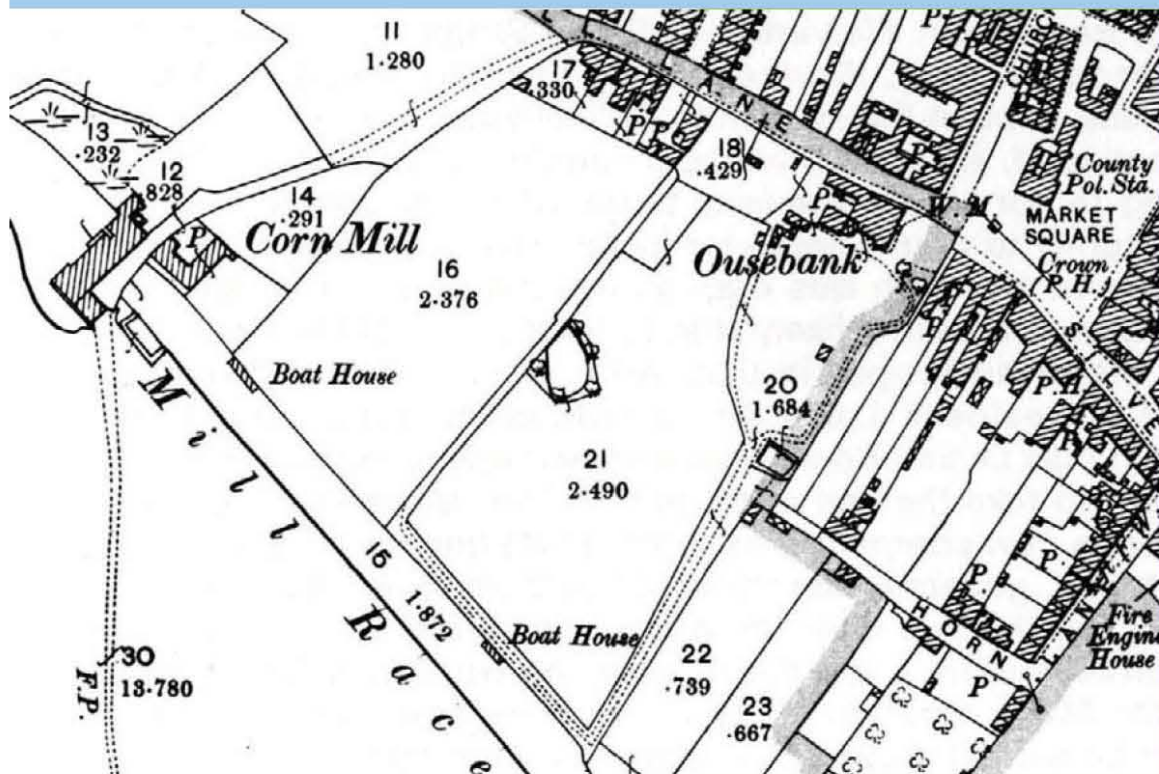




Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Buildings Assessment at Stratford House and Ousebank Cottage Mill Lane, Stony Stratford, Milton Keynes



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Report 10/24
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	
Project title	Archaeological buildings assessment at Stratford House and Ousebank Cottage, Stony Stratford, Milton Keynes
<p>Archaeological buildings assessment recorded a body of structures which comprise Stratford House and Ousebank Cottage. In addition to two large dwellings, one over three floors with cellar, the other over two floors, the buildings included a stable, a former chapel, conservatory and garage.</p> <p>Recording has shown that the two properties coalesced in an organic fashion from a variety of early disparate buildings of uncertain association into a single sprawling property which eventually included such unusual elements as a non-conformist chapel. The properties bear no indication that they were ever intimately connected with the tannery purported to have lain at the far end of the plot.</p> <p>While the origins of the buildings probably lie in the 18th century, the fixtures and fittings of any note all belong to a suite inserted during the property's heyday, at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. They last underwent any real alteration in the 1930s. While some of the properties appear to have retained earlier fabric and features, large portions, irrespective of age, are in serious disrepair.</p>	
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Previous work	None
Future work	Unknown
Monument type and period	Later post-medieval buildings, Grade II listed
PROJECT LOCATION	
County	Milton Keynes
Site address	Stratford House, Mill Lane, Stony Stratford
Easting / Northing	78 / 40
Area	450 sqm
PROJECT CREATORS	
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Project brief originator	Milton Keynes City Council, by verbal agreement
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology, by verbal agreement
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Project Manager	Tony Walsh
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDINGS ASSESSMENT AT
STRATFORD HOUSE AND OUSEBANK COTTAGE
MILL LANE, STONY STRATFORD
MILTON KEYNES
DECEMBER 2009-JANUARY 2010**

Abstract

Archaeological buildings assessment recorded a body of structures which comprise Stratford House and Ousebank Cottage. In addition to two large dwellings, one over three floors with cellar, the other over two floors, the buildings included a stable, a former chapel, conservatory and garage.

Recording has shown that the properties coalesced in an organic fashion from a variety of early disparate buildings of uncertain association into a single sprawling property which eventually included such unusual elements as a non-conformist chapel. The properties bears no indication that they were ever intimately connected with the tannery purported to have lain at the far end of the plot.

While the origins of the buildings probably lie in the 18th century, the fixtures and fittings of any note all belong to a suite inserted during the property's heyday, at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. It last underwent any real alteration in the 1930s. While some of the property appears to have retained earlier fabric and features, large portions, irrespective of age, are in serious disrepair.

