



A Level 3 Historic Building Survey
at Barnsdale House, 17 Barnsdale,
Great Easton, Leicestershire
(SP 847 928)
Jon Coward



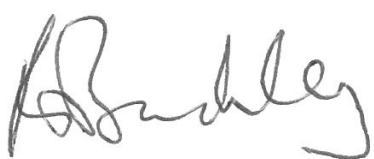
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Great Easton, Leicestershire SP 847 928

Jon Coward

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SP 84766 92801

Jon Coward

Summary

A historic Building Survey of Barnsdale House, Great Easton, a Grade II listed building, was carried out by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in October 2017. Planning permission has been granted for the refurbishment of Barnsdale House to include demolition of existing two storey and single storey rear extensions and erection of single storey side and rear extension; two storey rear extension and a first floor extension to the rear; installation of a new access and new railings, rendering of the existing wall and erection of a detached garage. (Planning Application 17/01014/FUL). The cartographic evidence indicates that the present house was erected after 1814 but before 1886; on stylistic grounds it is likely to be pre 1850. The outbuildings range in date from the mid 19th century to the 1960/70's. There are reasons to suspect that an earlier pre-existing building was incorporated into the main house at its construction.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

Great Easton sits in the Welland Valley, approximately 11km north-east of Market Harborough and is one of the largest parishes in south-east Leicestershire. The residence is located on the south-western side of the village at a height of c.58m O.D.

The British Geological Survey notes that the bedrock geology of the area consists of bands of Mudstone, specifically of the Charmouth Period and overlain with superficial river deposits of sand and gravel (River Terrace I).

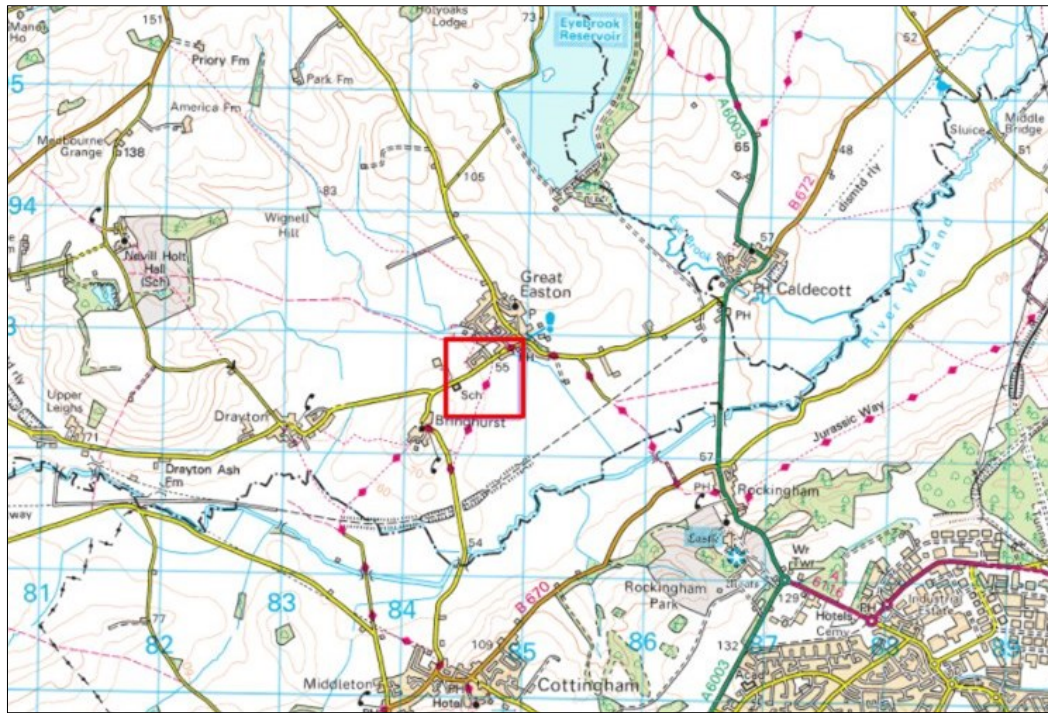


Figure 1 Great Easton, Leicestershire

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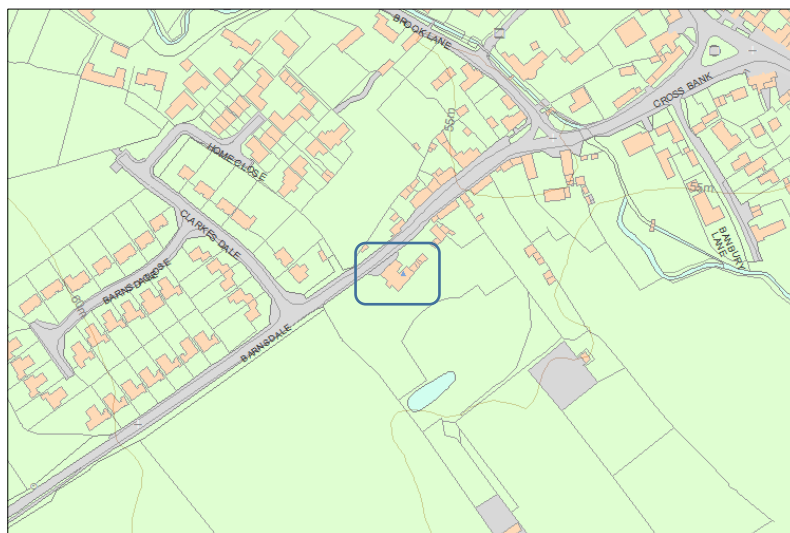


Figure 2 Barnsdale House

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Background

For the purposes of this survey, the elevation fronting the street is taken as facing North.

