A Photographic Record of The Bath Hotel, Shearsby, Leicestershire (SP 622 902)

TR Projects

Planning Application No. 01/1469/3

For Corporate Architecture Ltd

Signed: Paracus Cury 17/11/2004 Date:

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Contents

Summary	1
Objectives and Methodology	1
Location	1
Organisation of Information	3
Historical background	3
Building Interpretation	4
References	6

Figures

- Fig. 1 Location: Shearsby and Bath Hotel, Leicestershire
- Fig. 2 Site: Bath Hotel, Shearsby, Leicestershire
- Fig. 3 Site: Bath Hotel, Shearsby, Ground floor location of plates
- Fig. 4 Site: Bath Hotel, Shearsby, First floor location of plates
- Fig. 5 Site: Bath Hotel, Shearsby, Second floor location of plates

Plates

- Plate 1 Bath Hotel view from the south east
- Plate 2 Bath Hotel view showing 18th century section of building.
- Plate 3 View of Bath Hotel from east showing early 19th century principal elevation with five of original six windows
- Plate 4 Detail of first floor elevation of 18th century build.
- Plate 5 Detail of altered chimney stack in 18th century part of the building. Plate 6 Detail of Flemish Bond brickwork in 19th century section of the principal elevation

Plate 7 Detail of window in 19th century section of the principal elevation Plate 8 Detail of first floor window in 18th century section of the principal elevation

Plate 9 General view of Bath Hotel complex from the north

Plate 10 Gable end of 19th century three storey build from the north

Plates 11-12 Detail view of the 19th century north gable of Bath Hotel

Plates 13-14 View of the west elevation of the Bath Hotel

Plate 15 Detail of the buildings 18th century west elevation

Plate 16 The Bath Hotel – view from the south west

Plate 17 View from the south east showing rendered stables

Plate 18 View from the south west showing pitched Welsh slate roof

Plates 19-20 Ground floor general interior view of the 19th century threestorey building

Plates 21-22 General views of Ground floor of the 19th century building

Plates 23-24 View of Ground floor ceiling of the 19th century building

Plate 25 Detail of ceiling structure at first floor

Plate 26 19th century quarry tile and brick flooring

Plate 27 Wrought ironwork decoration removed from unknown location

Plate 28 Re-used floor structure used as a ceiling of single storey building on west side of original farmhouse.

Plate 29 Modern bar with 20th century panel decoration.

Plate 30 Re-used oak structure in roof of single storey extension

Plates 31-32 Re-used oak structure introduced into roof of single storey extension

Plate 33 Decorative niche in wall of single storey extension

Plate 34 Staircase rising to first floor in 18th century

Plate 35 Detail of first floor window in 18th century build

Plate 36 East corridor to first floor of 19th century three-storey build

Plate 37 Detail of reeding and patera ornament in 19th century doorcase at first floor

Plate 38 North-east corner of first floor room in 19th century build

Plate 39 Detail of first floor ceiling structure of 18th century build

Plate 40 Exposed section of principal rafter structure in the 18th century first floor area of the house.

Plate 41 Wide hardwood floorboarding exposed in cupboard under stairs of 19th century first floor.

Plate 42 Second floor window to west of 19th century build

Plate 43 Second floor east window of 19th century build

Plate 44 Staircase leading from first to second floor of 19th century build

Plate 45 Second floor west corridor of 19th century build

Plate 46 North-west second floor corridor of 19th century build

Plate 47 Hearth of removed fireplace in second floor

Colour plate c1 Front elevation of the Bath Hotel

Colour plate c2 Detail of first floor of 18th century section front elevation Colour plate c3 The Bath Hotel showing early 19th century build from the east

Colour plate c4 The Bath Hotel North gable of early 19th century build Colour plate c5 Converted single storey buildings

Colour plate c6 The Bath Hotel from the south showing single storey service accommodation

Colour plate c7-8 Single storey 20th century extensions

Colour Plate c9 Ground floor 19th century quarry tiling in the 18th century part of the house

Colour plate c10 Converted outbuilding with ceiling of re-used structural timbers

Colour plate c11 Outbuilding converted to bar with ceiling of re-used structural timbers

Colour plate c12 Single storey extensions with roof of re-used structural timbers

Colour plate c13-14 Detail showing re-used timbers in extension roof

Colour plate c15 Re-used timber detail in extension roof

Colour plate c16 Steel joint to re-used timbers in extension roof

Colour Plate c17 Ground floor window frame showing reeded surround and paterae stops

Colour plate c18 First floor door and frame showing reeded surround and paterae stops

Colour Plate c 19 Stairs rising from ground to first floor in 18th century build

Colour plate c20 First floor corridor east side facing south

Colour Plate c 21 19th century build first floor detail showing wide elm floor board pieces

Colour plate c22 Detail of exposed truss section.

Colour Plate c 23 Exposed sections of principal rafter and purlin

Colour plate c24 Stairs set against south gable wall

Colour plate c25 Second floor corridor of 19th century building

Colour plate c26 Various wrought and cast iron decorative features

Colour plate c27 Outbuilding of small holding to south west

Colour plate c28 General view of west range of outbuildings

Colour plate c29 Southern end of outbuildings to west

Colour plate c30 Outbuilding lying to the south

Colour plate c31 Outbuildings lying to the south

Colour plate c32 Additional outbuildings unit attached to loose box

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF THE

BATH HOTEL

SHEARSBY

Leicestershire

NGR: SP 622 902

SUMMARY

Situated in South Leicestershire the early group of buildings forming the Bath Hotel represent a unique survival of 18th and 19th century society's interest in visiting 'spa's' to consume draughts of natural, chemical spring waters as cures for a wide range of ailments. John Nichols, a late 18th century commentator on Leicestershire and its history, referred to the healing qualities of the chalybeate spring at Shearsby and 19th century records repeatedly refer to the it's healing powers. Shearsby parish was formally enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1774, sometime after that building must have commenced on a site adjacent to the medicinal spring. The earliest part of the present building must have been commenced shortly after that date. During the early years of the 19th century the north bay of the original 18th century farmhouse appears to have been replaced by a two bay brick building presumably intended to provide additional accommodation for visitors coming to take the waters. By the early years of the 20th century it is obvious that the 'spa' ceased to be a viable, economic activity and the farmstead began to concentrate more specifically on its victualling license. Today the only remaining evidence of the 'spa' and its activities is the name of the licensed premises - the Bath Hotel.

OBJECTIVES and METHODOLOGY

The principal objective of this report was to provide a photographic survey of the surviving historical features of the buildings on site. A brief historical introduction has been provided outlining the growth and development of the **Bath Hotel** between 1774 and the present.

The photographic work has been carried out at a level consistent with the requirements of the Royal Commission on Historic Building's <u>Recording Buildings: A Descriptive Specification</u>, "Level 1 Photography."

LOCATION

Historically the village of Shearsby, was originally part of the ecclesiastical parish of Knaptoft a shrunken medieval village situated 2kms (1½miles) south of Shearsby, (see Fig. 1, over), which is set on a ridge lying approximately 1km south-east of the **Bath Hotel**. The village of Shearsby lies 14.5kms, (9miles), south of Leicester and is situated some 1200metres (¾ mile) west of the Leicester - Welford - Northampton which was turnpike first authorised in 1765, ¹ this road now forms the A 5199. The **Bath Hotel**, which is the subject of this photographic survey, lies in close proximity with an unclassified road running from Shearsby to Bruntingthorpe, Walton and Kimcote, approximately 1km, south of Shearsby (see Fig. 2, see over),

Being situated in open countryside the location of the **Bath Hotel** would indicate it was built as a post-Enclosure holding set within its own fields, at Shearsby the Parliamentary Enclosure Award is dated 1774. The **Bath Hotel** takes its name from a nearby chalybeate spring. Such medicinal springs enjoyed considerable popularity during the second half of the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries when spa treatments were widely resorted to as a means of relieving various medical conditions, (see Nichols, below). It appears that a minor commercial venture which sought to capitalise on the healing properties of the spring and included the development of a small hostelry with residential facilities, was an additional source of income for the farmstead throughout much of the 19th century.

