

HERITAGE NETWORK



THE HEADMASTER'S HOUSE **Mill Street, Ashwell, Herts.**

HN507

Historic Building Record



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

THE HEADMASTER'S HOUSE Mill Street, Ashwell, Herts.

HN507

Historic Building Record

Prepared on behalf of Mr & Mrs Guy Reed

by

David Hillelson, BA MIFA

Report no.277

February 2005

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**11 FURMSTON COURT, ICKNIELD WAY, LETCHWORTH,
SG6 1UJ**

TEL: (01462) 685991 FAX: (01462) 685998

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The cover photograph shows a view of the annexe from the north-west

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by David Hillelson and David Kaye, with the advice of Adrian Gibson. The report text was written, and the illustrations were prepared by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Guy Reed, owner; Peter Weston, structural engineer; A.J.Cook, builders; and the staff of the County Archaeology Office, HCC, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	Headmaster's House, Mill Street, Ashwell, Herts.		
County:	Hertfordshire	District:	North Herts.
Village/town:	Ashwell	Parish:	Ashwell
Planning reference:	04/0906/1	NGR:	TL 26659 39816
Client name and address:	Guy Reed, Esq, 83 Back Street, Ashwell, Baldock, SG7 5PG		
Nature of work:	Renovation	Present land use:	N/a
Site Code:	HN507	Other reference:	N/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Type of work:	Building Recording	Curating Museum:	North Herts Museums
Related SMR Nos:	N/a	Periods represented:	Post-medieval
Previous summaries/reports:	N/a		

Synopsis: As the result of an archaeological condition on the planning permission for renovation works on the Headmaster's House, Mill Street, Ashwell, Herts, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owners to provide a record of the northern annexe, prior to the start of the conversion works.

The annexe is an early 18th century addition to the 17th century main building which has undergone substantial remodelling over its lifetime. It appears to have started life as a two-bay barn, possibly open on its northern elevation, which was later enclosed as living accommodation, and incorporated with a further bay to the west.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of Mr and Mrs Guy Reed, as part of a programme of historic building a specification for 3rd recording at The Headmaster's House, Mill Street, Ashwell, Herts. The planning permission for the development (ref. 1/04/0380), granted by the North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), has been subject to a building recording condition. The scope of the required work has been agreed in correspondence with the County Archaeology Office (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as advisers to NHDC, and subsequent telephone discussion. The full specification for the work carried out is contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design* dated December 2004.

1.2 The building covered by the condition consists of a single-storey annexe built on to the northern elevation of the main block. The site is centred on grid reference TL 26659 39816 (Fig.1). The development proposes the structural repair, renovation and alteration of the annexe.

1.3 The aim of the building recording has been to make a high quality record of the structures before the start of renovation works. The present report represents the compilation of data gained in the course of the project, which will be submitted to the planning authority.

1.4 The full archive for the project will be deposited with the North Hertfordshire Museum Service in order to preserve a record of the buildings in their present form. It includes copies of the structural engineer's plans and elevations, original black and white photographic negatives and contact sheets, and digital images.

2. Building record

GENERAL

2.1 The Headmaster's House was built as a school by the Merchant Taylor's Company in 1681. It is constructed of locally made 17th century red and white bricks which have been reddled, and is Grade II listed. The annexe, which forms the basis for the present study, is an extension to the front right of the building and is of late 18th century date (Fig.2). A modern brick lean-to with a pitched slate roof has been constructed at the western end of the annexe.

DESCRIPTION

2.2 The annexe is sub-rectangular in plan, although the western wall is aligned to the street frontage rather than to the rest of the structure (Fig.3). It measures 11.65m (38'3") along its northern elevation and 5m (16'5") deep. Its height, from present floor level to the ridge of the roof, is 5m (16'5") at the eastern end, and 4.85m (15'11") at the western end. The roof, which appears to be of a single build, is hipped at the western and gabled at the eastern end, and covered in plain clay tiles (Fig.4).