1 INTRODUCTION

Clayson Country Homes Ltd of Wellingborough Road, Northampton are formulating conservation and development proposals for the premises of Stratford House (Fig 2) and the adjacent Ousebank Cottage (Fig 3), Mill Lane, Stony Stratford, both Grade II Listed Buildings (NGR: SP 78 40; Fig 1). The Principal Conservation Officer of the City of Milton Keynes, Simon Peart, has asked that an archaeological building assessment should take place before any planning application is determined. This assessment and report was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology at the request of Clayson Country Homes Ltd, the fieldwork taking place in December 2009 and January 2010.

Lying close to Stony Stratford Market Square, both parts of the property front onto Mill Lane, which runs south west of and parallel to the High Street. One half of the frontage (Stratford House) is set slightly back from the lane, while the other (Ousebank Cottage) sits directly onto the pedestrian pavement. Access to the rear of the property is to either side, each through gates in a high brick wall of later 19th century date. The garden at the

rear stretches back through undergrowth containing some mature specimen trees to a millstream which runs along the foot of the plot, fed by the nearby River Great Ouse (Fig 1). The name of the cottage is ironic since it stands a very long way indeed from the bank of the Great Ouse.

1.1 Property Status

The property was Group-listed (Grade II) in 1976 when it was considered as two distinct addresses. The following comprises the wording of the official listing for each, reproduced from the Images of England (IoE) website (www.imagesofengland.org.uk):

Stratford House (IoE number 45613)

Mill Lane (South Side) Stony Stratford, Stratford House SP 7840 1/63 II GV2. Early C18 greatly altered in late C19 when it was greatly enlarged to the south. 2 storeys and attic; brick, stucco fronted, with quoins alternately vermiculated. 3 windows on 1st floor, 1 blind in centre. Sash windows with late glazing. Wide doorcase with pilasters and a dentilled entablature. 4 panelled door, the top 2 panels glazed. Eaves with small moulded arcaded corbel table. Tiled roof with three hipped dormers. 2 brick chimneys. High verges to gables. Large pilastered porch to south-east; part of later additions which form a large yard of brick buildings to the north-west, behind Ousebank Cottage. Panelled hall inside. Nos 36 to 40 (even) Church street form a group with Stratford House, Mill Lane and all the listed building in the Market Square.

Ousebank Cottage (IoE number 45614)

Mill Lane (South Side) Stony Stratford No 1 (Ousebank cottage) SP 7840 1/203 II 2. early-mid C18, built in 3 stages and formerly at least 2 dwellings. 2 storeys and attic. 2 windows on 1st floor, 3 windows and 2 subsidiary openings on ground floor. Only one doorway. pilastered with entablature. Door with 4 flush panels. Brick built with moulded eaves band. 3 light casement windows. A glazing bar sash on the ground floor to right. Later slate roof with 3 hipped dormers, brick verge to left. 3 wooden lintels on ground floor. Lower 2 storey stable to right with brick verge. Partly stone at rear, and partly tiled.

The two listing descriptions strongly suggest that the Listing Officer in 1976 was afforded little or no access to the rear and that, if he or she was able to engage the owner and elicit some information, they were afforded no interior view other than from the doorstep of Stratford House. The front of the house is pictured here in Figure 2.

The Images of England website includes a photograph of the front of each property, both taken in July 2004 (www.imagesofengland.org.uk). This is here reproduced for comparative purposes as Figure 3.

During 2008 a substantial portion of the roof of Ousebank Cottage collapsed, wrecking the interiors below and threatening the stability of the remainder. The remnants of the interior are scaffolded and propped, and it is now temporarily covered with tarpaulins for a roof (Fig 4).

2 HISTORIC MAPS

The property can be traced on maps back to 1881 and is depicted as follows:

2.1 1881 Ordnance Survey, 1st edition, 1:2500

This first, properly surveyed map shows that the property as recorded had already reached almost its final form, but for minor alterations. An extract of the map, specifically showing the property is published by Brown (1987, 43). This is not reproduced here.

2.2 1898 Ordnance Survey, 2nd edition, 1:2500

This enhanced re-survey version shows that the final additions had been made to the house, which had reached the extent still evident at the time of the current recording (Front Cover).

3 LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

The property lies on the south side of Mill Lane, a narrow thoroughfare parallel to but removed from the High Street. It is aligned from the south-west corner of the historic Market Square of Stony Stratford.

Historic maps show that but for minor alterations, the house as seen today was already fully in existence by 1881, when it belonged to the Sharp family of tanners (Ayers and Lambert 2003, 108). It was all then known simply as 'Ousebank'. The Sharps had apparently lived there from at least 1869, later giving way to the tenancy of the Worley family, also tanners, who were there until 1939 or later (ibid).

Listing information suggests that the complex was once made up of two core elements, probably of 18th-century origin, Stratford House and Ousebank Cottage. However, recording has shown that the organic growth of the frontage is a little more complicated and that the cottage as a dwelling is an afterthought. Subsequent alterations have subsumed early identities, while the alteration and development of each element has smothered the gaps between the two. There have been numerous changes of use, both to individual rooms and whole blocks, both existing and new (Figs 6, 7 and 8).

There is no surviving evidence for the use or status of the original, single house-property as almost all architecturally notable elements relate to its subsequent growth into the large, sprawling Regency or early Victorian town house (Stratford House) which forms the heart of the wider property today.

Therefore for the purposes of this report, speculation concerning the identity of the original house will be largely avoided, to concentrate on the identities of the later, extant house and the variety of surrounding buildings which eventually came to serve it. For clarity the two original core properties will be called simply Stratford House and Ousebank Cottage. As discussion of the development through time progresses, these designations will be seen to be simplistic as one property (The House) dominates the other (The Cottage) for much of their coexistence.

