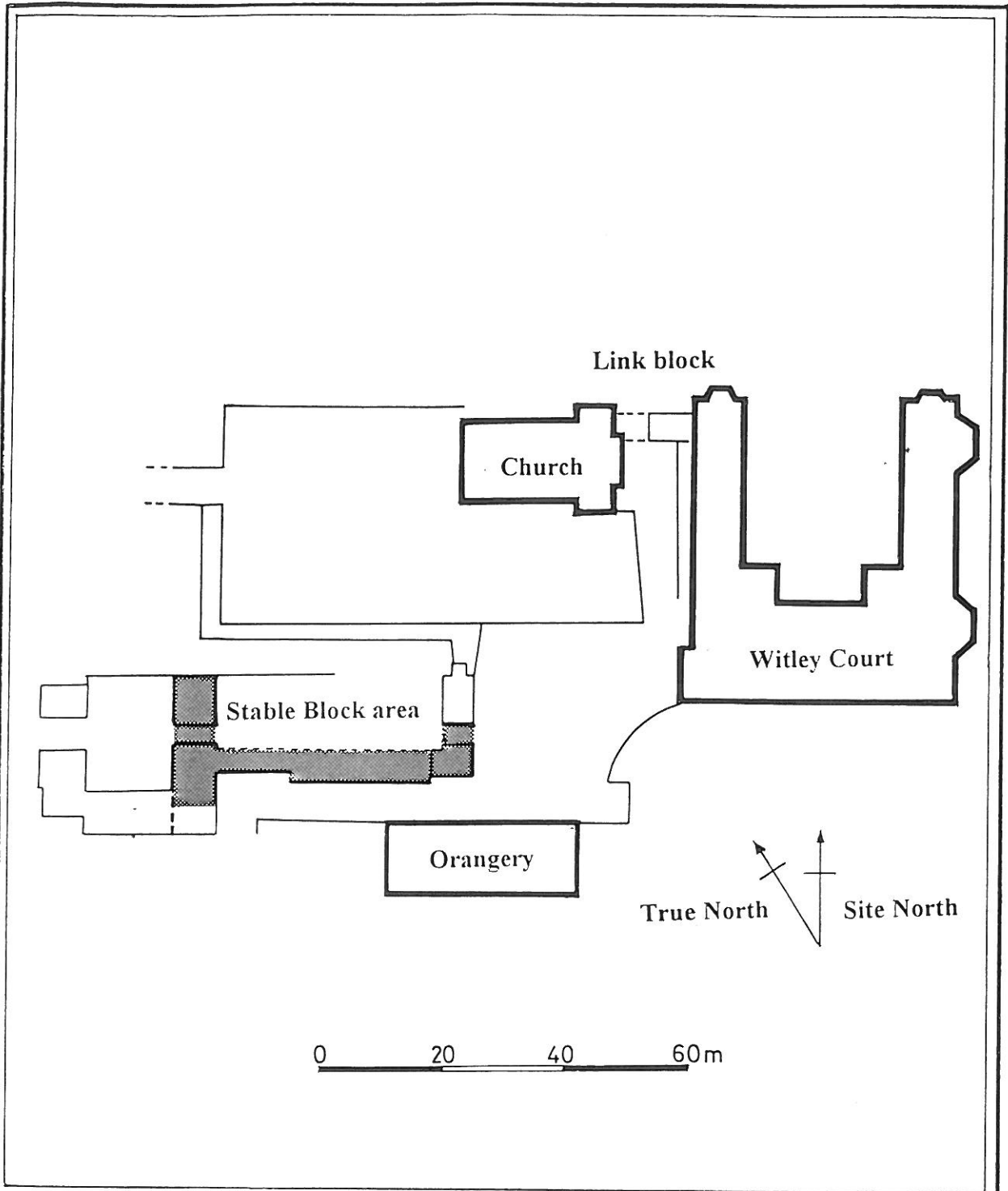
Illustrations

Steve Macklin

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February 1996
City of Hereford Archaeology Unit



Outline plan to show the relationship between the stable court and the main buildings

Witley Court

Great Witley
Hereford & Worcester
(NGR SO 77 65)

Plans, specifications, and estimate for roofing work in 1837

Introduction

The Hereford Record Office holds a series of plans and specifications dealing with proposed work on various roofs at Witley Court. They were prepared by Josiah Griffiths of Quatford, Worcester on the 14th April 1837. The work was commissioned by Lord Foley and an account for the full sum of £3,000 plus an additional £800 indicates that the project was completed.

The Record Office references are:

Specifications:	-	-	-	E12/W/14
Plan 1 : Plan of proposed Roof for Central part of House and Portico's				E12/W/15
Plan 2 : Plan of proposed Roofs to Offices and Gallery leading to the Church				E12/W/16
Plan 3 : Plan of Proposed new Roofs Stables, Carriage Houses etc				E12/W/18
Plan 4 : Details of new Roofs		-	-	E12/W/17

The work described in these plans and specifications concerns most of the buildings around the stable and office courts, the link block between the church and the mansion, and part of the main building.

Background

The main house is a large brick-built half-H shaped pile probably dating to the mid-17th century. The house may have been built by Sir William Russell, whose family had owned Witley since 1498 (Walker, 1990, 7). Sir William, a staunch Royalist, was High Sheriff and Governor of Worcester during the Civil War (op. cit. 15). In 1655 his son sold Witley to Thomas Foley, a wealthy ironmaster (ibid.).