2.3 The southern elevation is butt jointed to the main building and built of similar bricks, which have also been reddled. It has two windows, the western being of 16 panes, and probably contemporary, the eastern being of four panes and possibly a later insertion. The eastern elevation is contemporary with the southern but shows evidence of possible remodelling above eaves height, and has a 19th century four pane window with lightly arched voussoir, which is a later insertion.

2.4 The north-western corner of the building is built of 18th century bricks and has two contemporary windows, one on the western and one on the northern elevation, each being two-light metal framed side-hung casements with small panes.

2.5 The northern elevation, to the east of the western window, has been remodelled on several occasions and is unlikely to be an original part of the structure. Much of the brickwork is Victorian or modern. It has two further windows, the middle being 19th century and the eastern being modern, and two doorways, and when the outside ground levels were reduced as part of the present works, the base of a chimney was revealed to the east of the middle window.

2.6 In its present form the annexe is divided into three bays: the eastern being the former kitchen, which is 3.75 – 4.5m (12'4" – 14'9") wide; the middle being the main room to the east of the tie-beam, which is 5m (16'5") wide; and the western being the main room to the west of the tie-beam, which is 4.85m (15'11") wide.

2.7 The former kitchen may have been open to the roof originally. Later, a reused beam running east-west was inserted, supported on a brick buttress at the gable end and on the framing and studwork of the partition at the western end. The beam supported an upper floor with a window in the gable end. The ceiling was later remodelled to create an asymmetrical gable within the roof structure, effectively

raising the ceiling height in the northern half of the room. The floor is concrete and approximately 0.15m (6") below the level of the main room.

2.8 The eastern end of the main room may also have been open to the roof originally. A reused beam running east-west was inserted at a later date, supported on the partition at the eastern end, and by the tie-beam, which separates the two halves of the main room, at the western end. The tie-beam may mark the original western limit of the annexe. The floor is wooden.

2.9 The western end of the main room is shaped around the chimney of the main house, and is open to the roof. The floor is wooden but is suspended approximately 0.80m over an earlier brick floor.

DISCUSSION

2.10 The annexe is a later addition to the main house, but is built of similar bricks and is, therefore, likely to be of early 18th century date. In its earliest form it is likely to have been limited to the two eastern bays, the tie beam between the middle and western bays forming a gable-end to the structure. It may have been open fronted to the north or may have been framed and weather-boarded.

2.11 The 18th century brickwork in the north-west corner of the western bay suggests that this area was enclosed not long afterwards. An original brick floor was noted beneath the existing suspended wooden floor, suggesting both the presence of an earlier courtyard area, and that the original exterior ground level on the northern side of the annexe has been raised by up to 0.80m since the construction of the main house. The natural slope of the ground outside the property supports this theory.

2.12 At what point the upper floor was inserted in the eastern bay is unclear but the upper window appears to be 19th century in date. The main beam is reused. The ceiling in the middle bay may have been inserted at the same time and this makes use of a reused beam as well. The suspended floor is likely also to be a contemporary addition. This would suggest that the main period of remodelling of the northern elevation also dates to the 19th century.

3. Bibliography

PUBLICATIONS

- Brunskill, R.W., 1978, *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture*. Faber.
Hewitt, C.A., 1980, *English Historic Carpentry*. Phillimore.
Hillelson, D., 2004, *The Headmaster's House, Mill Street, Ashwell: Project Design*. Heritage Network, Dec. 2004
Lever, J. & Harris, J., 1993, *Illustrated Dictionary of Architecture 800-1914*. Faber.