At the time of the survey, the property consisted of the main masonry house; a brick extension to the north-east corner which was being converted from single to two storeys; and a brick range heading east off the south-east corner of the main residence. This range was two-storey against the house, but single storey thereafter. Virtually all of the renovation, repair, and remodelling work in the main house had already been completed by the time of the survey, but the brick outbuildings on the south-east corner were still in place awaiting demolition due to being structurally unsound, before re-erection at a later date. Leicestershire County Council as advisor to the planning authority had requested a Historic Building Survey to Level 3 of Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* 2016.

Aims

The purpose of the work was to record and advance understanding of the heritage asset.

The objectives of the Historic Building Recording programme are:

- To provide a written, drawn and photographic record of all the buildings on site prior to the commencement of works.

- To ensure the long-term preservation of the information through deposition of the record and a summary written report with an appropriate depository.

Methodology

The client had provided floor plans of the buildings. These were checked on-site, and measured plans drawn up of additional components. A photographic survey of the exterior and interior of the property was carried out. Two site visits were undertaken, one before demolition of the outbuildings, and one immediately afterwards.

In addition to this, the client provided photographs taken in advance of the repair and remodelling of both the main house and the outbuildings, which provided useful clues to the date range of the main building. Some of these have been used in this report where they show details no longer present by the time of the survey.

Historic maps were consulted in order to provide evidence for the dating of the various components.

Results

The listing description reads:

House. Early C19. Ashlar and coursed rubble stone with quoins and Welsh slate hipped roof with 2 rendered ridge stacks. Facade of ashlar faces right. 2 storeys of 5 6/6 sash windows. Stone sills and lintels with keystones. Central stone porch with hipped roof. Painted eaves cornice. Left end, facing road, of rubble stone, has 6-panelled door and fanlight in early C19 style doorcase. A 6/6 sash on both floors to left and a blind 1st floor window to right, 1 storey extension to rear. Inside are staircase with mahogany rail and 2 fireplaces, all of early C19.

The house is not covered by Pevsner (1984).

Barnsdale house is an imposing double-fronted, twin pile structure under a hipped roof. The main façade faces west, rather than to the street to the north. A range of brick outbuildings comes off the south-east corner, and there is a brick extension to the north-east, originally single storey but now two storey. Of note is that the range to the south-east is not in alignment with the house proper.

The main house is built using two different stones: the main façade is limestone ashlar (perhaps Clipsham), and the north front (facing the street) is coursed blocks in the same stone, with occasional ironstone blocks and a run of ironstone quoins up the east side. The south side is mostly coursed limestone with occasional ironstone, but the south-east corner is ironstone up to the second storey, plus ironstone quoins up to the roof line. The back of the main house, where visible, is mostly ironstone but with limestone also in evidence higher up. The range to the south-east is all brick, as is the extension to the north-east.

In addition the main façade is set on a low plinth of a stone type unknown to the author, but probably local as odd blocks of it are present in the boundary walls which are otherwise ironstone. The plinth ignores the porch, which has been added later.