In the second quarter of the 18th century the house was modernised, with flanking pavilions attached by curving screen walls to the ends of the long north wings in the fashionable Palladian manner. One, at least, of these pavilions contained stabling - a common enough feature of such a design. In the same period the medieval church was demolished and replaced by the present one, attributed to James Gibb, and built next to the house. At the end of the century, and in the early part of the next, considerable alterations were again made. These included the demolition of the Palladian pavilions and the creation of a new service and stable area to the west of the main house.

This work is generally attributed to John Nash. The two fine porticoes attached to the north and south elevations of the main hall block are almost certainly by him, and there is a water colour of one of them in the RIBA collection (Colvin, 1995, 692). The brickwork of the house was stuccoed and the roof lines altered. An observer in 1814 described Witley as 'an immense white house' and commented on its 'unsettled state' - implying that building works were still ongoing (F C Laird, 1814). The overall impression is reminiscent of Nash's small Italianate Villa style (cf. Cronkhill, Shrops.).

An illustration of 1837 shows the wings of the house with pitched roofs and overhanging eaves and the two former stair towers topped with similarly treated hips (see Pardoe, 1986, 5). The archaeological evidence obtained from the west wing suggests that this illustration could be reasonably accurate.

Lord Foley is known to have been one of Nash's debtors at one time, and both were part of the Prince Regent's spendthrift clique. Foley acquired the nickname 'Lord Balloon' and was apparently a notorious gambler (Pardoe, 1986, 1). That Nash worked at Witley in the early years of the 19th century seems to be beyond reasonable doubt, but the full extent of that work is less clear (Summerson, 1980, 49-50). As yet no in-depth documentary study has been made of the architectural history of the Court and as fragments emerge the full complexity becomes apparent.

It is generally accepted that the various ranges to the south-west of the main building, including the stables, were established during this period, but there is only limited evidence to suggest that Nash may have been responsible for their design.

In 1837 financial problems led to the Foleys selling Witley Court. It was bought by the trustees of William Humble, 11th Baron Ward and later the Earl of Dudley. Between 1843 and 1846 it was let to Queen Adelaide, widow of William IV (Pardoe, 1986, 12).

Ward then moved into the house and began planning a major modernisation scheme using Samuel Daukes as his architect. Daukes' work in the late 1850's and early 1860's included encasing the main house in Bath stone, radically remodelling the interiors, adding a quadrant block to the south-west linking the house with a new conservatory and other garden buildings, and remodelling the existing service areas including the stable block. A balustrade was added to the south wall of the south stable range which would, in the least, have involved substantial alterations to the roofs if not their complete replacement for a second time in a period of some 50 years. At the same time as the mansion was being renovated, huge amounts of money were spent on creating a magnificent garden designed by Nesfield to complement the house.

The stable and office courts

The date(s) of construction of the various parts of the stable and office courts are somewhat uncertain. Prattinton's miniature sketch plan of 1817 shows only one of the stable blocks, perhaps intimating that work was still under way. If this evidence is accepted then these ranges must have been built between that date and 1831 when they are shown on the first large-scale Ordnance Survey plan. In 1822, the house was still being described as being in some disorder. The porticoes do show on Prattington and were probably built between 1810 (when they are not on engravings) and 1817.

An element of doubt has recently been raised following an examination of the disused clock in the church tower. This is dated to 1804, and was designed for two-faces (Coppack, pers.com.). However, the church tower clock has three faces that are all original. It would appear that this clock was installed in the tower and modified to drive the three faces. This was unsuccessful and eventually a completely new clock was installed. The old clock was left within the rebuilt tower and is still there. Was this clock originally designed as a two-faced clock to go in the cupola above the entrance to the stable yard?

The 1837 plans make this doubtful. They do not indicate any form of cupola and show the roof as being continuous across both western and eastern gatehouses.

The Plans and Specifications

The plans and specifications are reproduced as an Appendix to this report. As the handwriting is excellent and easily readable, only a summary is provided here. The author's comments are in italics. The page numbers are those of the original specification and are at the bottom of the pages in the Appendix.

The Specifications

Page 1:

Mentions that the whole of the roofing is covered with 'composition' (*whatever that may be*) apart from one section. All the rubbish is to be removed.

Iron pillars in the kitchen are to be removed.

The place and boilers used for preparing the tar are to be taken down. (*was this related to the composition roof which was presumably a failure?*).

Timber: The whole of the roofs are to be framed in the best manner using the best materials but the present trussed beams are to remain as tie beams and the purlins supported from them by struts. Alternatively proper trussed principals are to be applied in their place. (*It is evident that all areas had been previously roofed but that only a little of the original timber was salvageable*).

Page 2:

Scantling of timber and securing of roof described. Fall on gutters of 2 inches in 10 feet, 2¹/₂ inches deep and not less than 10 inches wide. Lead flats to have proper rolls not more than 3 feet apart. Eaves and gables to be finished with 1¹/₄ inch facias with projecting soffits as appropriate.

Page 2/3:

Slates : House : Bangor Queen Slates - 2¹/₂ inch bond applied on old oak battens 2¹/₂ inch by ³/₄ inch with strong tinned nails.