WEBSITES

www.imagesofengland.org.uk/search/ShowListing.asp List description, IoE no. 162182

4. Illustrations

- Figure 1 Site location
Figure 2 Overall groundplan
Figure 3 Annexe and lean-to: plan view
Figure 4 Elevations

Appendix

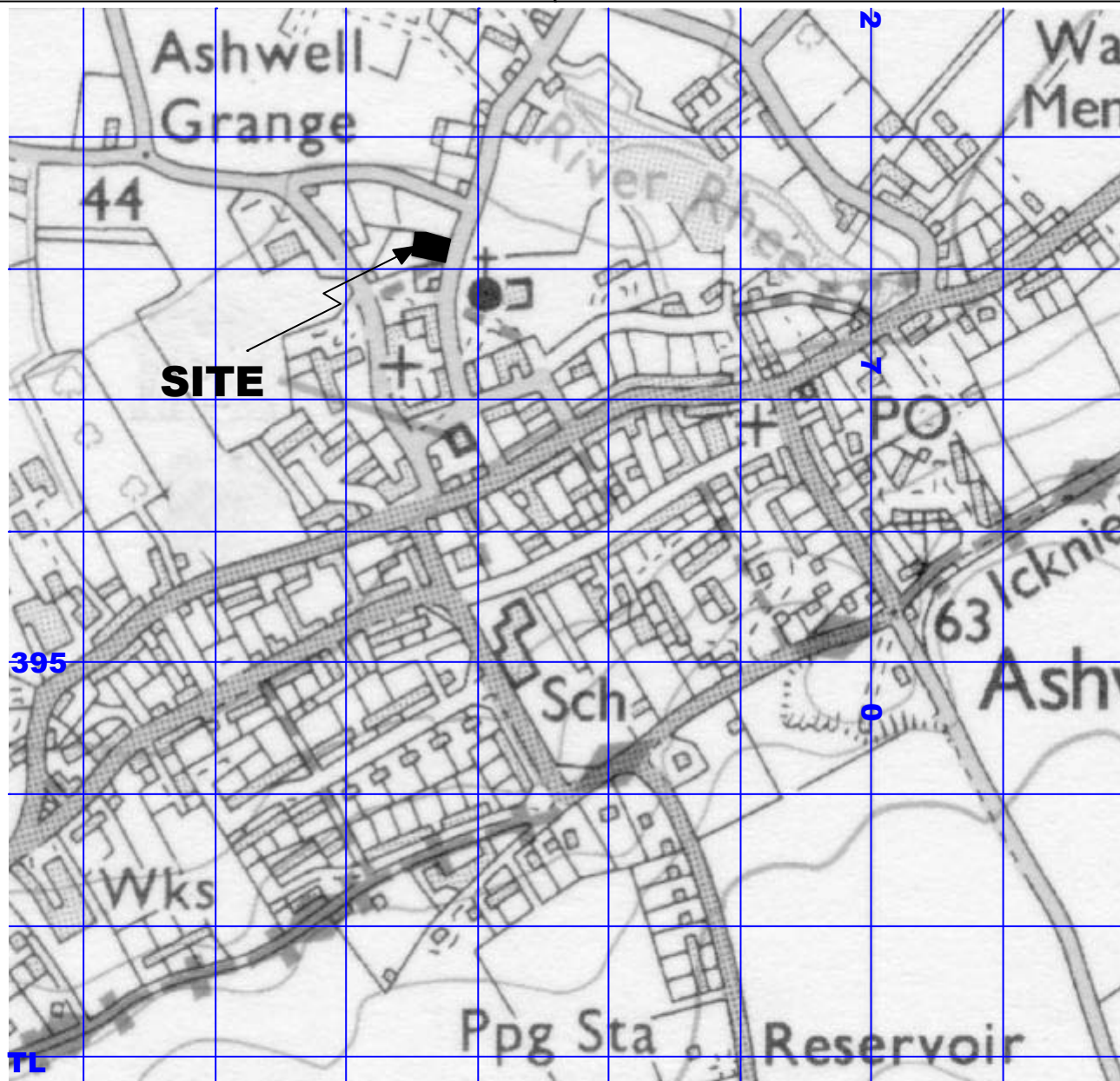
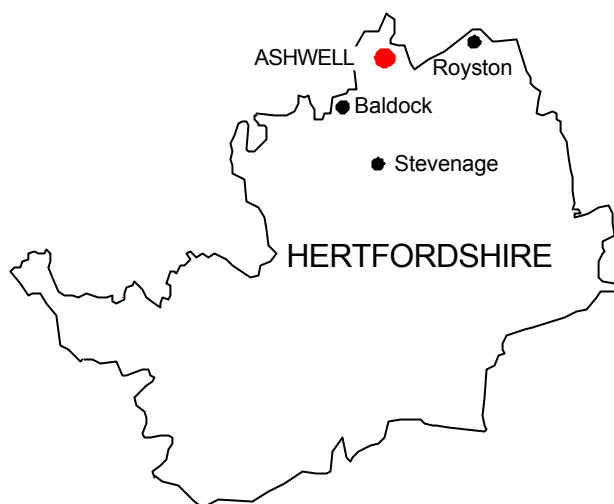
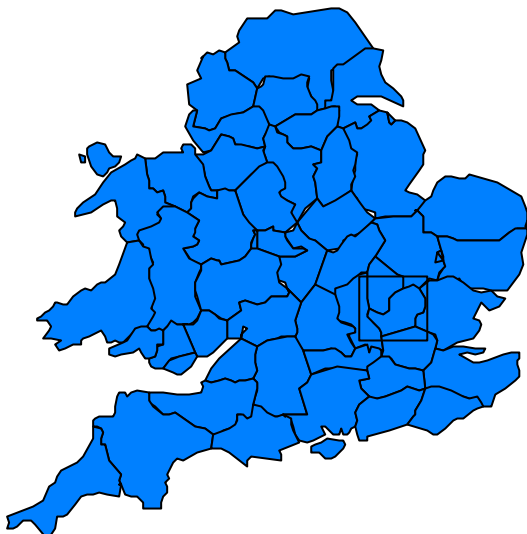
Photographic Log