Figure 3 Main (west) facade



Figure 4 North face



Figure 5 South face

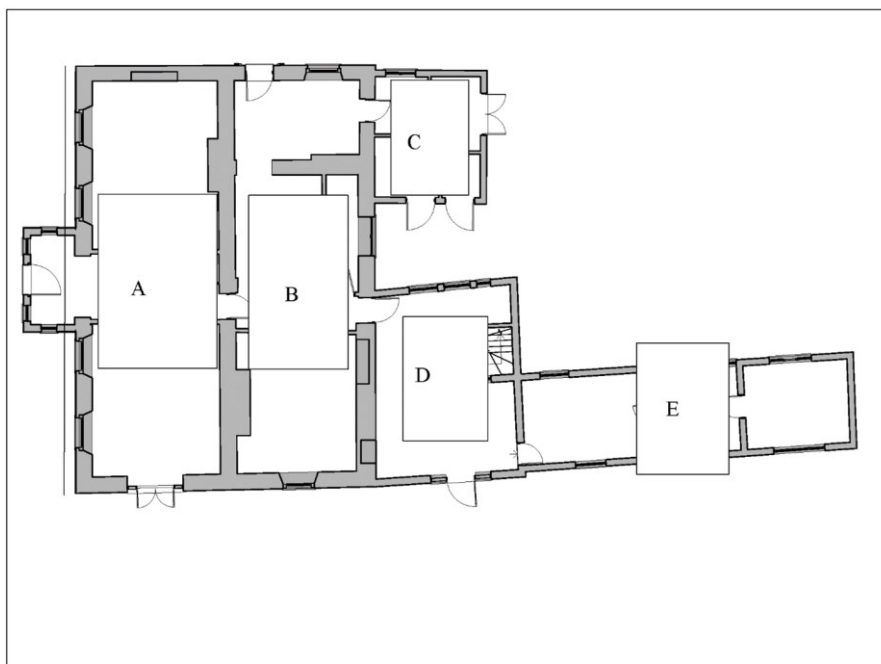


Figure 6 Block plan

For the purposes of this report, the buildings have been divided into different components : blocks A and B comprise the main house, west side and east side; block C the boiler/stores extension to the north east; block D the two-storey brick structure connecting the house with the single storey range to the south-east; and block E the range itself.

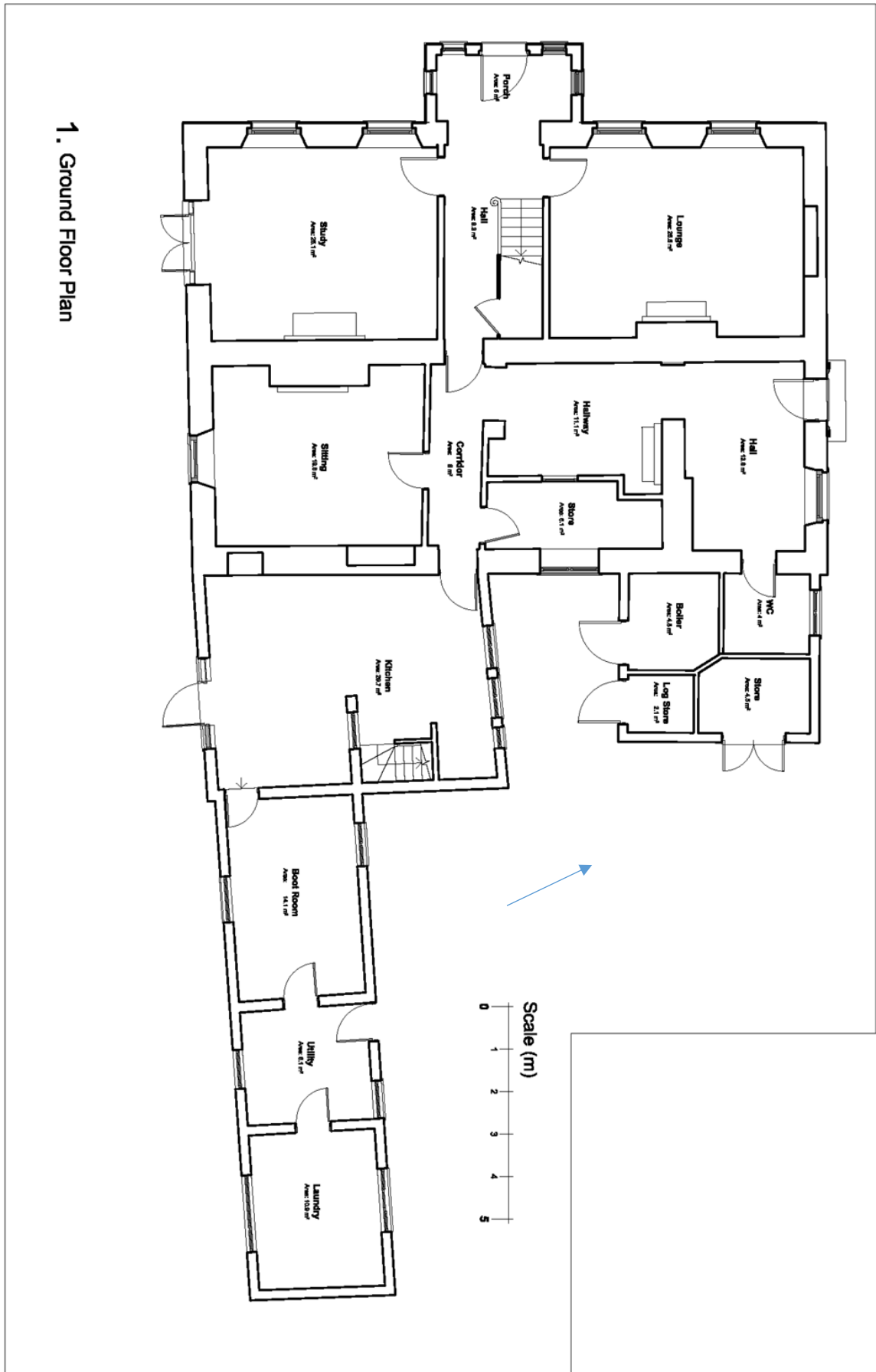


Figure 7 Ground floor. Plan provided by client



Figure 8 First floor. Plan provided by client

There is little useful to say about block C. Described on the plan as W.C./stores/log store, a photograph (Figure 9) taken before refurbishment shows it to have been modern brick, second half of the 20th C. It is tied into the boundary wall which is of the same brick.