ORGANISATION of INFORMATION

This photographic survey endeavours to provide a logical sequence of visual information which is chiefly based on the principal elevations. A substantial amount of the internal details had been removed by the time of this survey consequently it was not possible to create an effective sequence of illustrations for the internal details.

The photographs are presented as a sequence of black and white photographs which run from *Plate 1 to Plate 47*, and are followed by a shorter sequence of colour prints which are identified as *Plate c1 to Plate c32*. Six plans, Figs 3 - 8, located at the end of the photographs show the position and alignment of the photographs.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Writing about Shearsby in 1807 the historian and antiquarian John Nichols observed:

"In this lordship [Shearsby] is a famous salt spring, situate not 100 yards from the public road from Shearsby to Bruntingthorpe...It is an uncovered round pit, at which no cattle drink: and in August 1805 was about a yard and a half deep, being then full. Its taste is very saline and brackish, without any acidity: and in very dry seasons is probably more salt than it was after the last wet summer. The son of an inhabitant of Shearsby some time since drank the water, and bathed in it for a scorbutic complaint, and found great benefit from it; and there is little doubt that this spring, if properly taken care of, and secured by a building over it, and the recommendation of a few M.D's, might be as beneficial in many disorders as several in the kingdom, which owe their celebrity more to the fashion, then the convalescence, of their visitants. The land in which this spring is, is now the property of Mr Reeve of this place, who has some thoughts of erecting a building over the spring." ³

That Mr Reeve initiated some form of development relating to this "spa" is borne out by the fact that a series of early Directories for Leicestershire show members of the Reeve family as proprietors of **The Bath Hotel** throughout the period 1844 – 1877. The final occasion on which a member of the Reeve family was recorded as the proprietor of the Bath Hotel is in White's <u>Directory of Leicestershire & Rutland</u>, for 1877, on that occasion the <u>Directory</u> included an extensive and detailed chemical analysis of the mineral properties of the spring as well as its claims to heal various ailments.

"At the Baths Hotel is a mineral spring, called Shearsby Spa, which has been long in repute for its medicinal virtues in cutaneous disease, indigestion, rheumatic, bilious and nervous disorders. There is accommodation for enabling invalids to take the benefit of bathing and drinking the water." ⁵

Four years later, Kelly's <u>Directory</u>. of 1881 recorded Thomas Johnson as proprietor of the Bath Inn,' and, as it had done for the previous twenty six years, noted the presence of ".a mineral spring called 'The Spa'...in some repute for its medicinal virtues.." for the first time, on this occasion, it added "...but there is very little use of it." Kelly's <u>Directories</u> continued referring to the presence of the mineral spring at the Bath Hotel until as late as 1941. Infrequent though the use of the spa may have been during the final quarter of the 19th century, in 1927 Charles Simpson's hunting record of <u>The Harboro' Country</u> referred to Shearsby Spa as:

"...one of the local springs which...is still used for medicinal purposes. These springs in Leicestershire were once famous, but Shearsby is the only one in this part of the country that keeps up its reputation. The Spa is a farmhouse used as a small hotel and is still visited occasionally by people who want to take the waters." ⁶

This one reference is the only one that has been found which describes the spa as still functioning in the 20th century and it seems that by the close of the inter-war years, 1920-1939, the "spa" functions had all but disappeared. By the late 1950's the Bath Hotel was wholly dependent on its victuallers licence and a small-holding of agricultural land for its economic wellbeing and though newspaper articles written about the Bath Hotel during the second half of the 20th century invariably mentioned its "spa" background, it was as a matter of history and the establishment became increasingly dependent on the victualling license for its economic well-being. In more recent times almost all licensed premises have become equally dependent on providing catering facilities for their customers and the current series of alterations and modifications at the Bath Hotel represent a continuing development along these lines.

BUILDING INTERPRETATION

By the time of this photographic survey was undertaken all internal partitions and walls had been stripped back to their original base and re-plastered, as a consequence this historic building photographic interpretation has been entirely dependent on standing fabric in form of the walls.

18th century building (see Fig. 2 and Plates 1, 2, 3, 4, c1, c2,)

The earliest surviving part of the Bath Hotel complex consists of a two storey, two-bay, brick built fragment of a late 18th century, post-Enclosure farmhouse, i.e. post-1774. The brickwork of the front wall of this building is raised in Flemish Bond, (see Plate 8) and there is a dentil course at the eaves. The south gable of the building has been rendered and the brickwork of the rear, west elevation, was not sufficiently distinct to identify clearly. The roof of this 18th century building is of Welsh slate, (see Plates 5 and 8), indicating it has been re-roofed at some stage during its history, as Welsh slate does not appear on Leicestershire buildings until the second quarter of the 19th century. Two, eight-overeight paned, sash windows of the original house are retained at first floor on the east elevation. On the rear elevation the windows appear to be late 19th or early 20th century replacements for the original series. This 18th century building also contains part of a ground floor passageway near its northern end. A later entry porch set on the east elevation of the building, (see Plates 1, 2, 3), now conceals the original entrance door. Characteristic of much rural building of its time this farmhouse was only one room deep and would appear to have originally been a linear arrangement of three bays with a passageway forming the characteristic, Midland farmhouse plan type of two bays: passageway: one bay, an arrangement which first appeared in the medieval farmsteads and was carried over into the post-medieval, brick building tradition of the late 17th and 18th centuries. The surviving two bays of this building are set either side a centrally located chimney that shows evidence of having been modified on several occasions and has lost all diagnostic details at ground floor level, (see Plate 5). Most of the entrance passage which relates to this earliest phase of building, c 1774, has been obliterated by later alterations at ground floor.

Some of the roof timbers remained exposed in the first floor areas of this section of the building. In the bathroom area a shallow pitched principal rafter with a trimmed purlin and tie-beam was visible, (see Plates 39, c22), in the adjacent room the partition wall contained a waney edged principal rafter and a cut section of a purlin, (see Plates 40, c23).

19th century building (see Plate c1, c3).

At some time during the first quarter of the 19th century it would appear the north bay of the original farmhouse was replaced by the present two bay, three storey, brick building with a Welsh slate roof. The brickwork of this building is of Flemish Bond on the principal, east elevation and of Flemish Garden Wall Bond at the rear, west elevation, the eaves work includes a dentilled frieze. This unit of building which has retained five of the original six sash windows on its east elevation, may have been built as additional accommodation to meet the requirements of patrons using the spa facilities. The new unit of building represents a simple arrangement which, wherever possible, uses the existing access facilities and services such as stairs and passages rather than installing new facilities. This arrangement is characteristic of a number of additional units of enhancing build on early 18th century

farmhouses to recorded in Leicestershire.⁷ Here the centrally located chimney stack serves six chambers. Access to the first floor of all rooms in the building is by means of a staircase contained within the earlier farmhouse, (see Plates 34, c19). A simple stair, built alongside the south gable wall provides access from first to second floor within the additional unit, (see Plates 44, c24). High in the north gable of this building a series of three semi-circular, recessed features can be seen in the brickwork, (see Plates 10, 11, 12, c4). The inaccessibility of these features makes it difficult to identify their function with any certainty, their form is reminiscent of bee-boles, though their height above ground level would make retrieval of honey an extremely hazardous activity.