Medium Format Photographs

35mm Photographs

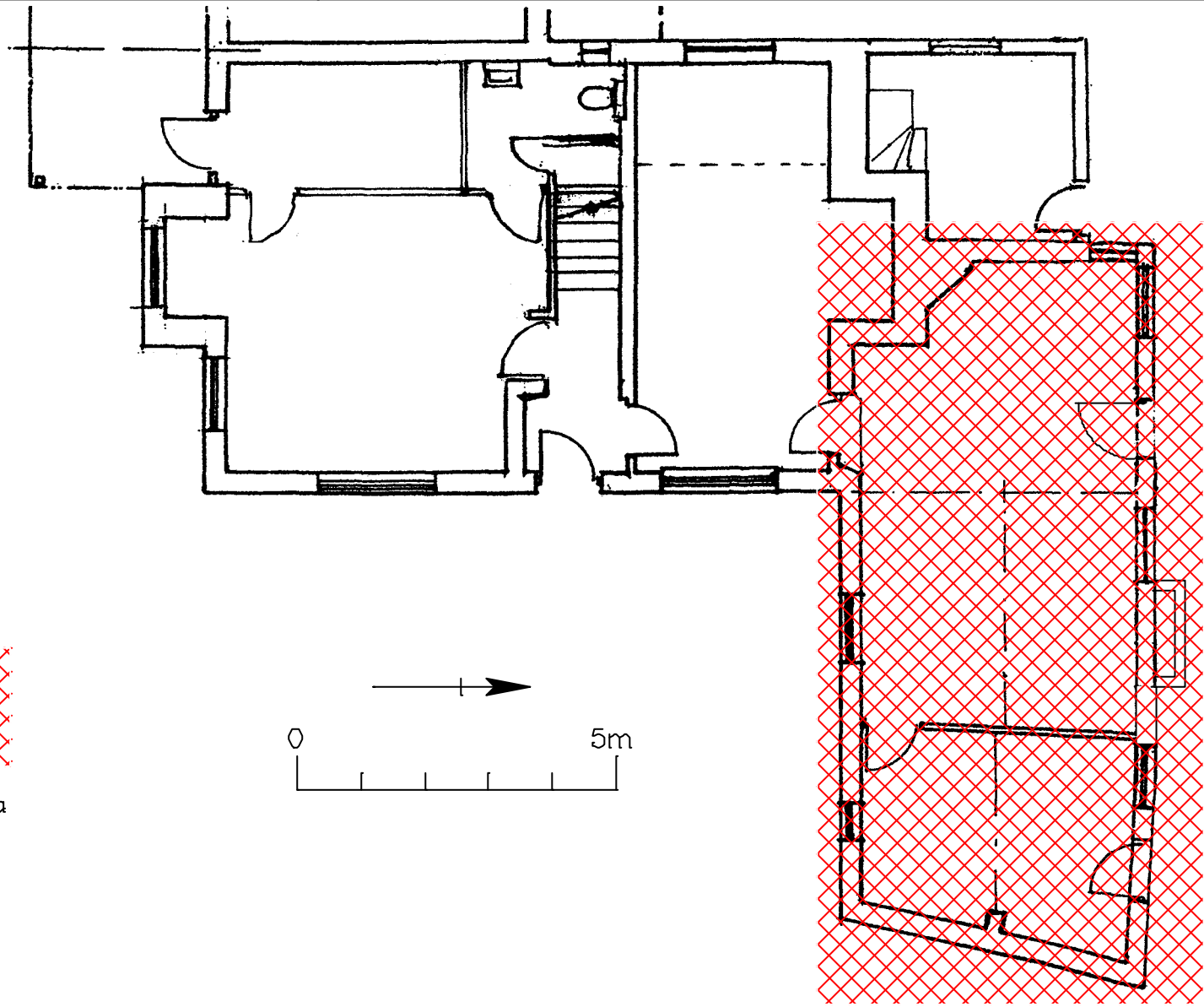
Digital Photographs

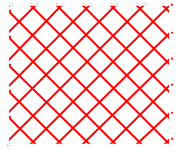
Client's Photographs