Figure 9 Block C, looking north-west

Block E is obviously earlier, probably mid- 19th C. It uses an irregular Flemish bond. The casement windows at each end of the north face (Figure 11, Figure 12) are inserted into wide blocked openings, and the middle window is over a blocked door. There is no provision for heat. The roof is common rafter in deal with Welsh slate. This range was probably originally used for storage and/or smaller livestock. The gable end shows different episodes of build, including a row of headers under a row on edge (above the wheelie bin Figure 13) which may indicate where a structure such as a pig run has been removed. A curiosity is that if both the present door and the blocked door to its left in Figure 12 were in use at the same time, they would be opening into the same room; so either the one succeeded the other, or some re-organisation of the internal layout is indicated. At some time this building has been converted into living accommodation, which has removed most of the evidence of its previous use; all the floors are modern tile. The windows on the south side (Figure 14) probably relate to the domestic use rather than the agricultural.

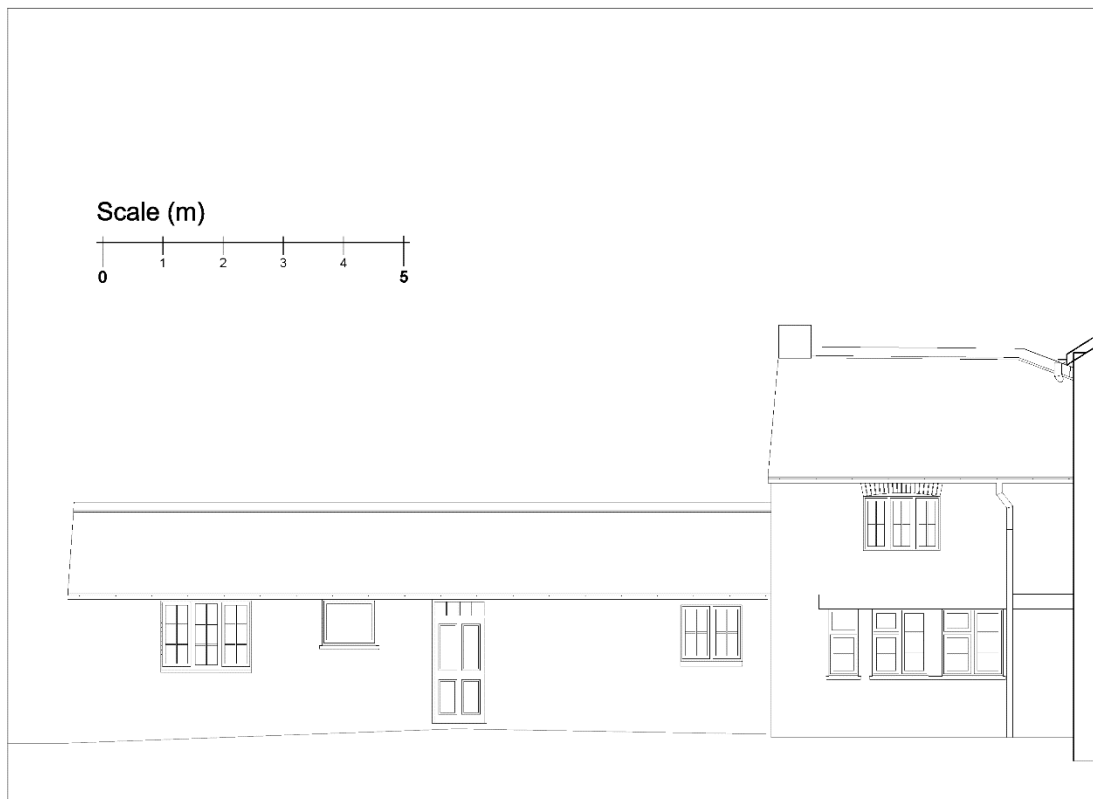


Figure 10 North elevation of blocks D and E. Plan provided by client



Figure 11 Junction between blocks D and E, north face. Photo provided by client



Figure 12 North face block E



Figure 13 East end of block E



Figure 14 South, and East faces, block E

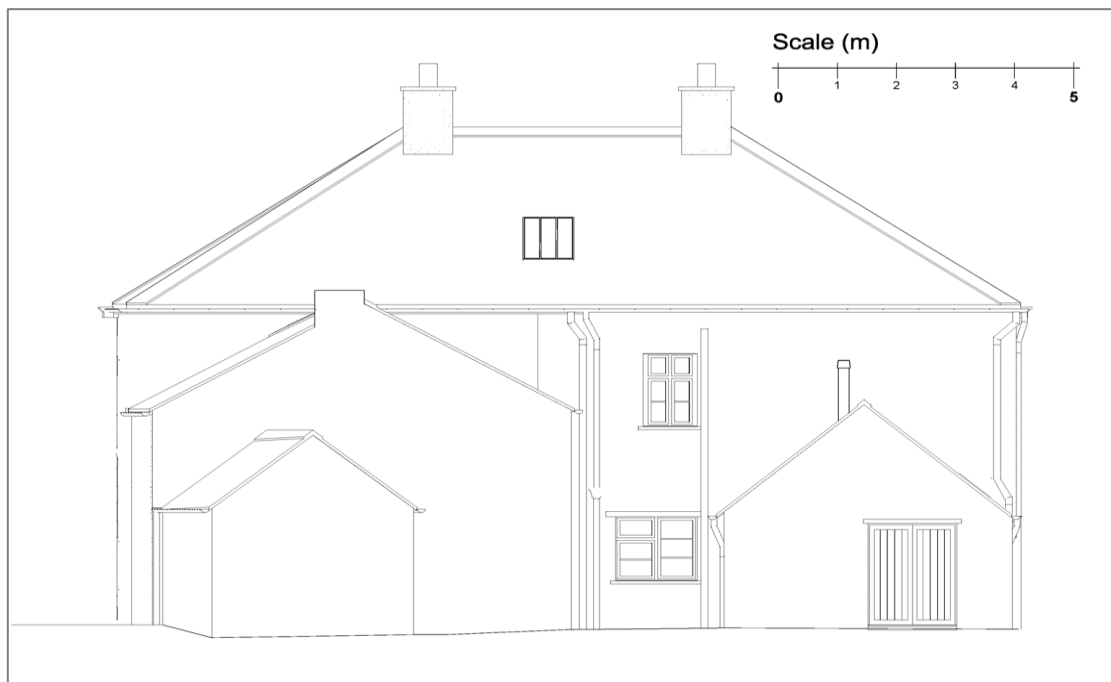


Figure 15 Elevation of eastern side. Plan provided by client



Figure 16 Stable door between blocks D and E



Figure 17 Block E, looking east to gable end wall (pink)



Figure 18 Block E, looking north-east to present entrance door

Block D is probably the most comprehensively remodelled block of the group, and it may have been remodelled more than once. Its history is not immediately comprehensible in its present state. Its odd orientation is perhaps best explained by it being the last to have been built; whereas the slight difference in alignment between the main house and block **E** would not be particularly noticeable if they were separate buildings, when joined by block **D** it becomes very apparent. The gable shows it to use an irregular bond. The chimney is either rebuilt, or probably added later, and part of the gable looks to have been rebuilt. Large blocked openings to the east and north (Figure 19) show that at one time the north side of the ground floor was open-sided; the pillar supporting this corner is constructed of bull-nose bricks, which indicates that carts or beast were moving in and out at some time. The south side (Figure 20) is rendered with scored imitation ashlar.

It is no more straightforward internally. The floors are modern tile. Part of the north wall of block **E** appears (Figure 21) to carry on into the interior, together with a window; there is a 20cm step down between the south (which is on a level with block **E**) and north side. The doorway on the south corner between this block and the house proper shows the ground floor of block **D** to have been raised to match that of block **E**; this doorway must have gone out of use at this point. The door and flanking