Few original internal details have survived in this additional section of building. The large ground floor sash window and the door case of the principal, first floor chamber both retain a reeded surround with paterae forms of a type commonly associated with the early 19th century at their corners. The door to this same chamber is probably of the same period, (see Plates 36. 37, 38, c17, c18, c20). At the north end of the second floor corridor there is a door with seven panels, the top three of which are glazed panels the door appears to be part of the original furnishings of this early 19th century addition, (see Plates 45, 46, c25).

20th century building (see Plates 17, c6.)

At the south end of the 18th century section of the building a single storey brick extension with pitched, slate roof has been added sometime during the first half of the 20th century. This appears to have served as a store for the licensed premises.

The Outbuilding Ranges (see Fig. 3 and Plates 9, 13, 14, 18 = external; 28 - 32 = internal, c5 - c8) Early editions of the 25inch, Ordnance Survey Maps, show a two buildings lying at right angles against the west elevation of the 18^{th} and 19^{th} century buildings forming the Bath Hotel, (see Fig. 2) ⁸ The palimpsest of a building can be identified in the brickwork of the west elevation of the 19^{th} century build and the single storey, pitched roof building now engulfed by later additions and extensions appears to be a remnant of this group of buildings. However no confirmatory evidence could be found as the remnants of walls of this surviving building had all been re-plastered.

A second pitched roof building, having a chimney at its south gable, lies at the western edge of the present group of infill buildings within the yard area. This buildings appears to have been part of the earlier range of farmyard buildings, (see Plates 13, 14, 18). At the time of this survey both the buildings with pitched roofs formed part of the range of single storey service, storage and dining facilities of the licensed premises, (see Fig. 2), that had expanded considerably during the second half of the 20^{th} century. Internally some of these infill units have been fitted out with suitable 'retrieved' materials in the form of timber roof trusses, (see Plates 23, 24, 25, 28, 30 - 32, c10, c11 - 16).

Small-holding buildings and stabling (see Fig. 2 and Plates c27-c32.)

Lying beyond the immediate curtilage of the Bath Hotel are a number of units of farm accommodation that relate to the small holding of land that remains in the ownership of the Bath Hotel, none of which appear on the early Ordnance Survey maps. All these units are of contingency form and are included as a matter of record at the end of this report.

REFERENCES

- 1 Turnpike Legislation: Leicester Welford Northampton: 5 Geo.III, c.78 1765
- 2 Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Record Office (hereafter LLRRO) ref: DE 47/1 Shearsby Enclosure Award 1774
- Nichols, J. 1807 <u>The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester- Guthlaxton Hundred</u> Vol.IV, pt I, pp232/3
- 4 Various County Trade Directories held at LLRRO including: White, W. 1844, 1877 <u>History, Gazeteer and Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland Kelly's 1855, 1861, 1875 <u>Directory of Leicestershire & Rutland</u></u>
- 5. ibid White 1877
- 6. Simpson, Chas. 1927 *The Harboro' Country* John Lane, London p.142
- 7. Two recorded examples are located in: Dairy Farm, 2 Main Street, Barsby and Elmtree Farm, Glenfield
- 8. LLRRO Ordnance Survey, 1st edn 25inch map, 1886: ref: XLIV.6



Fig. 1 Location: Shearsby and Bath Hotel, Leicestershire
Fig. 2 Site: Bath Hotel, Shearsby – based on 1st edn 25" Ordnance Survey map (1886), showing Bath Hotel and associated outbuildings. Cross-hatched areas indicate features surviving to present day.

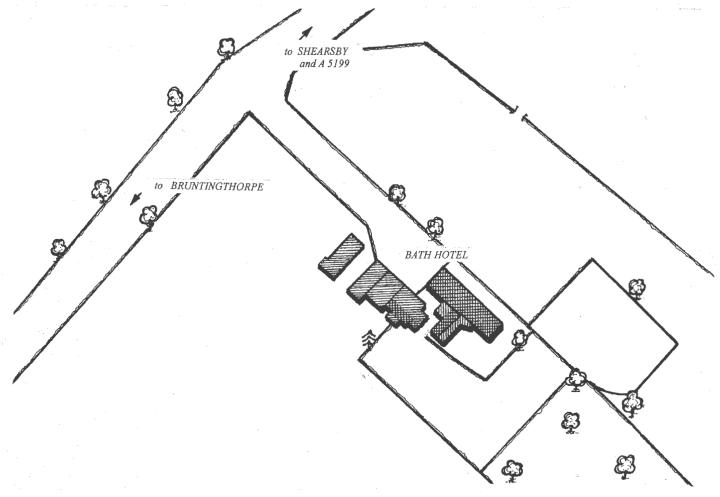


Fig.3 The BATH HOTEL, SHEARSBY Ground Floor: Black & White Photographs

Fig. 4 The BATH HOTEL, SHEARSBY First Floor: Black & White Photographs

Fig. 5 The BATH HOTEL, SHEARSBY Second Floor: Black & White Photographs

Fig.6 The BATH HOTEL, SHEARSBY Ground Floor: Colour Photographs

Fig.7 The BATH HOTEL, SHEARSBY First Floor: Colour Photographs

Fig.8 The BATH HOTEL, SHEARSBY Second Floor: Colour Photographs

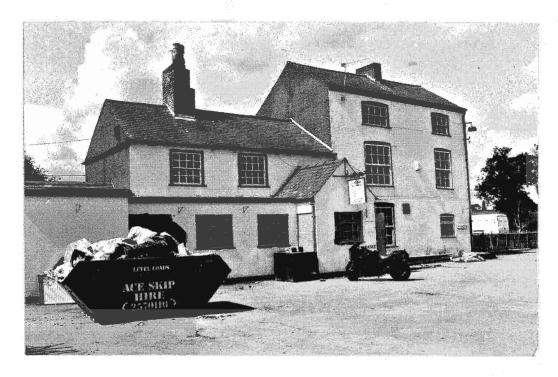


Plate 1 (above) Bath Hotel - view from the south-east. Principal elevation showing late 18th and early 19th century phases of building. The 18th century section (left) is of two bays with the entrance passage, the later 19th century three-storey, two bay section, was probably an addition to accommodate visitors to the spa. The entry porch and front passageway are late 20th century additions.

Plate 2 (below) Bath Hotel – view showing 18th century section of building, modern entrance porch and passageway.



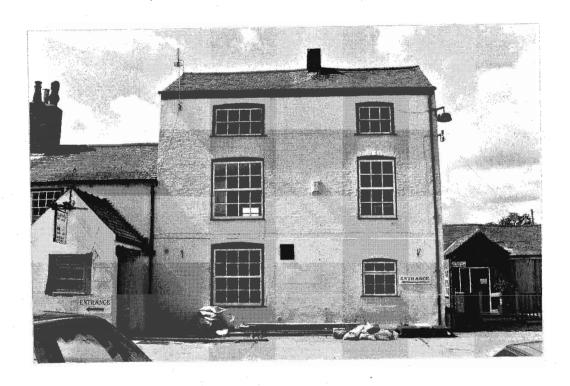


Plate 3 (above) - view of Bath Hotel from east showing early 19^{th} century, principal elevation with five of original six windows.

Plate 4 (below) detail of first floor elevation of 18^{th} century build, also showing a much altered chimney stack in this part of the building.