Other roofs : Bangor Duchess or Countess Slates. All other slated roofs to be repaired.

Roofs of privies: slabs of slate or stone painted lead colour.

Page 3:

Lead: Recast old lead with new piglead.

Roofs over portico's & new gutters: 7lb to the foot (8 inches up the roofs and a similar proportion up the walls).

Flashing: 5lbs to the foot

Steppings into joints where required: 4lb to the foot.

Page 4:

Drainage: Cast iron troughing and pipes as shown on drawings.

Iron grates for cesspools.

Brick drains 6 inches by 6 inches from iron pipes to main drain. (*presumably the several main drains that still run through the various courtyards*).

Chimneys: A new chimney to the Carriage House with Broseley brick.

All chimneys to be pointed with Roman Cement.

Hips and Ridges to be covered with stone worked to a proper form with rebated joints.

Page 5:

Lead on ridges and hips to be removed over the whole of the old and new roofs of the house and replaced with stone 14 inches wide with rebated joints. Joints filled with glaziers putty and all painted lead colour.

Passage to the Drying ground to be arched with bricks 5 inches thick. The spandrels filled up with concrete made of the old materials off the roofs and lime and the floor laid with good hard Common flooring bricks, jointed in cement, with stone spouts to convey the water through the side wall.

Gables wherever required to be built with the old bricks.

Painting of troughs, pipes, facias, skylights and new wood to be painted in oil, stone colour, 3 coats.

Page 6:

Projecting soffits to be lathed and plastered.

Ceilings: In the coachhouse and part of the rooms over the stables to be properly repaired and the joints, where decayed, renewed. Other ceilings to be repaired if damaged.

Skylight over the back staircase to be removed and a new frame adjusted to the pitch of the roof and glazed with crown glass.

Skylights over the Passage to the rooms over the stables to be removed and three small windows with 2 inch fixed sashes glazed with ground glass to be applied in the side wall, with stone heads and sills.

Page 6/7

Lanterns over the Brewhouse to be removed and shutters adjusted to open with lines and pullies to be applied in the new roof to let out steam.

Kitchen to be lighted by one of the largest and best of the lights out of the lanterns applied in the gable end towards the house. An opening to be made in the ceiling at the opposite end provided with a shutter to open and shut with a cord.

Page 7:

Bells over the kitchen and in stableyard to be rehung.

Ceilings and cornices of the two portico's to be cleaned, stopped and whitened.

Best staircase: The damp bricks on the one side of the best staircase window to be removed and replaced with new bricks and made good.

Water closet A funnel to admit air and if possible light to the Water Closet under the best staircase.

Page 8:

Conservatory: The skylight over the water closet at the back of the conservatory to be removed and the roof to be covered with slates and ceiled inside. A sash window to be applied in the side wall, glazed with waved or ground glass.

Dining Room: The flat part of the ceiling of the Dining Room to be repaired and coloured to match the walls. The ornament round the centre piece to be restored if damaged.

Landing: Walls & ceilings of the Landing to be cleaned, stopped and whitened. The clothes horses to be repaired and the upper part of the ironing stove renewed.

North Portico: Two hard white stone steps to be applied at the bottom of the flight ascending to the north portico, and smooth white stone flags, 4 feet wide, to be laid on each side of the quadrangle.

Stonework: The stonework of the Portico, Balustrades, Steps Etc to be repaired to the amount of £10.

Page 9:

Hot air warming apparatus: The three hot air warming apparatus' with the air valves etc to be removed and all made good. (Could this have been similar to the hot air heating system installed by Matthew Boulton in partnership with James Watt at his house at Soho, Birmingham in the late 1790's? This was about the time when much work was being undertaken at Witley).

Main house: Part of the wall of the central square of the house over the west end of the Dining Room now lathed and plastered to be slated with Duchess Slates applied with nails on deal boarding.

Two water cisterns to be covered with large slates.

Dining room & Library: The loose and useless struts in the principals over the Dining Room and Library to be taken away.

Page 9/10:

Colouring: The whole of the outside walls of the House, Portico's, Offices, Stables, Carriage Houses, Workshops & Church (but not the low walls of the Drying grounds, Churchyard & Backyard) to be coloured of a neat plain stone colour.

The projecting soffits of the House, Offices etc to be coloured ...

The area to the South and East Fronts to be whitewashed with lime.

Page 10:

This completes the details of the work, but the Particulars of the Contract (pages 10 & 11) have some points of interest:

The contractor was allowed to make use of materials that were perfectly sound and proper for the new work, but he had to supply all the rest apart from scaffolding poles; his men could use rooms in the stable yard for sleeping.

The Specifications are dated 14th April 1837. The total sum involved is £3,000; £1,000 to be paid at Midsummer and the remainder at Christmas.

The penalty clause would have worried most modern contractors—the whole had to be completed by the 30th September next or the Contractor to forfeit £500.

The Plans

The plans were all drawn at a scale of 1/12 inch to a foot but have been reduced for the purposes of this report.

Plan 1:

The main plan shows the proposed roof of the main part of the house and porticoes. North must be to the left, with the twin towers outlined on each side of the flat roof of the north portico. The two chimney stacks sit within the central part of the roof and hence would only just be visible from any direction. A cross-section going through both porticoes is shown at the bottom of the plan.