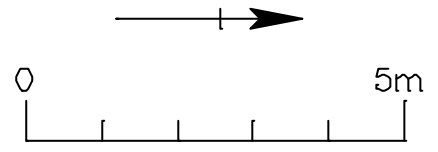


Site Location

Scale 1:5000




Study Area

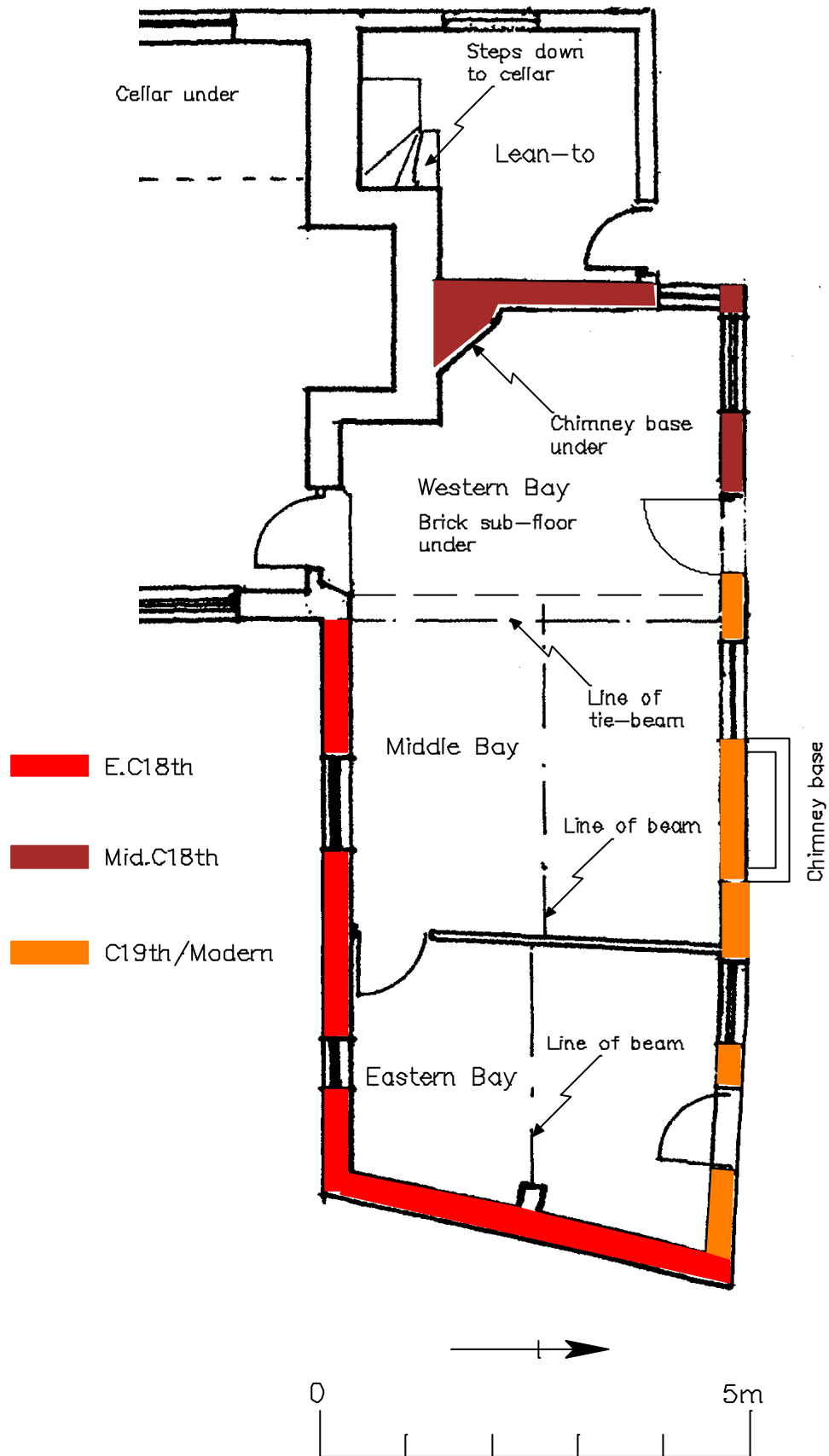


Overall Groundplan

(base plan courtesy of Peter Weston, Structural Engineering Consultant)