windows on the south side of block **D** relate to this floor raising. Perhaps the step down to the north side was retained simply to allow access from the main house via the other door (behind the blue tarpaulin in Figure 25), the present opening into the main house on the first floor is new. Some sort of a range or boiler has been removed from the ground floor, and the base of the chimney breast above is supported with a prop. There is a covered well adjacent to the south door (the Victoria County History states that in 1958 the parish still relied on well water). The joists of the floor above are fixed with modern-looking steel joist hangers. The upper floor, reached by a plain stair (Figure 22), has a casement window to the yard (Figure 24) and an odd 18th century style 8/8 sash window to the south which presumably came from a different property. The flue and fireplace on the upper floor above (Figure 23) have the look of a slightly ramshackle addition, rather than original build with the gable wall behind. The line of the ridge dipping to slip under the eaves of the house proper seems unusual, and may indicate a raised roof, or the addition of a second storey. Most or all of these alterations indicate conversion from agricultural into domestic use, and integration of this block with block **E**.



Figure 19 Block D looking west. Note bull-nose pier and blocked openings



Figure 20 Block D south face



Figure 21 Block D, looking north east. Note apparent continuation of north wall of block E into interior



Figure 22 Block D stairs



Figure 23 Block D upper floor, blocked fireplace and flue above removed range



Figure 24 Block D upper floor, looking north east



Figure 25 Main house, east side after removal of outbuildings.

Neither Block D nor E were provided with proper footings. This is not unusual in agricultural buildings of this date range, but may be an indication that block **D** started off life as a single storey structure.

The Main House (Blocks A, B)

At first sight, the building appears to sit on the transition of late Georgian to early Victorian style, and the survey broadly corroborates the listing date of early 19th century, at least for the majority of it. Virtually none of the original fixtures and fittings, doors or fireplaces survive. Although the measured plan could be checked for accuracy on the west side (block A), this was not possible on the east side (block B) as there has been extensive internal remodelling of the layout of both floors. For this reason no internal photographs of the east side of the main house are included in this report.

The elevation plan (Figure 26) shows the roof at a pitch of about 35⁰ on the north-south axis and 32⁰ on the east-west (this corresponds with the measured truss angle). Both are too shallow for the local Collyweston slate, indicating that the roof was originally meant for Welsh slate, given that Swithland slate would be an unusual choice this far east within the County.