In the absence of certainty in terms of past room uses or attributes, the rooms in each property are known by a number and their floor, in which G = Ground Floor (Fig 6), C= Cellar (Fig 6), F = First Floor (Fig 7) and S= Second Floor (Fig 8).

4 SCOPE OF RECORDING

The property was comprehensively investigated over two days for architectural and historically notable aspects which were photographed digitally and noted in free-text form. The two visits benefited from a set of surveyed plans provided by the applicant, the accuracy of which was verified on site by recourse to random measurement. These were annotated with observations and interpretations where possible, at a scale of 1:100 and provisionally phased while still on site. A total of 166 digital photographs was taken, a selection of which appears in this report. Black and White Prints were also considered, but rejected since so many interiors were full of boxes and jumbled furniture, belonging to the owner, which prevented a sensible archive record. The standard of recording

equates to at least Level II as defined by English Heritage in their procedural document *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (2006). Two room interiors could not be fully entered, one on the first floor since the floor had been lost, the other since the interior (below) was piled too high with debris, preventing entry or even sensible photography. Their omission is not thought to have had any effect on the overall recording or of the phasing of the buildings. Each is marked clearly on Figures 6 and 7. The recording on both visits was carried out in cold, clear conditions, with a great deal of snow on the ground.

5 RESULTS

5.1 The original Stratford House (Figs 6, 7 and 8)

The earliest extant building appears, on the evidence of the exposed north gable, to be mainly of coursed or roughly-coursed limestone and comprises a two-cell cottage with walls generally thicker than all other elements on the plot. Most was later clad in brick and/or stucco. At the mid-point of each gable end of this early building is a chimney serving ground and first-floor fireplaces. This arrangement suggests that the building ought not to be much earlier than the early 18th century. Piercing approximately midway between the two bays lies what has always been the main (later, classical) entrance doorway to the house, leading into a hallway, the cross-passage of an earlier period. It is slightly off-centre and survives as room G1, which remains the main entrance and access to all parts of the main house as it stands (Fig 9). To either side the rooms are G2 (a parlour), with cellar beneath, and G3 (the kitchen). There is currently no direct access from G1 to G3, but this was probably not always so; nor need G3 have always been a kitchen.

Integral to the first house is a cellar beneath G2. It is of stone with brick additions, such as a low wide shelf on the floor for keeping damp out of stored goods. A coal chute faces the street, as does an embrasure, filled with a quirky decorative leaded window made of sheared-off wine-glass feet and other waste glass (Fig 10). The entrance to the cellar, via a dog-leg and stairs, would have been outside the original house, another strong indication that there was an early rear wing, now lost. There is no indication of its size but such a rear wing would be in keeping with vernacular house layouts of the time.

There are no original stairs surviving for this earliest block, but a structural failure in the back wall of bedroom F2 may denote where the first stairs wound tightly up from the interior of G2.

Entry into the hallway G1 provides the first glimpse of a decorative scheme which can be seen throughout the house. It is distinctively early 19th-century with later, matching additions and comprises deeply moulded skirting board and door surrounds as a suite, all painted to emulate highest quality wood finish (Fig 11). Floorboards are wide, machine sawn and well fitted. It is fully wall-papered throughout. An ornamental arch is placed two-thirds of the way along and marks a change from reception space to private space. It has decorative *paterae* in the spandrels. All doors off the hall (to G2, G5, G6 and G7) are very substantial, panelled and have similar brass furniture.

Leading immediately off to the left of the hallway is G2, a parlour, also sporting wide machine sawn floorboards and a 14-inch deep skirting board. Its north-facing sash window has interior shutters with brass furniture, folding into shutter-boxes (Fig 12). An ornate brick fireplace probably dates from after the Second World War. Adjacent to the fireplace is a full height built-in book case with full covering doors made to match the others downstairs. In the south wall is a full-height arched blind niche.

The present kitchen (G3) has its window set into an exceptionally wide window embrasure to the north, which may suggest the room once had a reception function and was not always the kitchen alone or had another, previous function (Fig 13). Further evidence for this is a distinctive classical pilastered window-surround, with square *paterae* in the corners, an unusually decorative approach to a kitchen. In the western wall is the chimney breast now containing a small boiler-range with a tiled hearth and a wider stone-flagged surround. There is a variety of non-fixed cupboards around the room. A sink has been removed.

At the rear of the hallway lies the southerly extent of the original Stratford House. Beyond this lie later accretions.

First floor (Fig 7)

Upstairs on the first floor lie the two simple rooms which form two of the eventual bedrooms of the house. Both F2 and F4, probably always bedrooms, contain no visible early features, being fully plastered and papered. Both face north and have a fireplace in the gable wall. However there are the merest indications that the front and back walls of F2 may contain elements of timber-framing; the front wall is noticeably thinner than elsewhere and an upright timber post protrudes into the room, while the back wall is dropping. The wall seemingly contains 'hollow' elements: this may be the location of the first stair, winding up from the angle of the chimney-corner to the parlour.

Bedroom F2 contains a substantial grey marble fireplace with tiled inner face. It is otherwise unremarkable, having a simple small skirting (Fig 14). Bedroom F4 has a skirting but no cornice, but has a walk-in wardrobe with cupboards above (Fig 15). Its fireplace has been removed, replaced with a 1930s-1950s wall-mounted electric fire. Both bedrooms have bars on the windows to prevent occupants falling out, which suggests they may once have been for children.

