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**Former Taunton Cider Company
Premises, Norton Fitzwarren,
Somerset**

**Historic Building Assessments
2006**

UNIVERSITY OF
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Former Taunton Cider Company Premises, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset
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Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Building 1 (Cider manufactory)
- 3.0 Building (Morse's House)
- 4.0 Building 3 (Home Place/Edenmead)
- 5.0 Building 4 ('The Doll's House')
- 6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Plates

- 1. Building 1 from the northeast
- 2. Building 2 from the northwest
- 3. Building 2, east wing from the southeast
- 4. Building 2, west wing from the southwest
- 5. Building 2, north range ground floor from the east
- 6. Building 2, north range ground floor, inscription from the east
- 7. Building 2, east wing ground floor, recess from the north
- 8. Building 2, east wing, stair newel from the east
- 9. Building 2, east wing, mullioned window from the southwest
- 10. Building 2, north range, eastern roof truss from the southeast
- 11. Building 2, east wing, jointed crucks from the north
- 12. Building 2, east wing, roof truss detail
- 13. Building 2, east range, roof truss from the north
- 14. Building 3 from the northeast
- 15. Building 3 from the southwest
- 16. Building 3, ground floor fireplace from the east
- 17. Building 3, blocked doorway from the south
- 18. Building 4 from the northwest
- 19. Building 4, staircase from the southwest
- 20. Building 4 roof trusses from the west
- 21. Building 4 roof truss detail from the southeast

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Historic Building Assessments 2006

1.0 Introduction

Historic building assessments of four structures within the former Taunton Cider Company premises, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset, were carried out as part of an environmental impact assessment being undertaken by Alan Thomas of Archaeology and Planning Solutions. All four buildings were located at the north end of the site close to the main road through the village.

2.0 Building 1 (Cider Manufactory) (Plate 1)

2.1 Description

Cider manufactory. Early 20th century with later alterations and additions. Timber-framed and weatherboarded. Three storey main block towering above lower brick and timber-framed extensions. Nothing significant inside.

2.2 Significance

Of local interest only as the early nucleus of the Taunton Cider Co.

3.0 Building 2 (Morse's House) (Plates 2–14)

3.1 Description

3.1.1 Exterior

House. 17th-century with later alterations and additions. 17th-century main range aligned east-west and facing onto the road (Plate 2), with 17th-century north-south aligned east wing (Plate 3) and long north-south aligned west wing of uncertain date but mainly 19th-century in its present manifestation (Plate 4). The walls are largely roughcast, but areas of coursed rubble walling are exposed in the north wall of the north range and the south wall of the west wing. Mainly slate roofs but the west wing has a Bridgewater pan tile roof with half hip at the south end. North elevation: Two storeys. Main range to centre with scattered fenestration, and blind hipped end of east wing to the left providing a slightly irregular continuation of the roofline. Gabled west wing set back to the right with doors at ground and first floor level to the left, the former within, and the latter approached by, a flight of steps with plain steel railing. Brick coped gable terminating in a small bellcote. Carriage entrance to the right with pan-tiled canopy. West Elevation (West Wing): Irregular fenestration with wide vehicular access at the right-hand end. A single-storey brick lean-to with pan tile roof has been added to the south end of the west wing. East Elevation: Three window bays

3.1.2 Interior

Ground floor

The north range contains four transverse ceiling beams with wide chamfers (Plate 5), splayed window embrasures and a blocked doorway towards the east end of the south wall. At the west end of the range is a massive chimneystack, with a tablet bearing the date '1608' and the initials 'VC' or 'WC' flanking an apotropaic mark comprising a star of David within a circle (Plate 6). The inscription appears to be of comparatively recent date but seems to be an attempt to replicate 17th-century lettering, and may be a copy of an original feature. A safe has been inserted into the east side of the stack in the 20th century, presumably into a former open fireplace. Later division and cladding of the interior has obscured the original arrangement, but there seems to have been a large room at the west end of the ground storey, served by the chimneystack, and at least one smaller room at the east end.

The east range has three splayed window embrasures on the east side corresponding to the three rooms into which the range is divided. Against the south wall of the northern room is a chimneystack with former open fireplace, converted into a recess with shelving. There is also a chimneybreast protruding from the west wall, apparently associated with the north range. There also seems to be a chimneystack against the south wall of the southern room, now much disguised but also apparent on the first floor. On the west side of the stack is a recess containing shaped shelves, probably 19th century, but reminiscent of 17th-century patterns (Plate 7). On the west side of the wing is a newel staircase set within a semi-circular well, presumably a stair turret that protruded from the external face of the wall, but which is now obscured by later additions. The stairs themselves seem to have been renewed but the 17th-century newel with its decorative finial at first floor level survives (Plate 8).

The west wing also contains splayed window embrasures, but nothing else of significance is visible at ground level.