The porch is not original; map evidence shows it to have been built after 1900 but before 1962 (see below), the pre-renovation photos show it to have had casements in metal frames.



Figure 26 West facade. Plan provided by client



Figure 27 Detail of main facade and added porch, showing plinth

All the windows are new, but they are copies of the previous ones, which were themselves replacements. The pre-renovation photographs show the window on the top right-hand frontage (Figure 28) to have had the original hornless sash, whereas all the rest on this facade were horned

replacements. The pre-renovation photographs also show a couple of hornless sashes on the north face of the main house and one on the south. The windows on a west face commonly need replacing more often than the other sides due to rain penetration.

Inside the porch, the hall has a nice open string staircase (Figure 30) in keeping with an earlier 19th century date: moulded hardwood rail over painted deal stick bannisters, with the occasional iron one for reinforcement, ending with a restrained flourish on the curtail step. The arrangement as the stair meets the first floor (Figure 29) is however pretty unusual, and may just reflect the whim of the owner, as it seems to give no practical advantage over a simpler layout.

The two ground floor rooms in block A still have their shutters and bars (Figure 36); the fireplace in the north room (Figure 32) originally came from the bedroom above (Ben Cripps, *pers. comm*)



Figure 28 Original hornless sash on west façade. Photo provided by client



Figure 29 Stairway, before renovation. Photo provided by client

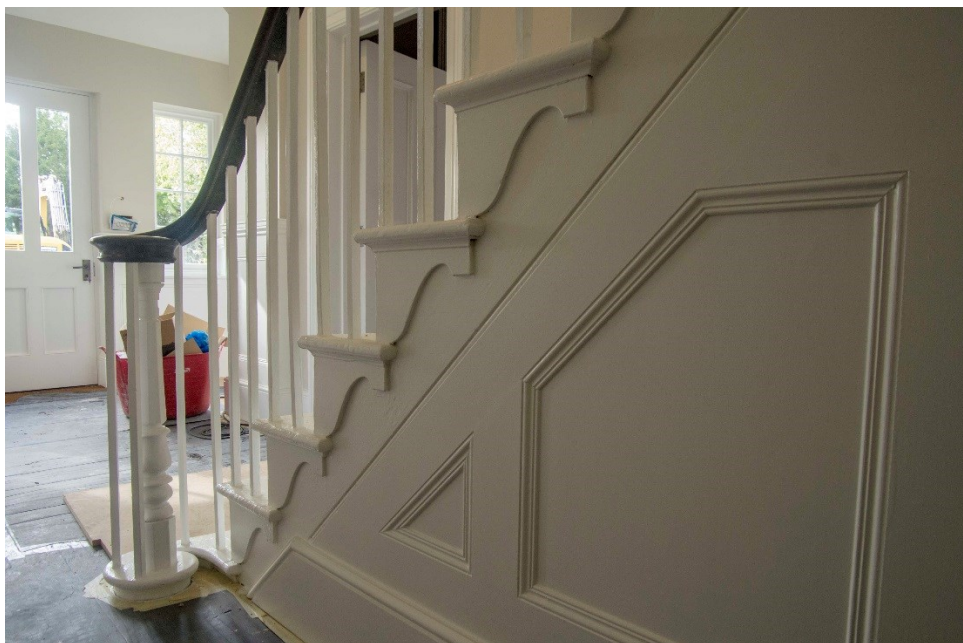


Figure 30 Stair and curtail step

The ground floor north reception room in block A has an axial ceiling beam across the middle of the room (Figure 31) whereas the equivalent south room (Figure 33) does not. It is unlikely to represent a removed wall given the central position of the fireplace. The fact that there is a slight mismatch at the junction of the axial beam with the west wall may mean it was a later addition to deal with a perceived structural problem in the floor above; the reason for this is unclear as there would appear to be no difference in loading. The ceiling in the south room is very slightly lower than the north, but whether this is a result of using joists of slightly heavier scantling or merely a difference in ceiling treatment cannot be said. The cornice design common to both the north and south rooms is as pre-renovation photographs show, but may not be the original design. Those of the hallway, stairs and landing (Figure 37) are probably original.



Figure 31 Reception room, north side



Figure 32 Fireplace in north reception room, relocated from bedroom over



Figure 33 Reception room, south side



Figure 34 First floor bedroom, north side



Figure 35 First floor bedroom, south side

The attic room and window are new, but given the presence of a stair, there originally would have been some provision for servant accommodation in this space. Within the roof space, the roof is supported (Figure 38, Figure 39, Figure 40) on a type of queen strut truss, with twin purlins, in deal. The collar of the truss is supported by the brick chimney stack as well as the queen struts, with the purlins carried on cleats lower down the back of the truss. The junction between the truss and the tie beam is re-enforced with an iron strap (Figure 39). Only the north truss was accessible but the south is presumably the same arrangement.