Scale 1:100

Figure 2



Annexe and Lean-to: Plan View

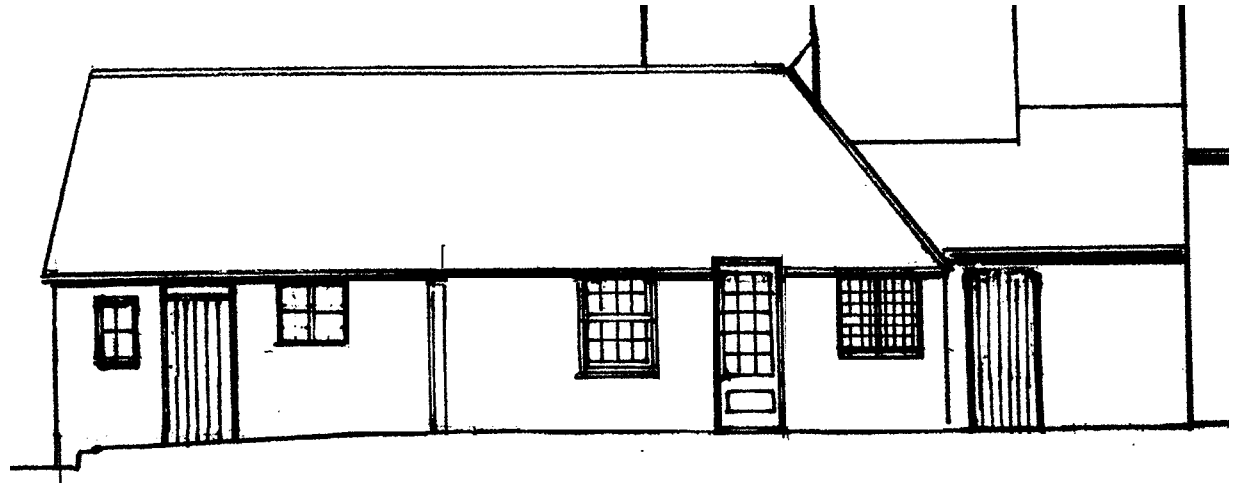
(base plan courtesy of Peter Weston, Structural Engineering Consultant)