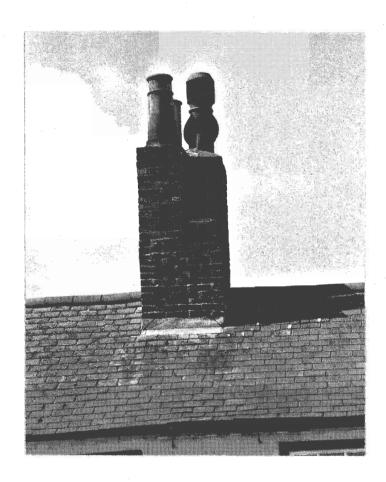
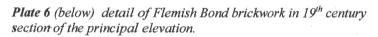


Plate 5 (above) detail of altered chimney stack in 18th century part of building, also shows Welsh slate roof, also shows dentil corse of brickwork at eaves.



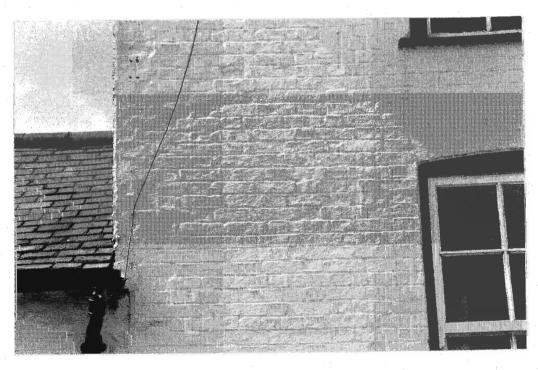




Plate 7 (above) Detail of window at second floor of 19th century principal elevation, (east).

Plate 8 (below) Detail of first floor window in the 18th century principal elevation, (east), also shows detail of dentil coursed brickwork at eaves level.



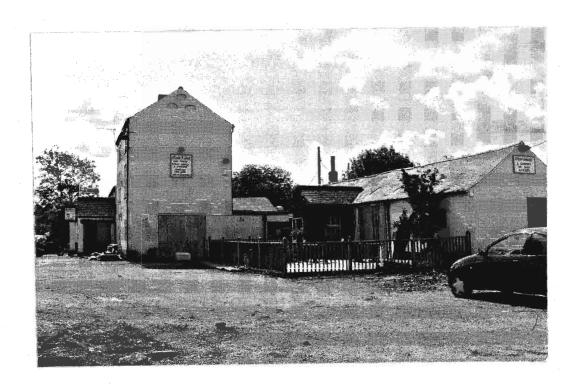
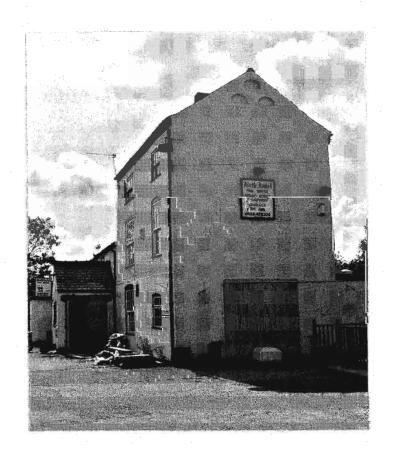


Plate 9 (above) General view of **Bath Hotel** complex from north, the 19th century build is to the east, (i.e. left) and 20th century single storey additions lie to the west with converted outbuildings infilling work between.

Plate 10 (bleow) Gable end of 19th century, three storey build from north.





Plates 11, 12 Detail view of the 19th century north gable of **Bath Hotel** showing the three recesses which may originally have been bee-boles.





Plates 13, 14 Views of the west elevation of the Bath Hotel showing the extensive infill. The two pitched roofs belong to earlier buildings that were part of the original farmstead.





Plate 15 Detail of 19th century building's west elevation, showing three-over-three paned, sash window at second floor and segmental arched window at first floor. Also shows Flemish garden Wall Bond of this elevation. The gable palimpsest, part of which can be seen in this photograph appears to be part of a now demolished building shown on early Ordnance Survey maps.

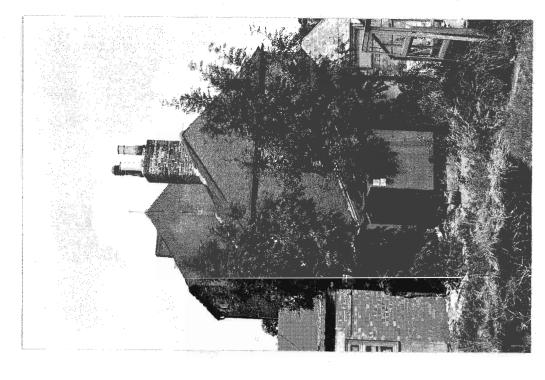


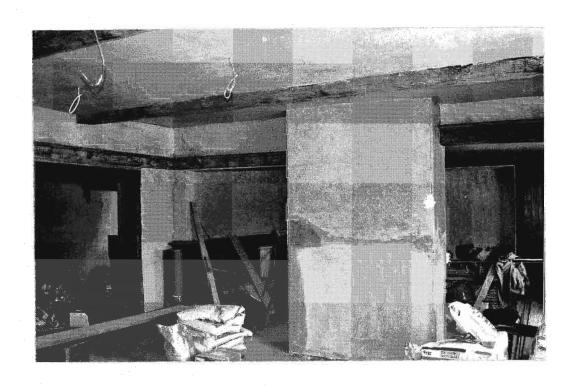
Plate 16 The **Bath Hotel**, view from south-west showing rendered gables of the 18^{th} and 19^{th} century buildings.



Plate 17 (above) view from south-east showing rendered gables of the 18^{th} and 19^{th} century builds with the 20^{th} century additions in foreground.

Plate 18 (below) view from south-west showing pitched Welsh slate roof and gable chimney to single-storey converted farm building.





Plates 19, 20 Ground floor, general interior view of the 19th century three-storey building, showing extent of removal of diagnostic details.





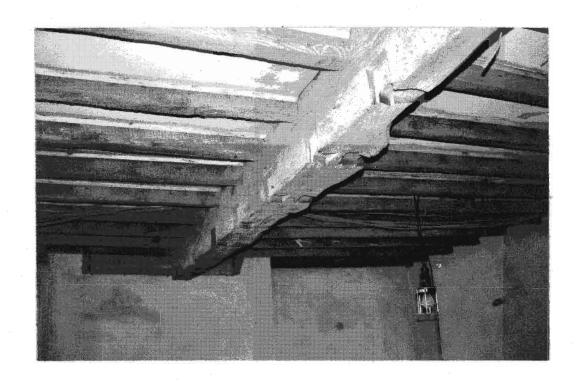
Plates 21, 22 General views of Ground Floor of 19th century building, looking into original yard space subsequently filled by later buildings and now in process of refurbishment for restaurant use. All wooden shelves and beams shown in this series of Plates, i.e. 19 – 26, and 28 - 32 have been cleaned by sandblasting or a similar radical cleaning process.





Plates 23, 24 View of Ground Floor ceiling of 19th century building, with re-used material, (abvoe). (Below) first floor structure of 19th century build with re-used beam and joists visible.





Plates 25 Detail of ceiling structure at first floor showing re-used beam and joists.

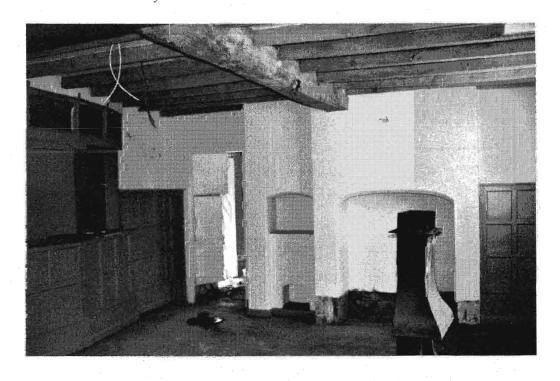
Plate 26 19th century quarry tile and brick flooring in 18th century part of building.