Second floor (Fig 8)

There is no evidence that the small (servants') rooms S1, S2 and S3, which characterise the second floor date from the first construction of the house, but are themselves later insertions, put in later when the height of the house was raised, as denoted by a change from stone to brick high up in the west gable (Fig 16). These rooms are each lit by a single hipped dormer facing north. None contains any fixtures and fittings save a single servant's bell in S2 (Fig 17). Pipework suggests that S2 may have contained a bathroom, while it contains numerous coat/clothes/hat pegs (Fig 18). Leading off at right-angles, and part of the attic-suite, is S4, a single, longer room probably with the function of a servant's sitting room (Fig 19). This room belongs structurally to a later phase and so, as a suite with S1-S3, shows that the use of the attics in this way was not original to the early house.

There may have been an early rear wing to the first house, facing south, in which a kitchen function is likely to have been located. This has been subsumed but its location has probably dictated the subsequent development of the rear portion of the house. Certainly such a wing would be in keeping with common vernacular house-plans of the

later 18th century and this would explain why the cellar would otherwise have to be accessed from outside. However, without physical intervention into the existing fabric or below the floors, it is unlikely to be possible to find evidence for this wing.

There is no indication as to either the first roof or its original covering, which may have been ceramic tile or thatch over a shallower second-floor roof-space designed for storage only.

5.2 The original Ousebank Cottage (Figs 6 and 7)

Like the adjacent Stratford House, this building began with two individual cells, but created for a different purpose. The western end (stable and carriage house, G10 and G11 and above) is the older portion, the eastern (cottage G8 and G9 and above) being infill. This older, western portion is built of a mixture of coursed limestone and brick, the latter material also being used to turn window and door embrasures and stress quoins (Fig 20). Within it room G10 began as a Carriage House or Cart Hovel (for the purposes of this report this distinction carries no real difference in terms of room-use). Although there has been some alteration and structural collapse, the rear wall of G10 still bears the tell-tale sign of a high carriage entrance with a timber lintel and a brick relieving arch (albeit collapsing) above it (Fig 21). A surviving gothic-style window also indicates that it was fitted out as a suite with the adjacent G11. That room was once linked to G10 by a doorway in the dividing wall, now blocked up. It comprises a stable with two stalls, in all holding up to four horses (Fig 22). Hay racks remain in part, as do water troughs, but denuded. There are two gothic-style windows in the south wall, in common with the one preserved in the same wall of the Carriage House room G10 (see again Fig 20). The stable has a simple timbered hay-loft floor above, accessed via a ladder. Neither part of the building was originally heated, the single chimney stack being a later insertion when converted to a dwelling.

5.3 The first additions to Stratford House

Ground floor (Fig 6)

Leading off directly behind G1 is the principal stairway (G4) and hall, off which lead other doors (Fig 23). The rather grand oak stair with quarter-landings has substantial newel posts with polygonal knop and sturdy banister hand-rail, with thickly-turned balusters.

The skirting board sweeps up in a curve, suggestive of the finest carpentry. A pendant dropper marks each turn and quarter-landing above as the stair arrives at the landing (F1). Beneath the angle of the stair is the rear door of the property, facing east (Fig 24), which is entered via a classical stucco-covered porch, floored with distinctive, high-quality late Victorian or Edwardian decorative tiles, notable for their use of sky-blue in the scheme (Fig 25). The door is backed for security by an internal half-shutter, which covers the top two (of four) panels which are glazed. The shutter folds back into a box in the wall. Beneath the stairs is a walk-in cupboard space. The hall at this point includes one of a suite of early ornamented steel heating radiators (Fig 26). Their Art Nouveau-style decoration suggests a date around 1900.

At the foot of the stairs in G4 lie the doors to G5 (the back stairs and hall), G6 (a dining room) and G7 (Withdrawing-Room or Best Room).

The back stair (G5) has a simple, sweeping handrail and plain square balusters (Fig 27), all of a (slightly flimsy) pattern recorded most recently for the National Trust (by the author) in a domestic property, Salopian House, Isleworth, Middlesex, where this dated to 1807 (Soden 2008). The only difference here is that of a barley-twist newel post. There is a simple narrow skirting and an added wall-mounted handrail. Leading off this service-hallway alongside the stair is a back-lobby (G5a) from which lead connecting doors into the kitchen (north), the cellar (via a dog-leg stair, Fig 28) and Ousebank Cottage (west). In addition there is an unobtrusive serving hatch which connects the kitchen with the dining room (G6).

The dining room (G6) is a spacious room, served via the abovementioned serving hatch which incorporates storage shelving and cupboard space around it (Fig 29). In the western wall is a handsome gothic-revival stone fireplace while the south wall contains a large, shuttered sash window (Figs 30 and Fig 31, respectively). The room has three distinct bays, dictated by its heavy beamed ceiling (Fig 32). Adjacent to the fireplace in the south-west corner is a part-glazed door which formerly led outside, through the Edwardian conservatory (see below).

The Best Room (G7) is the loftiest in the house and its proportions and finish suggest it had the highest status of any of the interiors. Lit by a massive single-storey bay window to the south, it could be closed up by shutters in boxes to either side, and shaded by curtains on a huge, purpose-made, sweeping brass curtain rail (Fig 33). The room was heated by a fireplace in the east wall which contains a 19th-century tiled back (which

could not be seen fully due to scores of boxes and furniture). Between a deep, fourteen-inch skirting and a matching cornice lies a picture rail all the way around.