The small drawing at the top of the sheet has what appears to be a bay window on the left hand side. This could be one of the bays on northern ends of either the east or the west ranges. The widening along the range would argue for the east range, but if so, what are the shaded extensions?

Plan 2:

North is again to the left with the eastern end of the church and the churchyard indicated. The link block between the church and the west range of the house is shown with a lead trough through the roof to take the water from the gully behind the balustrade to the main down pipe. A cross-section of the roof, including the balustrade, is shown at 'G'.

The right-hand half of the plan is the Office Yard. The northern range includes a long passage containing two cisterns down the northern side. There are five chimney stacks and cross-sections 'E' and 'O'. To the east is the complex roof between the offices and the main building. The southern range around the Office Yard in one the far left and has cross-section 'F'.

Plan 3:

This shows the whole of the complex of stable yards and carriage yards again with north to the left.

The long passage that went along the back of the northern range of stables to the drying ground was eventually taken into the adjoining buildings and the part leading to the north has been completely lost in later buildings.

The main entry to the carriage yard from the east has buildings with central partitions (cross section 'B') that were coach houses in the early 20th century. The buildings on each side of the Yard also appear to have central partitions (Cross-section 'A'). Were these partitions only at first-floor level?

The western entrance to the Stable Yard is not apparent on this roof plan, but the cross-sections 'G' of all the buildings around the yard do not have a central wall or partition, nor, on the southern side do they have a balustrade.

The western range of the Stable Yard - now called the western gatehouse - has a simple roof without any embellishment. The clock tower was presumably a later addition.

The southern range - the area recently studied in some detail (*HAS 269 of January 1996*) - has three chimney stacks (there is another one in the eastern gatehouse). The change in width, and the measure for roofing it is plain.

The northern range of the Stable Block has no chimneys at all - presumably just stables.

Plan 4:

This shows the details of the new roofs. The main drawing shows a sample gable elevation with appropriate facias. On the left is a Section of the Pediment with the new gable wall and plastering, and at the top is a detail of the projecting eaves showing the method of fixing the rafters, troughs and brackets.

Conclusions

These plans show the basic constructional methods used in the re-roofing of much of Witley Court in 1837. The extent of the work suggests that maintenance at Witley had been minimal for many years and that the 'composition' roofs, used when the Stable and Office Courts had been built not many years previously, had not been a success. It may well be that the intention to sell the Court had already been made before the work was put in hand and that all that was being done was to put it into saleable condition before offering it on the market.

The work included the re-roofing of the main part of the building and work to the Dining Room, Library and Main Stairs as well as the comprehensive refurbishing of the Outside Courts. On completion the whole complex was painted or whitewashed as appropriate. The Specification was dated the end of April and completion was at the end of September—only 22 weeks for what appears to be an enormous amount of detailed work. The labourers lived in and presumably worked six days a week for long hours each day.

Much of this expensive restoration work did not last for long. It would have been in use throughout Queen Adelaide's stay between 1843 and 1846, but when Lord Ward took up residence he undertook a complete re-modelling of the Court in the 1850s and 60s using Daukes as architect. This new work must have involved the erection of the balustrade on the south wall of the south Stable Block and presumably the clock tower on the western entry.

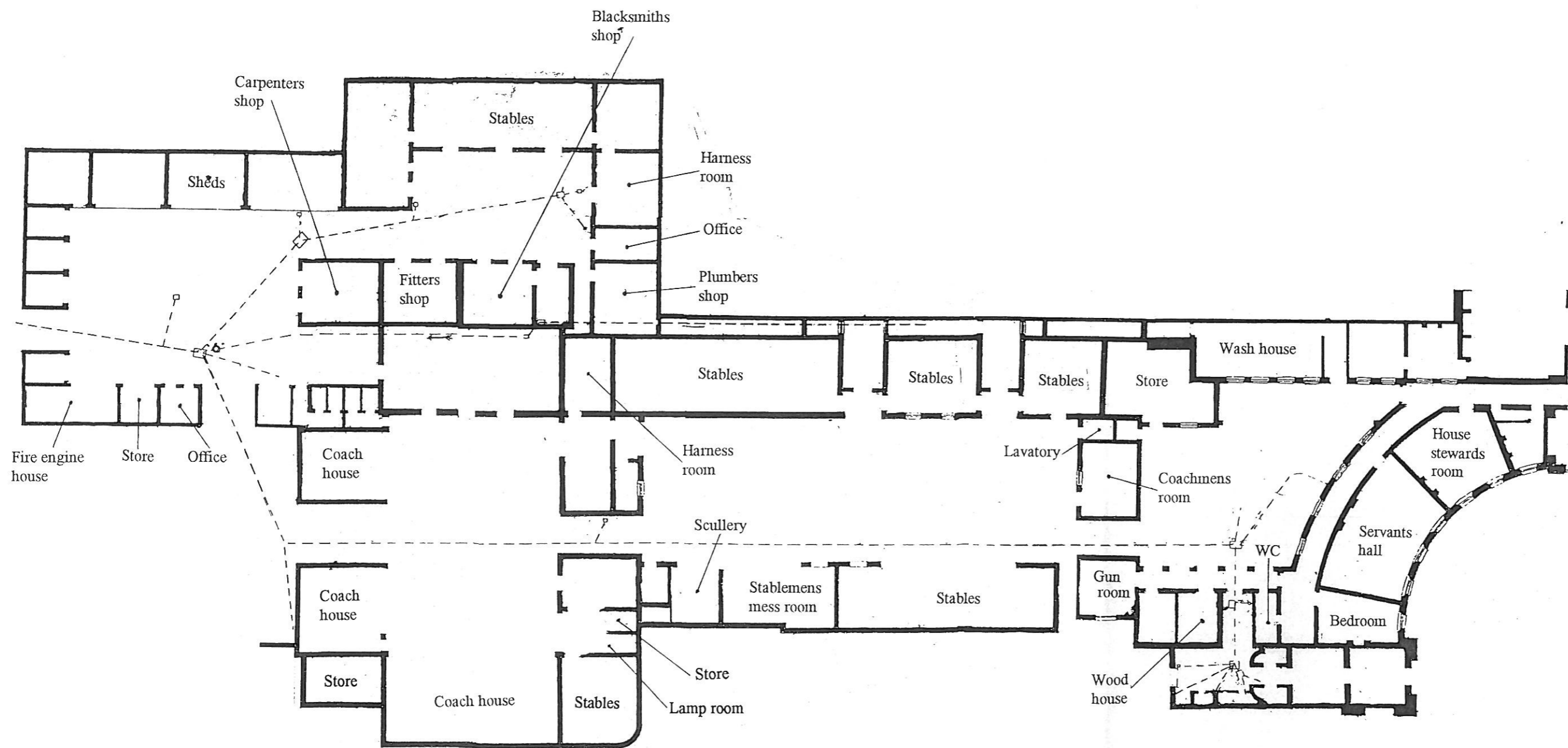
With the stable yard and the office yard hidden behind the church on the north and the conservatory and quadrant block on the south, with the main house encased in Bath stone, and with the fountains and the magnificent gardens created by Nesfield in his 'monster work', this became one of the most fashionable houses in the country, visited by aristocracy and royalty.