Figure 36 Shutters common to both ground floor reception rooms



Figure 37 Cornice etc on landing



Figure 38 North roof truss, east side. Queen strut to the right with light switch



Figure 39 Detail of truss

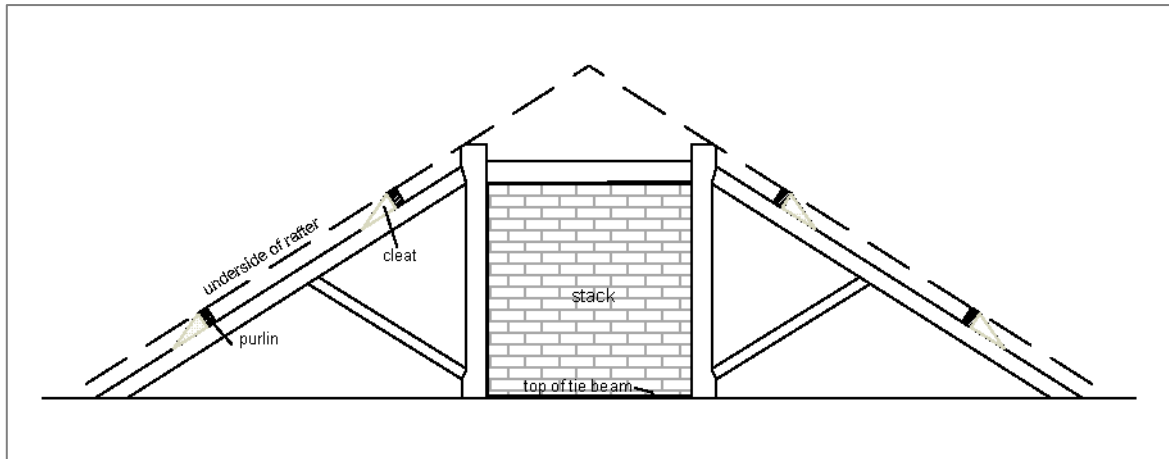


Figure 40 Schematic section east - west of truss

Cartographic evidence

The first available map to show the village in any detail is the enclosure award of 1805. The original of this is quite badly damaged but an 1810 copy (Figure 41) shows buildings on the plot which do not appear to correspond to the present house. The preliminary O.S. survey by Boyce in 1814 also does not appear to show the present house, rather a narrow building gable end on to the street (Figure 42).



Figure 41 1810 copy of 1805 enclosure map



Figure 42 Detail from 1814 preliminary O.S. map by Boyce

By the time of the First Edition O.S. of 1886 (Figure 43), the house and associated outbuildings are shown with much the same footprint as now, except that there is an additional small structure on the north-west corner of the main house, and the porch had not yet been added. This is also absent from the 1900 Second Edition (Figure 44), but has appeared by the 1962 edition (not shown), which no longer shows the small structure to the north-west, but is otherwise the same as the 1900 edition. By the 1977 edition (Figure 45) the outbuilding on the north-east corner has a larger footprint, giving an indication of the likely date of the modern outhouse. After this there is no change in the footprint up till the present O.S. map.