First floor (Fig 7)

The quarter-landings of the principal staircase are lit by a window which has red and orange stained-glass edges (Fig 34). At the top of the stairs the landing (F1) opens out onto the bedrooms (F2 and F4 already dealt with, above) (Fig 35). In addition bedroom F3 is accessed via a short flight of stairs upward (at left in Fig 35) to allow for the very high ceiling of G7 below). It has a quirkily tiled fireplace in the east wall (tiles of costume through the ages) and a sash window lights the room from the south (Figs 36 and Fig 37). F3 is the principal bedroom of the house at its greatest extent and has a double skirting and picture-rail. The ceiling has been replaced.

The wide expanse of landing F1 leads through an archway (in a manner similar to the arch downstairs) from the family-dominated house to a split-level landing-corridor of the servants' domain (F9; Fig 38-looking back). It lacks all embellishment, as do the doorways which connect with it. It also forms the landing for the back-stairs coming up from G5.

Leading off this landing-corridor (at its higher level) is the comparatively non-descript bedroom F5 (Fig 39). Lit by a single window on the south, it was heated by a fireplace in the west wall, containing a 1930s tiled fire surround (Fig 40). It has a simple skirting while a door in the east wall links directly down a short flight of stairs with bathroom F6, making it *en suite*.

A second archway at the corridor's eastern end leads to the stairs to the attic in a self-contained stair-tower (F9a) and the bathroom (F6), toilet (F7) and airing cupboard (F8) (Fig 41). Originally F6 – F8 were probably one room, but these have been divided up in recent times. The bathroom retains a substantial vertical shutter on sashes with shutter-box below (Fig 42).

Adjacent to bathroom F6 is the single first-floor space which cannot be accessed. Viewed from below it has lost its floor.

Externally, the most notable aspect of the extension was the broad architectural cohesion sought in the rear façade (Fig 43). Although the main thrust of the extension had a hipped roof (above F3), the roof above F5 was provided with a gable (pertaining to and hiding the roof over S4). However, alongside this the more haphazard rooflines

which lay above F6 and the floorless room, were less desirable, so these were given a matching gable to hide them, freestanding and entirely false. Both gables and the chapel (for which, see below) have central, blind windows high up, as does the east gable of the main house, which at the same time received a new brick skin and vermiculated quoins visible from the street (Fig 44).

Second floor (Fig 8)

The second floor to this extension comprises the abovementioned S4. It is accessed, as are all the attic rooms, via a narrow, fully-enclosed continuation of the backstairs with a small landing between S1 and S4 (Fig 45). It was lit by a small, awkwardly-placed window in the former roof valley of Ousebank Cottage (Fig 46) where this stair-tower was later incorporated within the building and the lost room F13 (for which see below; Fig 47).

5.4 Alterations to create the dwelling of Ousebank Cottage

Ground floor (Fig 6)

At some point the function of the former carriage-house element of the block (G10) was considered redundant and may have been superseded by another building, not now extant. Equally it may be that the owners did away with their carriage, preferring to ride or walk. In any case, while the stable G11 and its hay-loft (F12) were retained, the gap between the building and Stratford House was in-filled to form a cottage and the carriage house incorporated into the new arrangement. At ground floor level this meant creating a new building comprising G8/G9 (Fig 48; although the distinction between these two rooms probably came later), and making a new space formed of G12 and G13. The sunken floor of G12 is of late 19th-century black and red chequerboard-laid 6-inch quarry tiles (Fig 49). G13 too has a sunken floor and the whole forms almost a sub-basement, requiring access upward to get to the buildings and rooms behind. It is not clear why these floors have been set down about 1.2m thus, which (on tile evidence) probably took place no earlier than the late 19th century. G12 and G13 appear to have been separated by a flimsy partition, visible as a scar on the floor.

The early Ordnance Survey maps also suggest that a building has been lost which was part of the carriage-house. A right-angled projection was shown which was lost,

probably at the same time as the conversion. It lay at the midpoint of the building and probably contained the entrance into the carriage house.

The sunken G12 and G13 have no access onto Mill Lane. It is possible that together they performed a storage function, perhaps cold-store, meat-store and provisions generally. Two of the three windows onto the street are very small indeed and have bars on, suggesting a concern for the security of the contents. The rooms are dark and cool, ideal for stores.

Between G9 and G12 is a flimsy partition wall. On the east (in G12) it is panelled in tongue and groove vertical boards, but in G9 it can be seen to comprise bricks laid on edge, a construction method which skimps to an ultimate degree on brick usage (Fig 48, left background). Its load-bearing capacity is negligible. The whole front (north) wall contains a variety of windows and openings, the sequence of which cannot now be elicited since the interior has gone completely in the collapse of 2008. A small rear hall (G14) contained two sets of stairs, one up from this sunken ground floor to a rear lobby (G15), the other, from that rear lobby to the first floor (F13). Only a plaster-scar now denotes them (Fig 50). A separate short flight of stairs led from the sunken G13 up to the kitchen annexe of Stratford House (G5a), but these too are lost.

On the south side of G15 lies the inaccessible room G16, which appears to contain a pump, suggesting that a well lies beneath (Fig 51).

The room G9 is the easternmost of the conversion into a cottage. It can be accessed via a front door onto Mill Lane in the north-east corner or by a back door opposite that (Fig 52, Fig 48, above). Both front and rear walls are insertions, for which both bear exterior butt-joint evidence (Fig 53 and Fig 4). The rear portion of G9 has been allotted a kitchen-function while the greater, front portion is a living space, the two simply partitioned off in timber. The whole is heated by an inserted chimney-stack between G9 and G10, the adjacent former carriage house, which was now turned into another living space accessed by a doorway next to the chimney stack. It too has a fireplace while an enclosed, boarded stair rises to the first floor. While the floor of G9 is of quarry tiles, that in G10 is fully of floorboards.