References

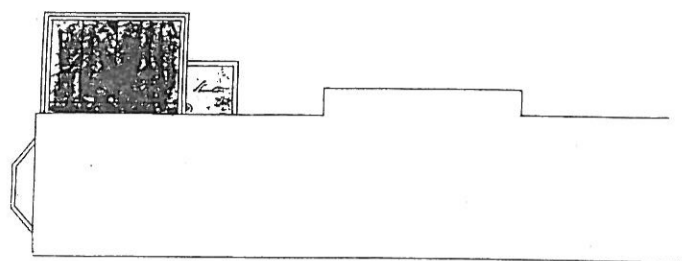
- Colvin, H, 1995, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*
Laird, F C, 1814, *The Beauties of England & Wales*
Pardoe, 1986, *Witley Court*
Summerson, J, 1980, *The Life & Work of John Nash, Architect*
Walker, 1990, *Witley, Worcestershire*

APPENDIX

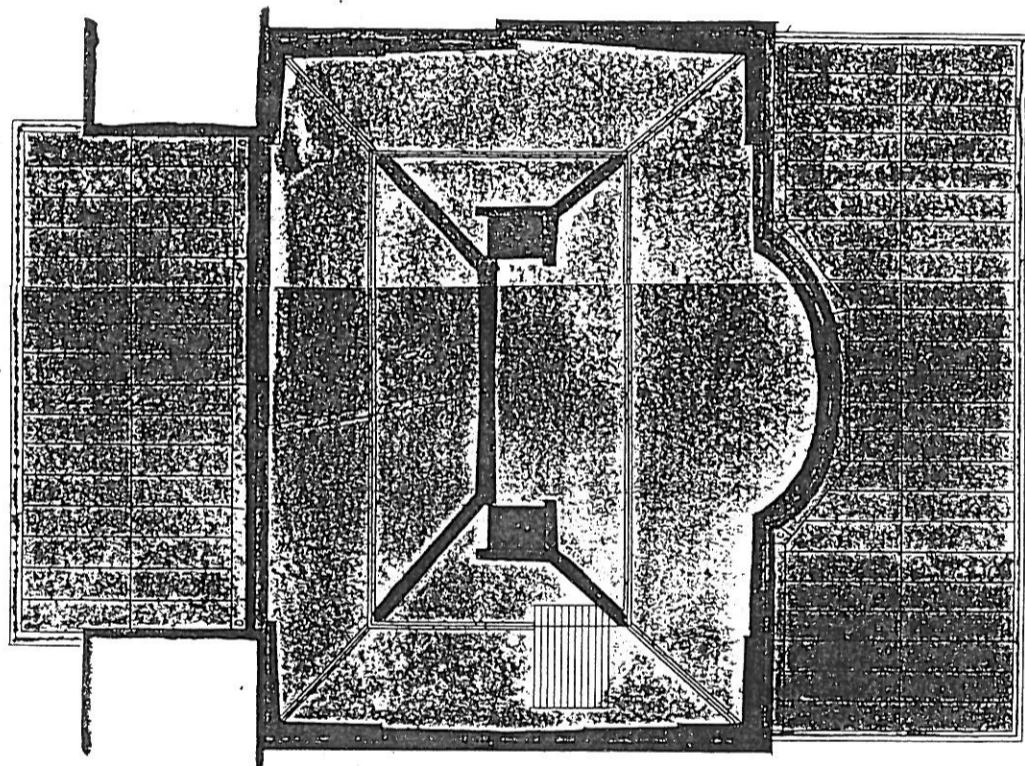
Specifications, estimate and plans
of 14 April 1837