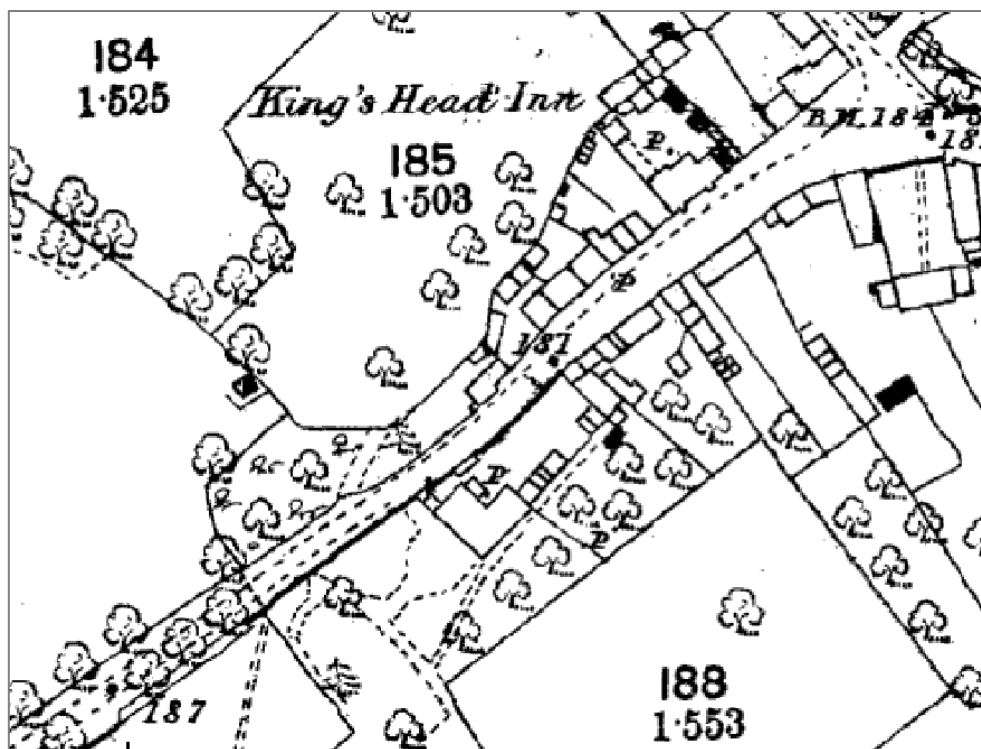


Figure 43 Detail from O.S. First edition 1886

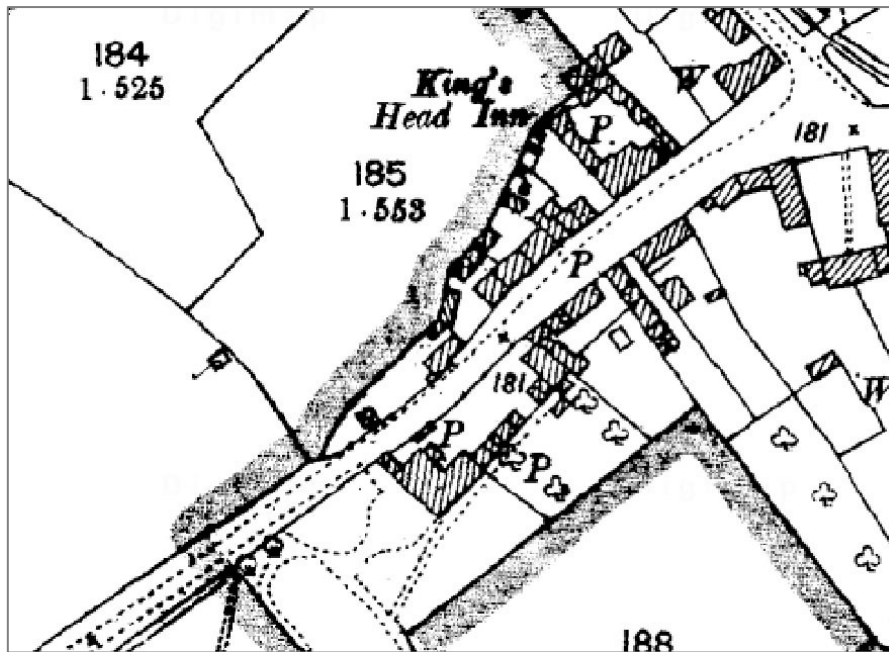


Figure 44 Detail from O.S. 2nd edition 1900



Figure 45 Detail from O.S. 1977 map

Discussion

Using the map evidence alone, it can be said with reasonable confidence that the main residence and outbuildings were erected between 1814 and 1886. In regard to the main house, as hornless sashes are uncommon after about 1840, and after that date one would expect the windows to have fewer, larger panes of glass, it is proposed that the earlier half of the date range is more likely than the later. Moreover, the façade has a Georgian symmetrical feel to it, which would have been more pronounced before the porch was added. A caveat is that fashions and building techniques might spread quite fast through the major centres, but may not be embraced so quickly in the rural parts of the country.

The north-eastern brick outbuilding block **C** is between 1962 and 1977, but blocks **D** and **E** are more difficult to date; block **D** probably mid to later 19th century given the bull-nose brick pier, but this block has obviously undergone at least one radical remodelling at a later date. Block **E** appears to have been partly incorporated into block **D** and if so must pre-date it.

Although the main residence as it now stands can be roughly dated, there are grounds to speculate that it may have incorporated an earlier building: the back (east) and south-east corner of the main house, being mostly ironstone, gives rise to the suspicion that perhaps the building shown end on to the street in the 1814 O.S. precursor survey was re-used for the basis of the east side of the subsequent house, which would have necessitated a completely different roof structure. This may explain the free use of spare ironstone quoins on the east corners. In addition, the south-eastern corner needs underpinning; there are no apparent foundations underneath it (Figure 46). Whereas this might not be unusual in agricultural buildings, it seems unlikely that any reasonably high-status house built in the nineteenth century would not have proper footings provided. Finally, the plan (and on-site measurement) shows that there is a very slight taper east to west: the main polite west façade is a bit wider than the east. This may have been to accommodate the desired proportions of wall to window on the main façade, or it may be that the south gable of the original building was not at exactly 90° to the long side, pre-industrial generations being less in thrall to the right angle than ourselves.



Figure 46 South east corner of main house, showing wall built straight onto the clay ground. Re-enforcing bars hammered into the sections for subsequent underpinning encountered no footings.

Acknowledgments

The survey and report was undertaken by the author. John Thomas of ULAS provided project management. ULAS would like to thank Ben Cripps and his team for their help and tolerance during the project, and the author would like to thank Neil Finn for discussing the project.

Archive

The archive consists of annotated plans provided by the client, the survey photographs in digital TIFF format, a plan showing the positions of the survey photographs, a measured drawing of the roof truss, and digital photographs in JPG format taken by the client before work commenced. These will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums Service under accession code X.A4.2018.

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Victoria County History internet address:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/leics/vol5/pp49-61>

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