First floor (Fig 7)

The remains of the first floor are only partial, the roof collapse having removed the interior of F13 and part of F10. Only an axial beam and a small number of joists are *in situ* in the former floor (Fig 54).

The stairs up from G10 come to a stop on a small landing outside bedroom F11. The bedroom is lit by a north-facing window and heated by a small fireplace in the east wall (the central inserted chimney stack rising from G9 and G10 below). The room includes the cheek-pieces of the roof above and contains a built-in cupboard adjacent to the fireplace (Fig 55).

Bedroom F10 is a larger room (unhindered by stairs) and is accessed by stepping down slightly, perhaps suggesting that the lowering of the floors in G12 and G13 may have also been due to insufficient headroom or storage room. F10 is missing its east wall and an almost uninterrupted view can be seen straight through to the outside of the self-contained stair of Stratford House which links its first and second floors (F9a: Fig 47 above). It contains a small Victorian fireplace in the central stack and a built-in cupboard adjacent (Fig 56). It is lit by windows to north and south. Like F11 it contains the cheek-pieces of the roof.

F12 is the plain hayloft above the adjacent stable, which never changed its use.

Second floor (Fig 8)

There has clearly been an attic floor to this dwelling, as evidenced by the plastered out roof-space and dormers high in the north roof aspect (two survive of three photographed in 2004). However there is now no apparent access to this space, which may have been through the collapsed ceiling above the former F13.

5.5 The chapel (Fig 2)

To the south-west of the main buildings range lies a chapel (G17). It is of brick and bears similarities of brickwork, finish and general aspect to the remainder of the rear extensions of Stratford House (Fig 57). In general architectural tone it is of neo-gothic appearance, the two bay interior has a mock-medieval ceiling (Fig 58). The three

trusses are carried on wall-posts set upon six ornately and very expertly carved corbels (Fig 59).

In each gable there are three small gothic, pointed-arched windows. The middle one in the west end is actually blind since a central chimney masks its rear, serving a large, tile-backed fireplace in the middle of that wall inside (Fig 60). In the south face are two large sash windows which light the interior. The entrance is in the east gable, while a former door lies blocked up in the east end of the north wall. Although the room is now cluttered with rubbish and garden furniture, there is enough debris which is of ecclesiastical origin to be reasonably sure that the building was indeed a private chapel. The absence of an altar or communion rail, or any other liturgical focus, might suggest that it was both non-conformist and very low-key, often described as 'primitive' in its worship.

An empty space and rawl-plugs on the north end of the west wall suggests the former presence of a tablet or commemorative monument. The building shares an identical brick-construction with the majority of the main house south and east faces, down to the detailing of yellow-brick-lined blind window openings at eaves height (Fig 43 above). For this reason it is felt to be of a similar origin, perhaps the second quarter of the 19th century.

5.6 Later additions to the range (Figs 6 and 7)

Minor alterations were later made to the group of buildings. A boiler house (G17a) was added to the chapel, as was an outside privy (G17b). Both are of brick and are likely to be 20th-century in date. Linking the east end of the chapel with the back of the main house is a timber conservatory or planting house on dwarf brick walls, probably of Edwardian date (1901-1911) or soon after (G18; Fig 5 and Fig 61). This is now partly collapsed, the remainder being in a very poor state. It contains boxed-in heating pipes (asbestos?) under sturdy potting shelves, the latter being unusually fashioned from numerous cast iron (church?) under-floor heating grates, screwed to a timber frame (Fig 62). What remains of the interior walls is lined with tongue and groove boards. Through the rubbish on the floor can be discerned a very handsome floor of Edwardian tiles, still apparently in very good condition (Fig 63).

The conservatory provided a dry, warm link from house (G6) to chapel (G17), while there is circumstantial evidence for a former door into G16 also, although this cannot currently be proven as the structure is boarded over.

At the rear of Ousebank cottage a high garden wall was added which delineates a narrow yard (G12; Fig 64, at right). The western end may also contain an outside privy, although insufficient access was possible to be certain. The need for the yard may indicate the division of Ousebank Cottage to be separate from the main house, from which it was thus possible to retain some privacy. Its date is uncertain, but it may be of the early 20th century.

Also to the rear but lying separate from the main buildings ensemble was a simple double garage with single-fall roof and sliding doors hung on rails (Fig 65). This is also of 20th-century date.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Original Stratford House (18th century)

The first Stratford House is distinguishable within the core of the property as a simple two-cell cottage, probably of just two storeys, with a chimney stack at either end. Its exact date is uncertain, the type is traceable to the early 18th century. There may have been an earlier rear wing at right-angles to the frontage, but no physical evidence for this was seen during assessment, since no intervention into any fabric was contemplated.

6.2 The extension of Stratford House (19th century)

The extension of the house probably took place in the early decades of the 19th century. While there are distinct classical (perhaps slightly anachronistic) elements to it, such as the porches, vermiculated quoins and some interior detailing, there is also, apparently contemporary novel architecture, such as the Neo-gothic chapel. Since there is this dichotomy of styles, influenced by both the outgoing classical and the incoming gothic, but neither fully one nor the other, a date is suggested of no earlier than 1830-40, possibly a little later. Linking all the elements of this date are the gothic detailing (of chapel, stable and carriage house – see below), yellow brick blind window surrounds to the house and chapel and a huge mock-medieval fireplace in G6. Gothic was

consciously chosen by architects for representing the English church and its adherents, together with non-conformism, while the earlier medieval, the Romanesque, was chosen by a growing new Catholic minority to represent their liturgy in architecture. The use of classical details on the house is perhaps slightly anachronistic but it predates true 'Victoriana' for which a greater level of ornament might be expected to accompany solid functionality. Early Ordnance Survey maps indicate that the house had reached almost its maximum extent by 1881.