Plates 27 Wrought ironwork decoration removed from unknown location and stored on the Ground Floor.

Plate 28 Re-used floor structure used as ceiling of single-storey building on west side of original farmhouse. All the panelling is 20^{lh} century.



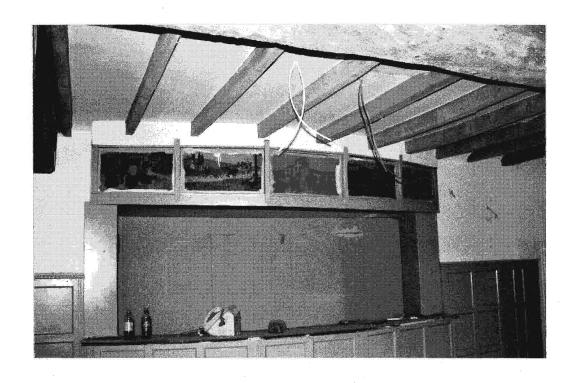


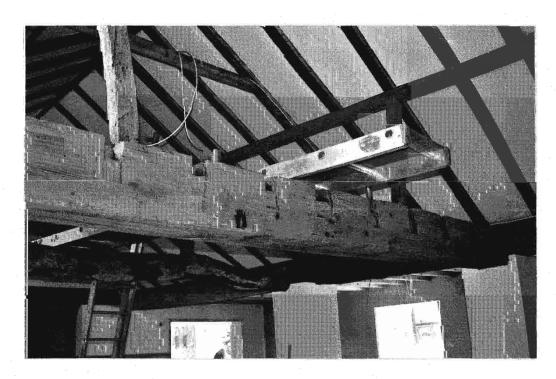
Plate 29 Modern Bar with 20th century panel decoration in converted outbuilding area on west side of house.

Plate 30 Re-used oak structure in roof of single-storey extension





Plates 31, 32 Re-used oak structure introduced into roof of single storey extension on west side of building.



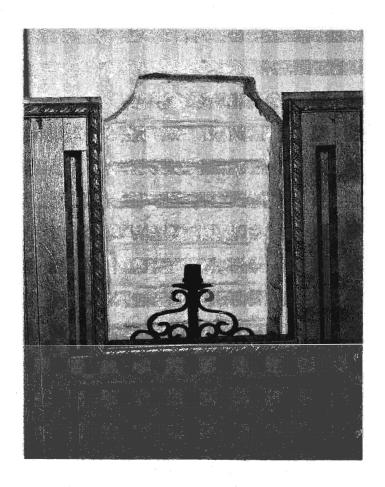


Plate 33 Decorative niche in wall of single storey converted outbuilding.

Plate 34 Staircase rising to first floor in 18th century, two-storey Build.



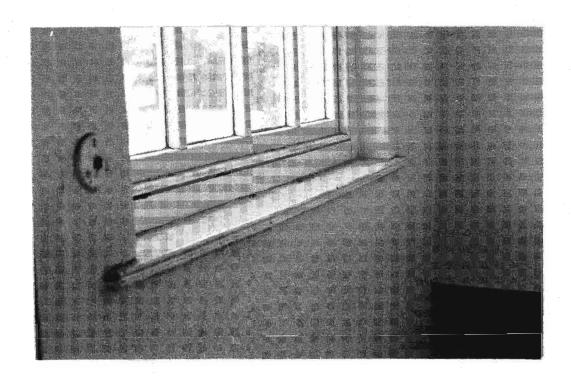
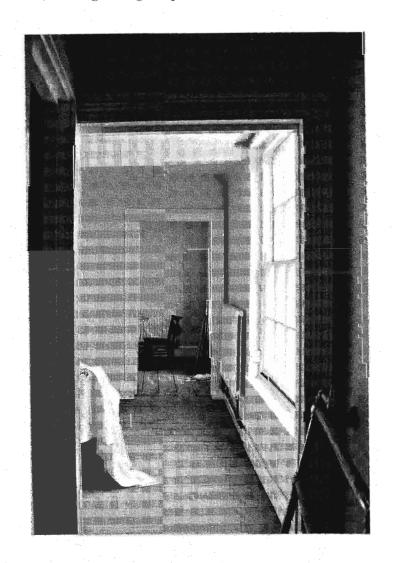


Plate 35 Detail of first floor window in 18th century build, see also Plates 1, 2 and 4.

Plate 36 East corridor to first floor of 19th century, three-storey build, showing reeding and paterae ornament to the doorcases.



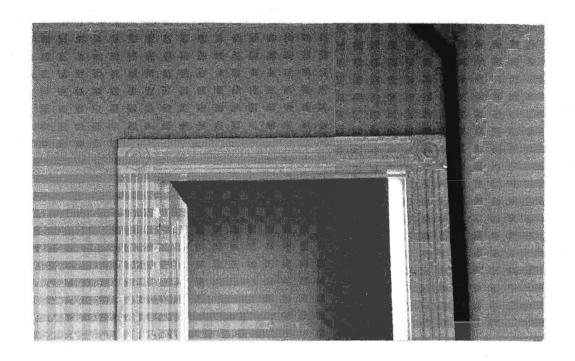
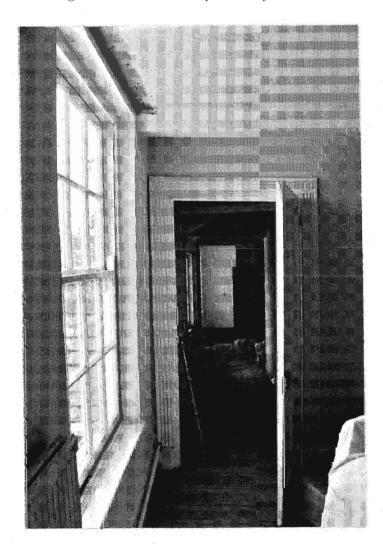


Plate 37 Detail of reeding and paterae ornament to 19^{th} century doorcase at first floor.

Plate 38 North-east corner of first floor room in 19th century build looking towards the 18th century section of the house.



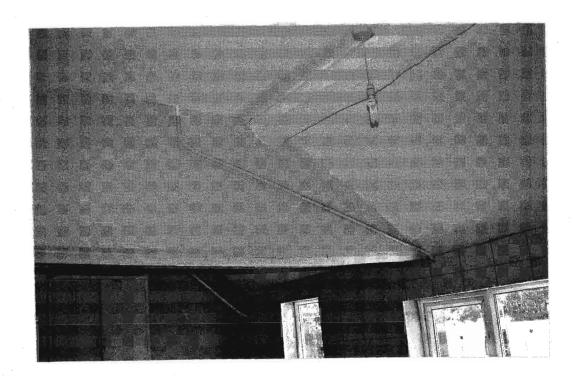


Plate 39 Detail of first floor ceiling of 18th century build showing exposed purlin.

Plate 40 Exposed section of principal rafter structure in the 18th century first floor area of the house.