First Floor

Both the north and south walls of the north range have splayed window embrasures, of which the easternmost on the north side retains a 17th-century three-light wooden mullioned window, the mullions chamfered to front and rear (Plate 9). The roof of the north range was not accessible at the time of this assessment, but the eastern end truss was partially visible from the roof of the east wing. This seemed to be a 17th-century collar and tie beam truss with studs between the two horizontal members and wattle and daub infill (Plate 10). The principal rafters were cut off just above the collar, possibly indicating that the roof was hipped.

The east wing also has splayed window embrasures at first-floor level, and, like the north range, retains a 17th-century three-light mullioned window. At the south end of the wing are three side pegged, morticed and tenoned, jointed cruck trusses (Plate 11), the

principals of which contain mortices for two pairs of tenoned purlins, though only one is occupied. These trusses are linked by collars, that of the central truss apparently tenoned and pegged, whereas that of the northern truss is jointed with nailed bare-faced tenons (Plate 12). This northern truss is closed with wattle and daub infill, and coincides with a partition wall, which may also be of timber-framed construction (Plate 13).

There is one splayed window embrasure on the west side of the west range. The roof appears to consist of principal rafters with the feet set on the tops of the walls.

3.2 Significance

Morse's House is not listed, nor locally listed, nor is it within a conservation area.. However, the north and east ranges seem to belong to a good quality house of 17th-century date, with the original fenestration pattern largely intact and many original features surviving, including the semi-circular stair turret and newel, mullioned windows, chimney stacks, ceiling beams, and roof trusses. Despite unsympathetic cladding, Building 1 plays a key role in defining the traditional character of this part of the village, and the degree of survival takes it beyond local significance as a good example of the vernacular architecture of the region. Furthermore, PPG 15 (DoE 1994) states that 'all buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are listed', and it is arguable that Morse's House meets this criterion, and on those grounds might be considered to be of national significance. Unfortunately, later adaptations have obscured much of the detail, and further investigative and recording work would need to be done before a definitive decision could be made as to the listability of the property.

4.0 Building 3 (Home Place/Edenmead) (Plates 14-17)

4.1 Description

4.1.1 Exterior

House. 17th century with later alterations and additions (Plate 14). Roughcast with plain tile roof and brick ridge stacks. Main north range aligned east west facing towards the road with north-south aligned rear wing, and rear extensions to the north range. Two storeys and three window bays, the ground-storey windows boarded over, and the first-floor four-light first floor casements under gablets. To the rear are a number of brick extensions ranging in date from the early 19th century to the 20th century (Plate 15).

4.1.2 Interior

The interest of the interior lies within the north range. This, like the north range of Morse's House contained a large room at the west end, which, also like Morse's House has a large eastern internal chimneystack. However, this one has an exposed large open fireplace with sides of coursed and dressed stone blocks and chamfered and stopped timber mantle beam (Plate 16). In the back of the fireplace is a small oven. South of the fireplace on this wall is a recess and then a small splayed window embrasure. Three

further splayed window embrasures survive in the north wall in this room, and there is a recess for a blocked doorway in between the central and eastern embrasure (Plate 17). In a smaller room to the east, is a splayed window embrasure, and in the south wall a doorway set into a splayed recess, possibly a former window. The first floor was inaccessible at the time of this assessment.

4.2 Significance

In common with Morses's House, Building 3 is neither statutorily nor locally listed. Nevertheless, like Morse's House, too, it is essentially a 17th-century building, though perhaps not in such a good state of preservation. Here too, later refurbishments have obscured the early fabric, so that neither the extent of survival, nor the full purport of the original plan, are entirely clear. Unfortunately, it was not possible to gain access to the first floor and roof at the time of this assessment, but the presumption must be that 17th-century roof structures survive. The building is of considerable local significance in making a strong contribution to the character of this part of Norton Fitzwarren. It has the potential to be of regional significance as a representative example of the vernacular architecture of the area. It is less obviously of listable quality than Morse's House, but it does seem to retain its original fenestration pattern towards the north, even though the window frames themselves have been replaced, and it does have a well-preserved fireplace. Crucial to a definitive assessment of the house would be further investigation and recording, including the upper storey and roof structure, with a view to defining the original plan, and the extent to which the 17th-century fabric survives.

5.0 Building 4 ('The Doll's House') (Plates 18–21)

5.1 Description

5.1.1 Exterior

House. Mid to late 19th century, incorporating earlier material, with later rear extension. Rendered coursed rubble walls and hipped interlocking tile roof with hip apex finials. Aligned east-west facing north towards the road with rounded front corners. Two-storey, three-bay building with door to right (west) of centre. Lit by 19th-century casements (Plate 18).

5.1.2 Interior

19th-century straight staircase with stick balusters and chamfered foot newel towards the western end of the house (Plate 19). The main interest of the house is on the upper storey, which is divided into five roof bays by four trusses (Plate 20). The principals carry two pairs of tenoned purlins and are tenoned into the stubs of tie beams, which seem to have been cut away flush with the soffits of the principals (Plate 21). These trusses, with their traditional jointing and pegging techniques including tenoned purlins, appear to pre-date the 19th-century range for the house suggested by the map evidence (i.e. between 1840 and 1889), and are probably re-used.