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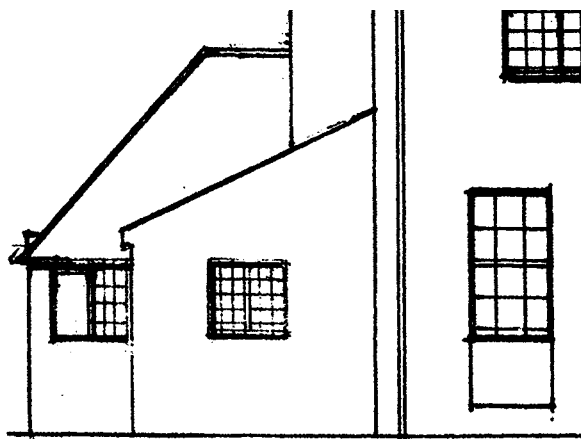
Figure 3



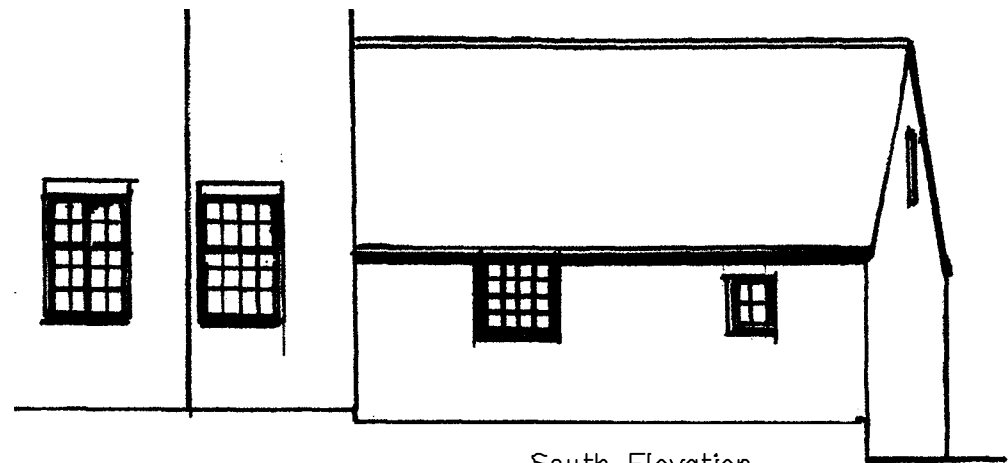
East Elevation



North Elevation



West Elevation



South Elevation

Elevations

(base drawings courtesy of Peter Weston, Structural Engineering Consultant)