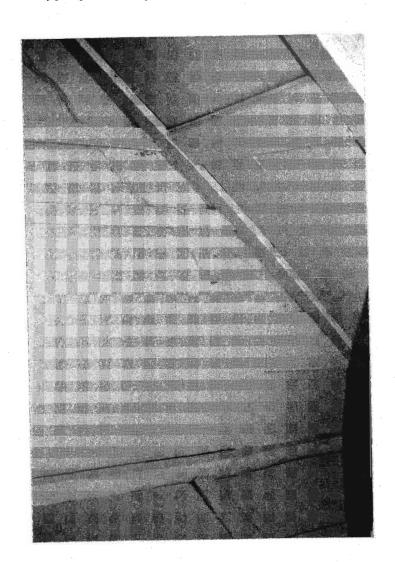
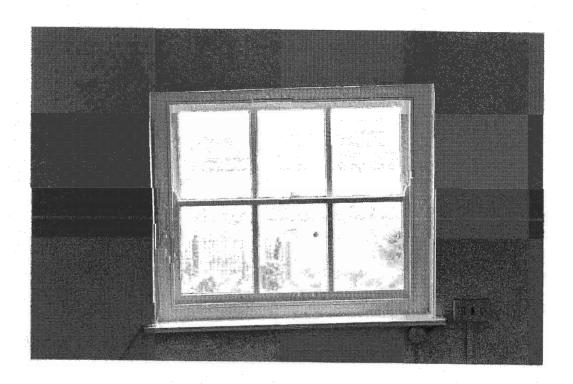




Plate 41 Wide hardwood floorboarding exposed in cupboard under stairs of 19^{th} century first floor.

Plate 42 second floor window to west of 19th century build, see also Plates 14 and 15.



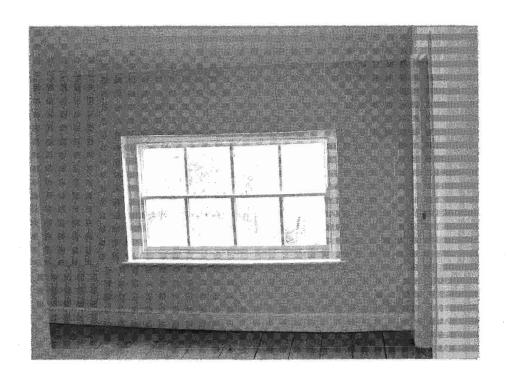
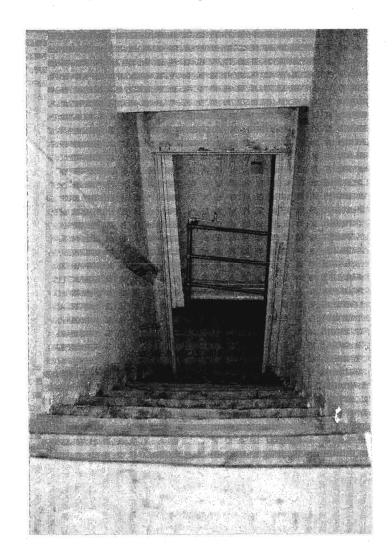
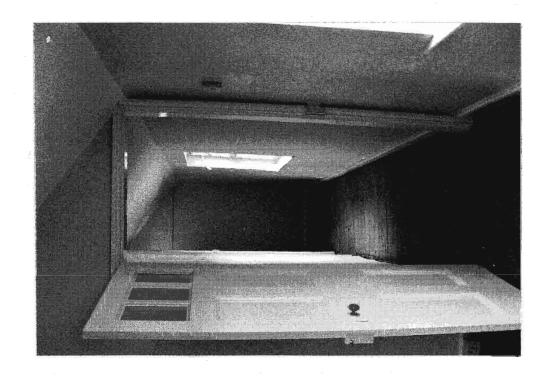


Plate 43 Second floor east window of 19th century build, see also Plates 1 and 7

Plate 44 Staircase leading from first to second floor of 19th century build and rising against the south gable.





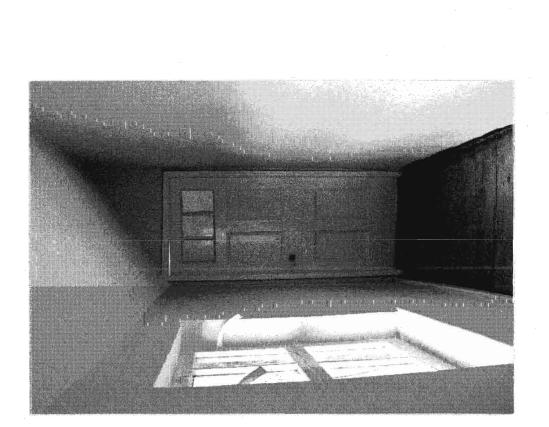


Plate 45 Second floor, west corridor of 19^{th} century build, looking north and showing the chamber door with three glazed top panels.

Plate 46 North-west, second floor corridor of 19^{th} century build, looking from the north end chamber towards the gable wall of 18^{th} century build.



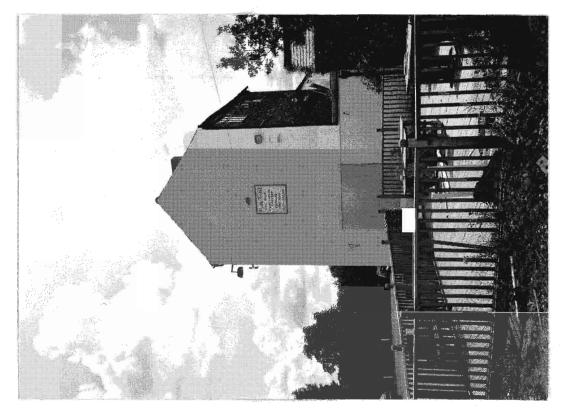
Plate 47 Hearth of removed fireplace in second floor, north wall of 19th century build.



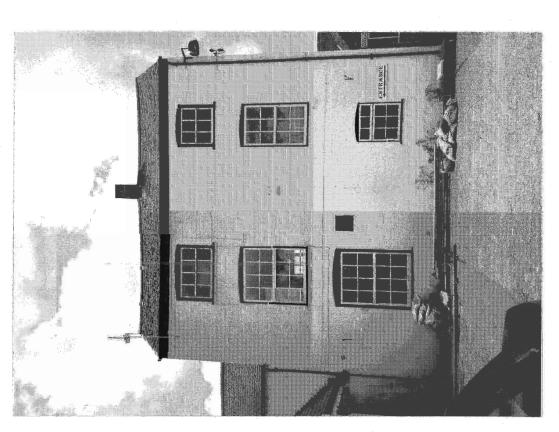
Colour Plate c1 Front elevation the **Bath Hotel** showing two storey 18^{th} century section and three storey early 19^{th} century section with 20^{th} century porch and other additions around the 18^{th} century build.

Colour Plate c2 Detail of first floor of 18th century section, front elevation





Colour Plate c4 The Bath Hotel North gable of early 19th century build.

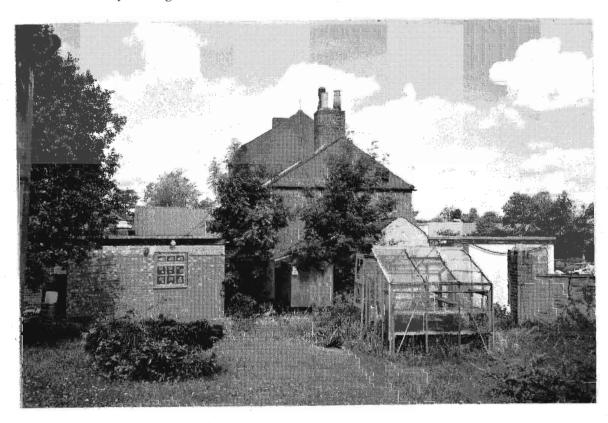


Colour Plate c3 The Bath Hotel showing early 19 century build from east



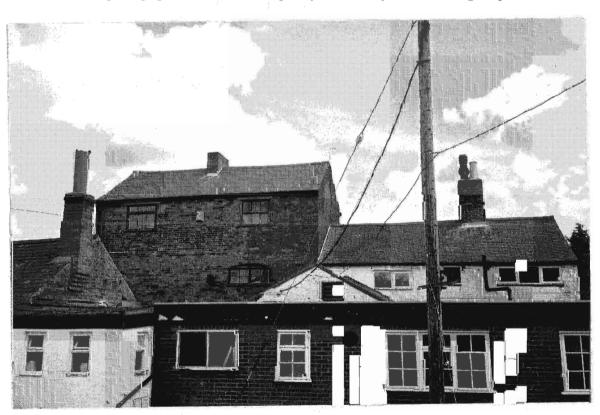
Colour Plate c5 Converted single storey outbuildings and 20th century additions on the west side of the **Bath Hotel**.