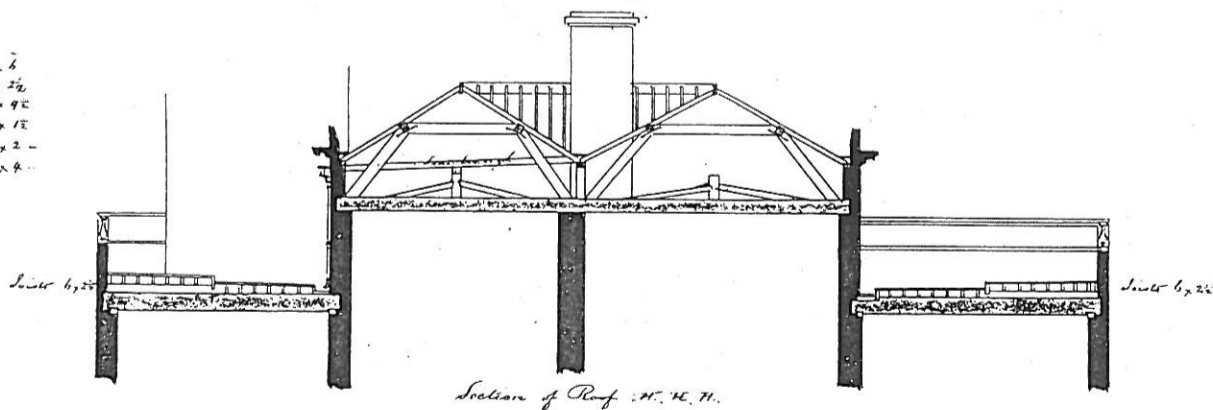
Early 20th century plan showing the use of the various parts of the stable and office courts



N^o 1
 Plan of proposed Roof
 for Central part of House and Portico's
 Abtley Court.



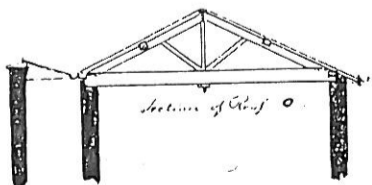
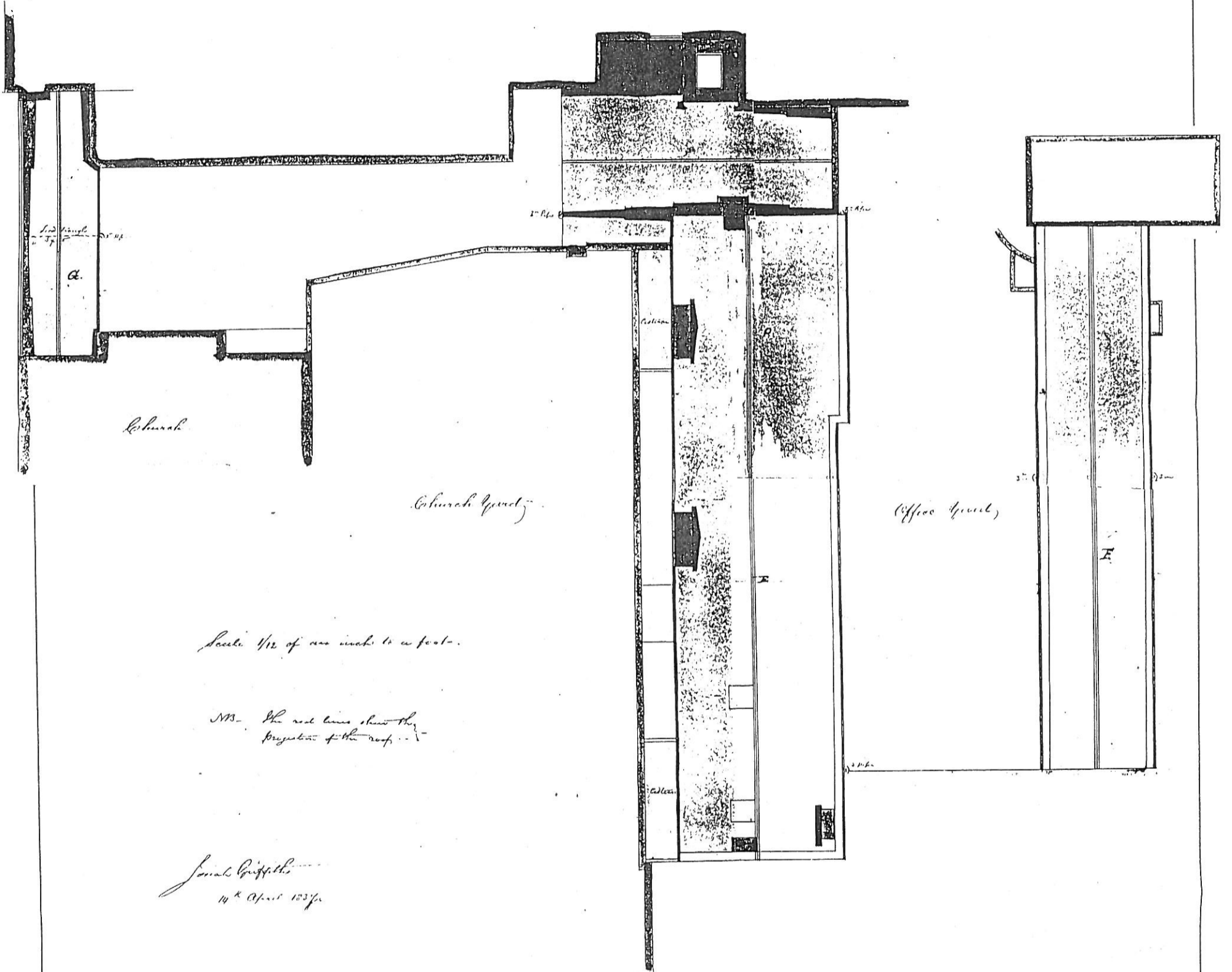
- Parlour 7 x 6
- Bedroom 5 x 5 1/2
- Stables & Cellars 8 x 9 1/2
- Ridge 8 x 1 1/2
- Walls 12 x 2
- Valleys 4 x 4