Scale 1:100

Figure 4



MF1: Annexe and lean-to from NW



MF2: Annexe from NW



MF3: Annexe from NW



MF4: Annexe and lean-to from N



MF5: Main house from E



MF6: Annexe from E



MF7: Annexe from S



MF8: Annexe from SE



248/18-19: Annexe, main room, W end N interior elevation



248/20-21: Annexe, main room, W end W interior elevation



248/22-23: Annexe, main room, W end SW corner



248/24-25: Annexe, main room, E end looking SE



248/26-27: Annexe, main room, E end looking E



248/28-29: Annexe, main room, E end looking NE



248/30-31: Annexe, main room, E end looking NE



248/32-33: Annexe, main room, chimney base looking SW



248/34-35: Annexe, former kitchen, S interior elevation



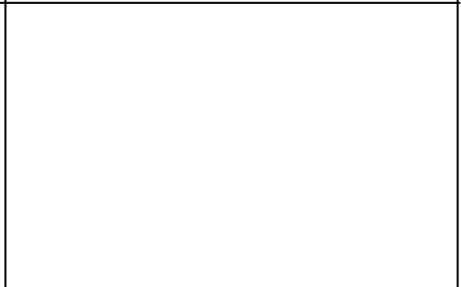
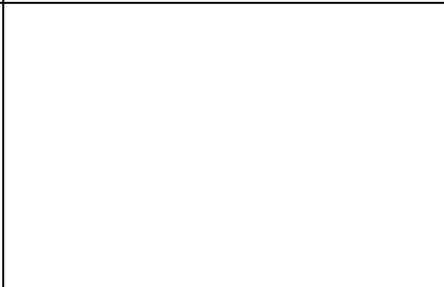
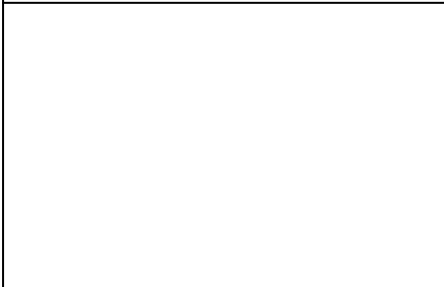
247/2-3: Annexe, former kitchen, W interior elevation



247/4-5: Annexe, former kitchen, N interior elevation



247/6-7: Annexe, former kitchen, E interior elevation

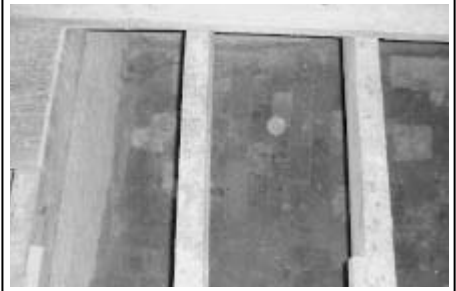




DP1: Annexe, chimney base looking SW



DP2: Annexe, chimney base looking W



DP3: Annexe, brick floor beneath W end looking W



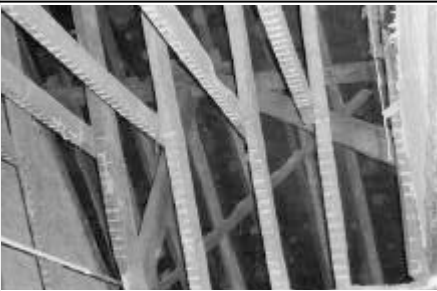
DP4: Annexe, main room tie-beam looking E



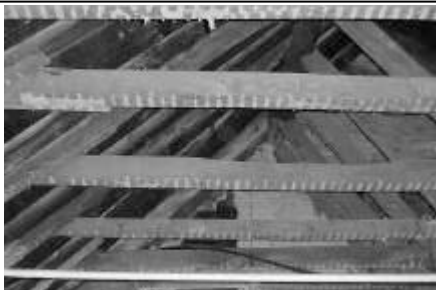
DP5: Annexe, main room, junction of tie-beam with joist-beam



DP6: Annexe, main room, junction of tie-beam with joist-beam



DP7: Annexe, former kitchen ceiling structure looking SE



DP8: Annexe, former kitchen ceiling structure looking E



DP9: Annexe, former kitchen ceiling structure looking SE



DP10: Annexe, former chimney base against N elevation from NW



DP11: Annexe, former chimney base against N elevation from N



DP12: Annexe, ceiling structure at junction former kitchen & main room looking NW



CP1: Annexe, N & W elevations from NW



CP2: Annexe, N elevation from NE



CP3: Lean-to, N elevation from N



CP4: Lean-to, interior from SW



CP5: Lean-to, interior from SE



CP6: Lean-to, interior from NE



CP7: Annexe, former kitchen,
W interior elevation



CP8: Annexe, former kitchen,
S interior elevation



CP9: Annexe, former kitchen,
N interior elevation



CP10: Annexe, main room
looking W



CP11: Annexe, main room
looking SE



CP12: Annexe, main room
looking NE



1/1

North elevation



1/2

North elevation



1/3

North elevation



1/4

North elevation



1/5

West elevation of main house



1/6

West elevation of extension



1/7

South elevation



1/8

South & West elevations