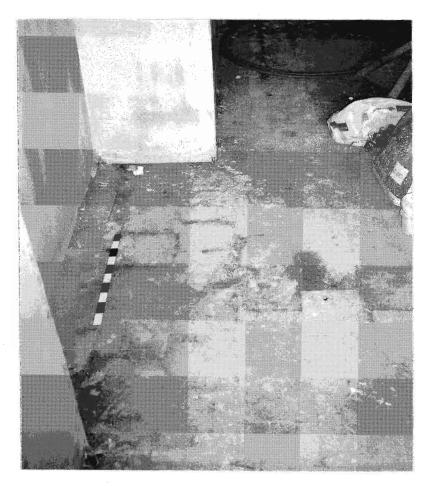
Colour Plate c6 The Bath Hotel from the south showing single storey service accommodation of the small-holding, (left) and 20th century single storey extensions to the licensed premises, (right). Also shows the rendered gables of the 18th and 19th century buildings.





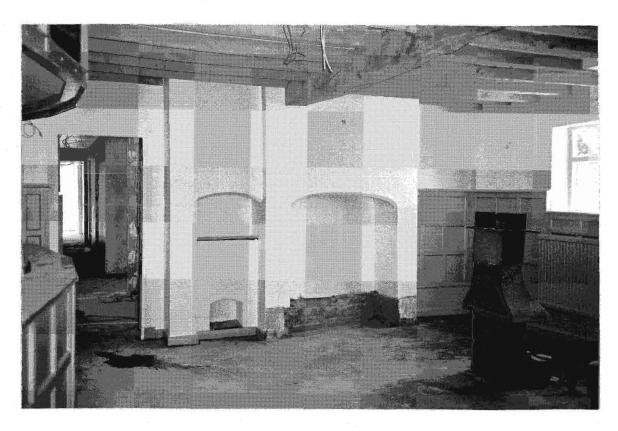
Colour Plates c5, c6 Single storey 20^{th} century extensions lying to the west of the 18^{th} and 19^{th} century sections of the **Bath Hotel**. The pitched roofs visible in these two photographs are believed to be part of the earlier, farm outbuilding complex.





Colour Plate c9 Ground floor 19th century quarry tiling in the 18th century part of house.

Colour Plate c10 Converted outbuilding with ceiling of re-used structural timbers





Colour Plate c11 Outbuilding converted to bar with ceiling of re-used structural timbers. Modern panelling surround the walls.

Colour Plate c12 Single storey extensions with roof of re-used structural timbers





Colour Plates c13, c14 Detail showing re-used timbers in extension roof

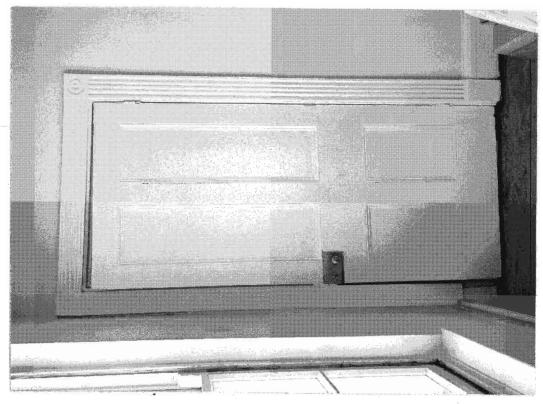




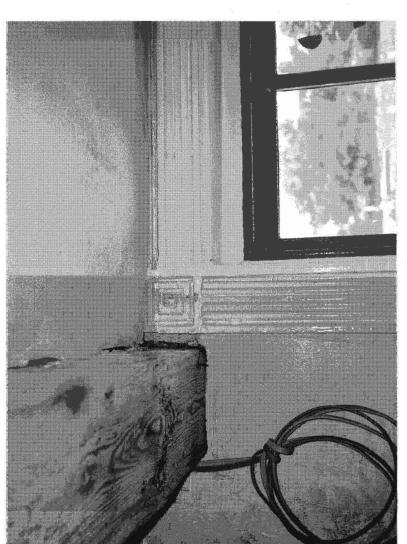
Colour Plate c16 Steel joint to re-used timbers in extension roof



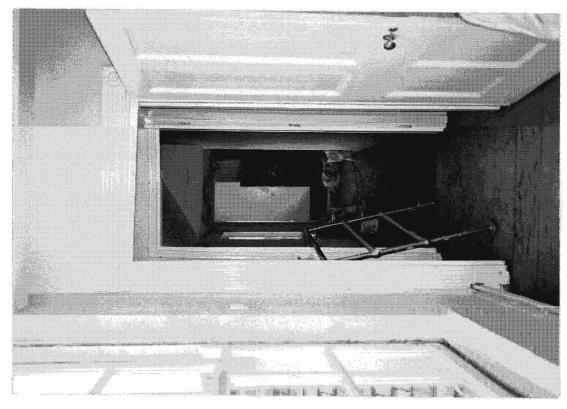
Colour Plate c.15 Re-used timber detail in extension roof.



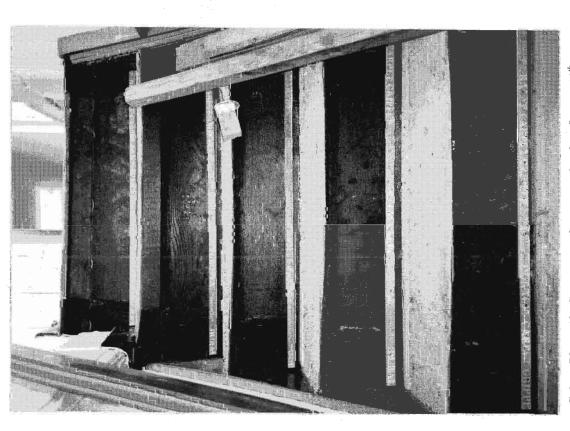
Colour Plate c18 First floor door and frame, showing reeded door surround and paterae stops, in 19th century build.



Colour Plate c17 Ground floor window frame showing reeded surround and paterae stops in 19^{th} century section of house.

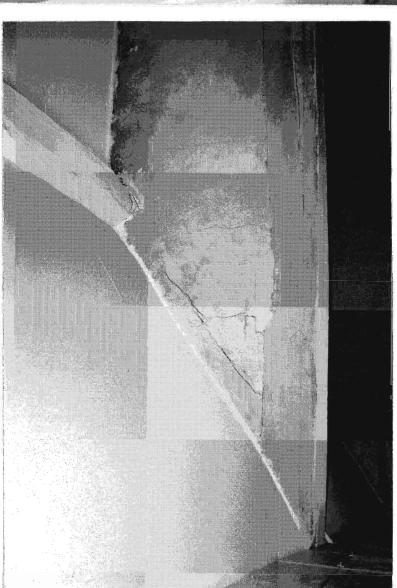


Colour Plate c20 First floor corridor east side facing south looking through 19^{th} century build to 18^{th} century stairhead.