N^o 1 - Plan of proposed Roof for Central
 part of House and Porticos

N^o 2

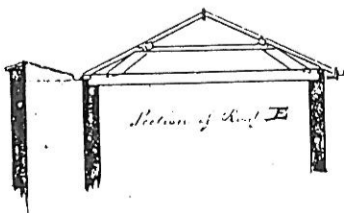
Plan of proposed Roofs
to Offices and Gallery leading to the Church
Witley Court.



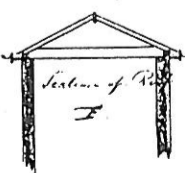
Stables 7 x 4 1/2
Barn 12 x 3
Lumber 12 x 12



Roofs 8 x 12
Porches 12 x 2
Walkways 8 x 3



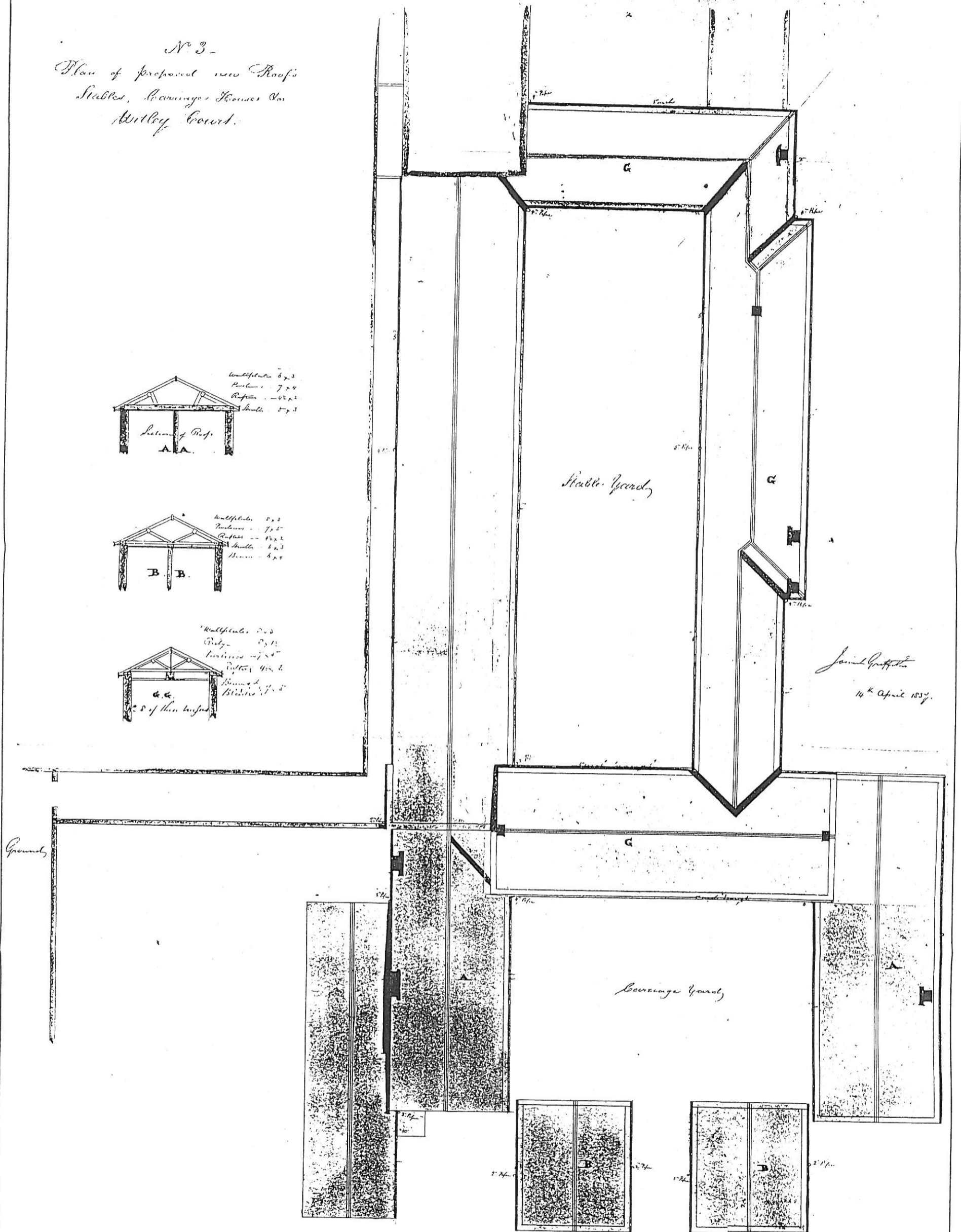
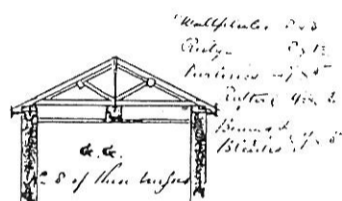
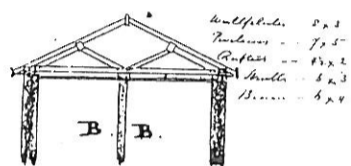
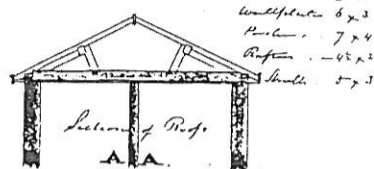
Stables 7 x 12
Barn 7 x 5
Stables 8 x 3
Barn 7 x 4
Porches 12 x 2