The massive extension and growth of the house at this time was given a deliberate architectural cohesion which portrayed the gentrified house of humble origins as something entirely new-built and planned. Lying as it does on a minor back lane, it could assume no outward pretensions there. But the garden was its principal prospect and guests would see it from there (Fig 5). Thus its rear façade is its main one for all purposes of select reception and entertainment. That it turned its back on Mill Lane and hid the far more vernacular agglomeration of first the ancillary buildings and later Ousebank Cottage was a matter of portraying the right image.

It is at this same point that the house probably acquired servants' quarters in the attics.

Later additions have been minor but notable, such as the now-dilapidated conservatory of perhaps just prior to 1900, with its tiled floor, the only part of it still in comparatively good condition.

6.3 The emergence of Ousebank Cottage (19th century)

The earliest building here comprises the former stable and carriage-house, this being a function which was later superseded. The rear-facing gothic windows suggest that it may have been built at the same time as the expansion of Stratford House and its chapel, all linked by a cohesive pattern of architectural features. The decorative use of brick in this rear façade reinforces its rear-facing focus. It derived no value from looking towards Mill Lane.

In disagreement with the existing Listing description, evidence for an 18th-century cottage at this address is absent.

The carriage-house's conversion to part of Ousebank Cottage, probably in the 19th century and the coeval in-fill of the intervening space, may have come with the growth of

the household or with the redundancy of the chapel. One specific opportunity (historically) for the loss of a carriage house would be the arrival of the railways, the London to Birmingham line opening in 1838. The coaching trade up the Watling Street from London was thus hit very hard indeed around 1840, while those who would previously have made their own way to London, either by coach or by personal carriage, now increasingly took the new and immensely fashionable train.

Transport remained a concern, however, and after the Ordnance Survey 1900 map of the site, a large double garage was built a short distance from the range. This remained in use until the 1980s. It still contains two cars.

6.4 Overall

The organic property which survives today retains a dual personality as befits its humbler origins as 18th-century cottage and an adjacent plot of (originally) unknown occupation. Its coalescence onto a single property dominates its architectural development, while the loss, perhaps not long after 1840, of the carriage house in the creation of Ousebank Cottage gave the western portion its own identity for perhaps a little more than a century.

The dilapidated and poorly preserved Ousebank Cottage sits within its own tiny plot, surrounded and dominated by the former grandeur and (to an extent) architectural dissimulation of Stratford House's 19th-century heyday. From Mill Lane Stratford House is a better-than average town house on a back lane. When once seen from its now dilapidated garden it wanted to be much, much more.

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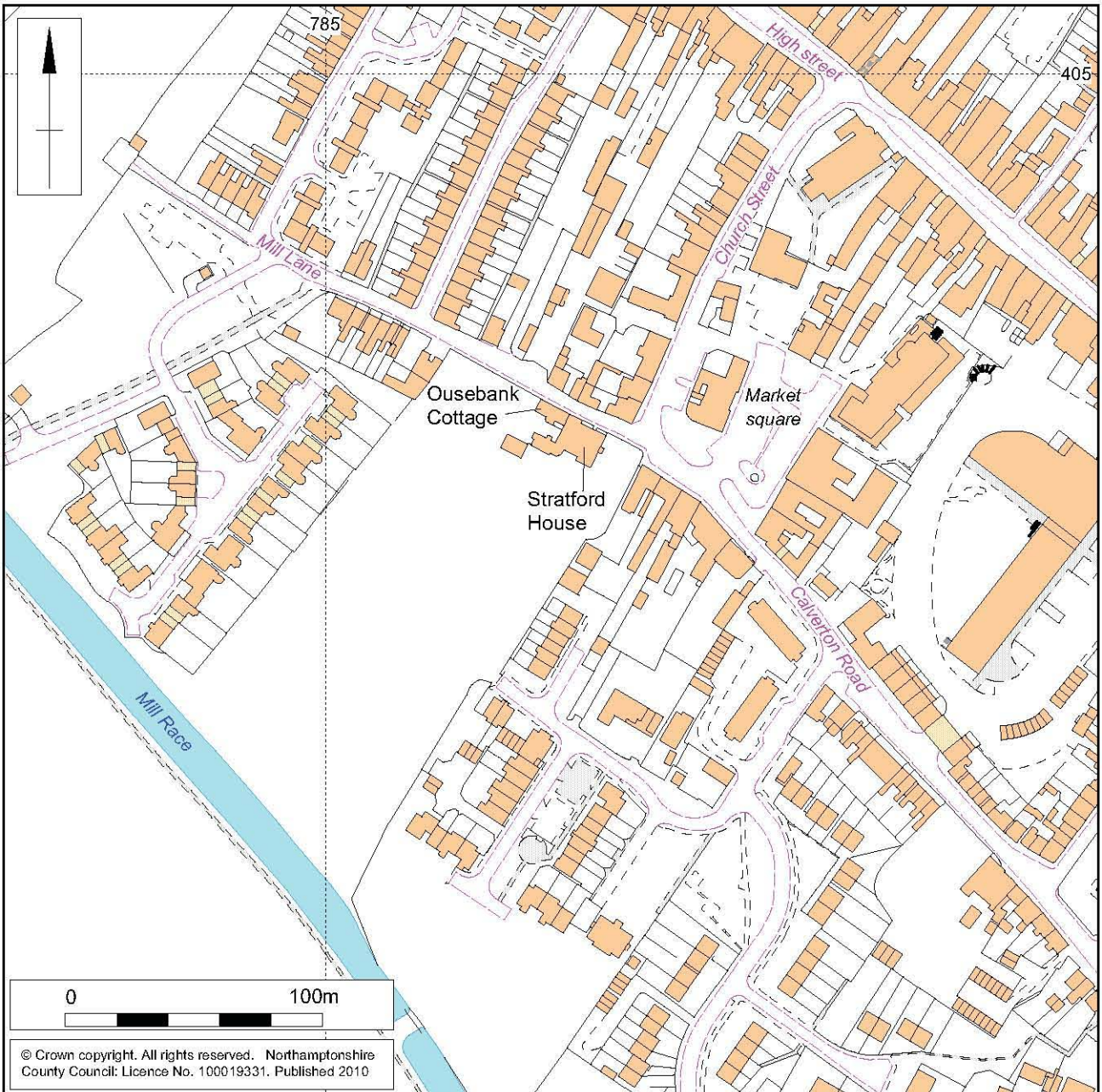
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Web pages