5.2 Significance

Building 4 is neither statutorily nor locally listed, nor is it within a conservation area. It is an attractive and comparatively well-preserved example of a small mid to late 19th-century house. It makes a significant contribution to the streetscape in this part of Norton Fitzwarren, particularly as part of the group of buildings including Buildings 2 and 3, and has an added interest in incorporating earlier roof trusses. It therefore has a local significance, but does not have a regional importance, nor is it listable.

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Of the four buildings, Building 1 is of least significance, being of local interest only for its historical associations as the earliest cider manufacturing building on this site. Building 4 too is of local significance only, although its roof gives the 19th-century structure an added interest. However, Building 4 is also to be considered as part of an important visual group in the Norton Fitzwarren streetscape, which also includes Buildings 2 and 3 and which makes a major contribution to the character of the village. On architectural and historical grounds Buildings 2 and 3 form the mainstay of this group, but later refurbishments have masked large areas of the original fabric, meaning that these structures cannot be fully assessed without further work. On these grounds it is recommended that further investigation and recording be undertaken at Buildings 2 and 3 in order to gain a fuller understanding of the structures. This should comprise the following:

6.1 Building 2 (Morse's House)

6.1.1 Measured Survey

- Phased ground and first-floor plans.
- Transverse sections through north, east and west ranges.

6.1.2 Fabric Investigation

- Removal of plaster to identify the original cross walls in the north and east ranges.
- Create access to the roof of the north range if possible.

6.2 Building 3

6.2.1 Measured Survey

- Phased ground and first-floor plans.
- Transverse section through the north range.

6.2.2 Fabric Investigation

- Removal of plaster to identify original internal walls.



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7

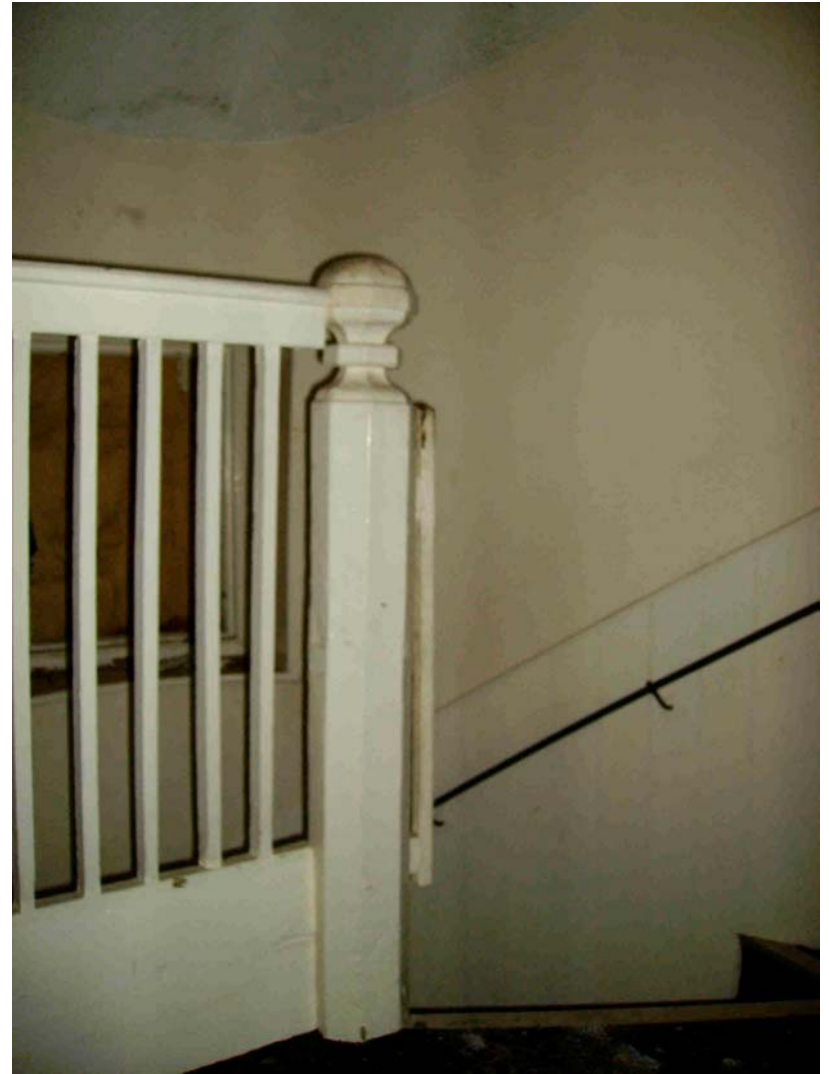


Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11



Plate 12



Plate 13



Plate 14



Plate 15



Plate 16



Plate 17



Plate 18



Plate 19



Plate 20



Plate 21