Porches 5 x 2
Walkways 8 x 3
Roofs 8 x 12

N^o 2 - Plan of proposed Roofs to Offices and Gallery leading to the Church

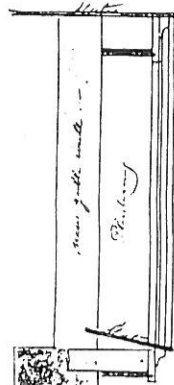
N^o 3 -
 Plan of proposed new Roof's
 Stables, Carriages Houses etc
 Willey Court.



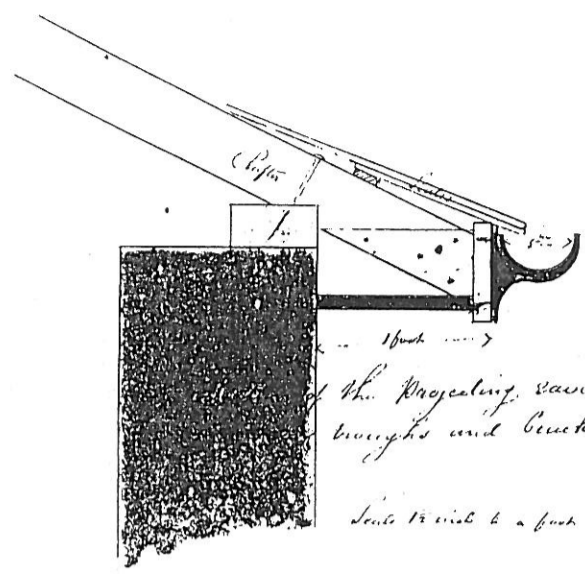
A.B. - The next line shows the projection of the Roof -

Scale 1/2 of an inch to a foot -

N^o 3 - Plan of proposed new Roof's Stables,
 Carriage Houses etc.



Section of this
Pediment

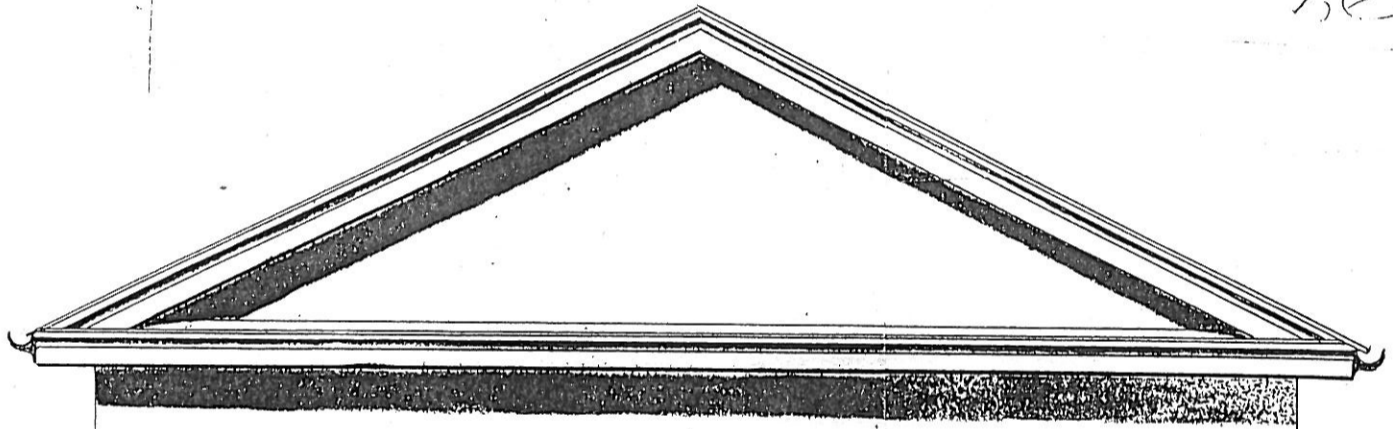


These fin by 14 inch

of the Projecting eaves
brackets and brackets

Scale to suit to a foot

Note -
Details of new Roof
Willet (cont.)



Elevation of one of the Gables

Scale to suit to a foot

Joseph Griffiths
14th April 1837