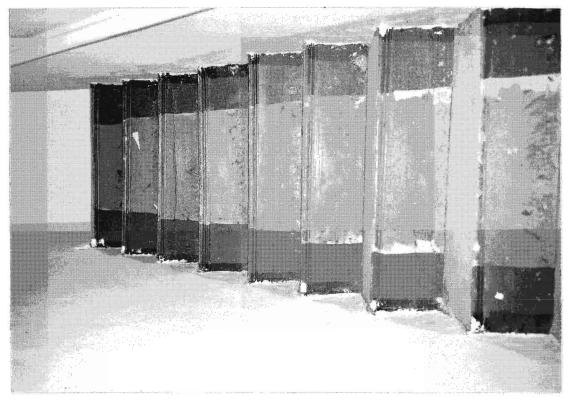
Colour Plate c19 Stairs rising from ground to first floor in 18^{th} century build.





Colour Plate c21 19th century build, first floor, detail showing wide, elm floor board pieces possibly relocated in cupboard under stairs.

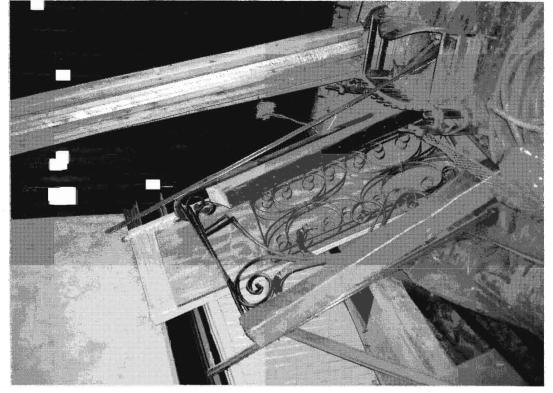
Colour Plate c22 Detail of exposed truss section showing tie-beam, principal rafter and purlin in present bathroom of 18th century build.



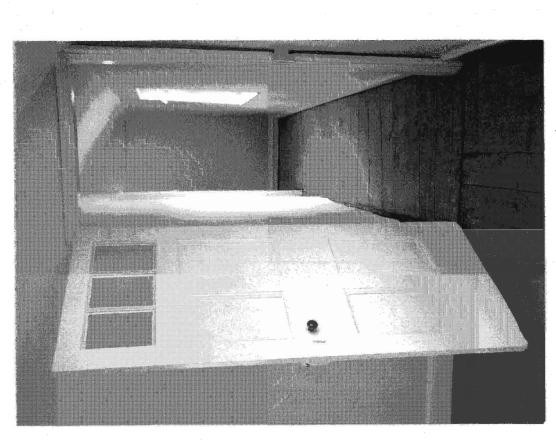
Colour Plate c24 Stairs set against the south gable wall leading from first to second floor of the 19th century build.



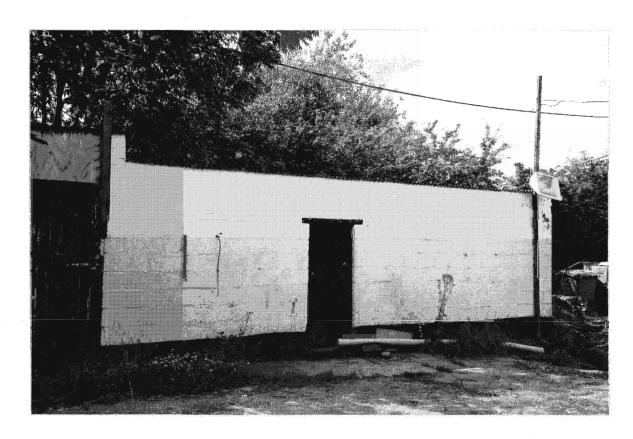
Colour Plate c.23 Exposed sections of principal rafter and purlin in the 18^{th} century first floor roof.



Colour Plate c25 Second floor corridor of early 19th century building looking south, from north end chamber and showing door with glazed top panels.



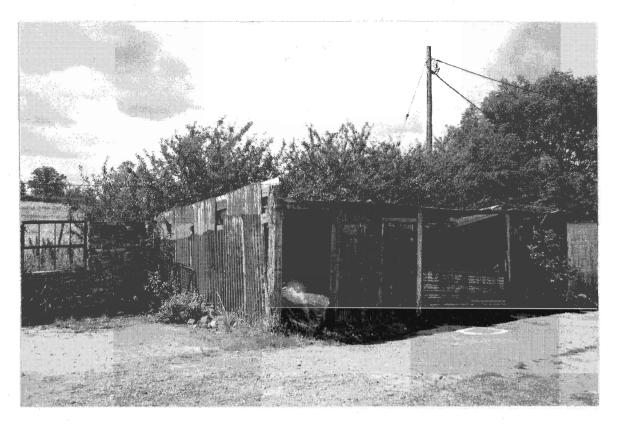
Colour Plate c26 Various wrought and cast iron decorative features loriginal location unknown.



Colour Plate c27 Outbuilding of small-holding lying to south-west of the **Bath Hotel**, detail.

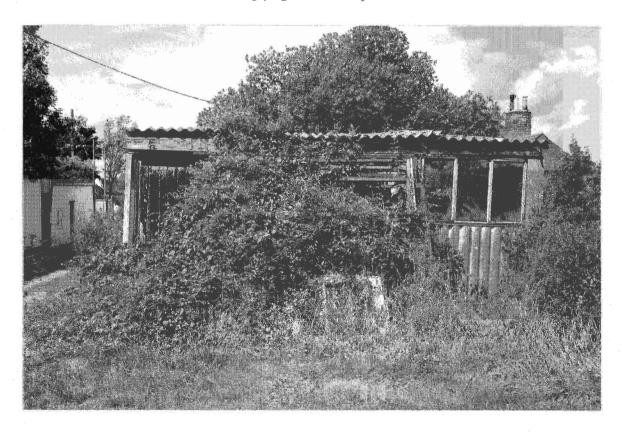
Colour Plate c 28 General view of western range of outbuildings lying to the south-west of the Bath Hotel.

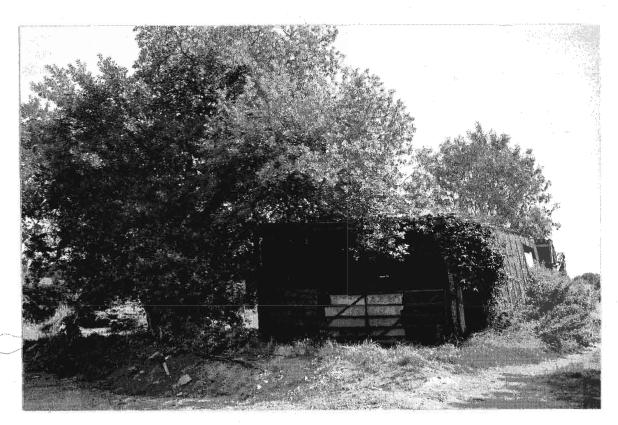




Colour Plate c29 Southern end of outbuildings to the west of the Bath Hotel, currently used for storage of gardening machinery and furniture, but previously used as lambing sheds.

Colour Plate c30 Outbuilding lying to the south of the Bath Hotel.





Colour Plate c31 Outbuildings lying south of the Bath Hotel, viewed from the north. Latterly used as a loose box.

Colour Plate c32 Additional outbuilding unit attached to loose box shown in Plate c31, now used as store for broken Bar furniture.