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Scale 1:2500

Site Location Fig 1



3013 View of front of Stratford House 2010 Fig 2



View of front of Ousebank Cottage 2004
(from Images of England c Dr W A Cooper LRPS) Fig 3

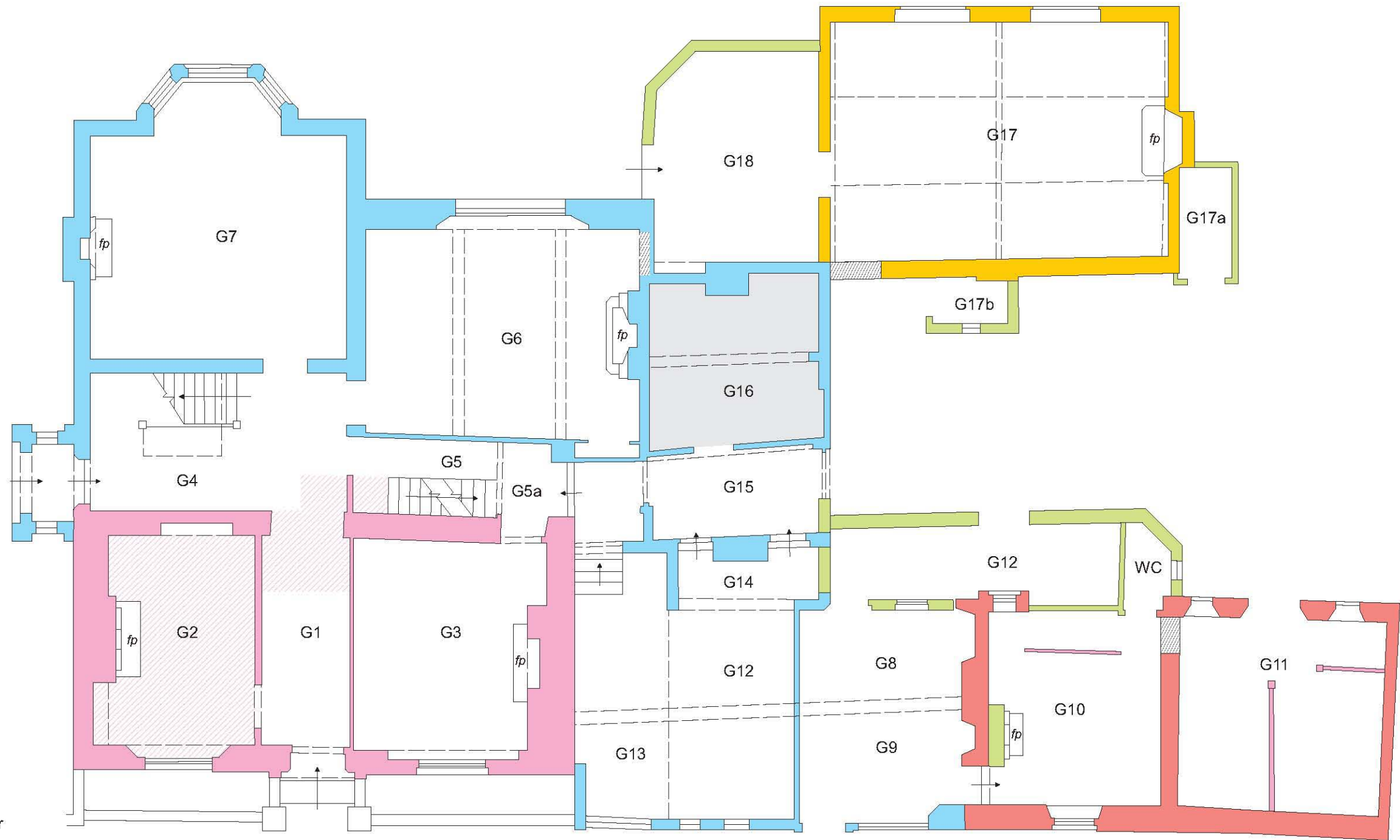


3023 View of front of Ousebank Cottage in 2010 Fig 4



1950s view of rear of property (photo provided by Colin Clayson) Fig 5

Scale 1:100

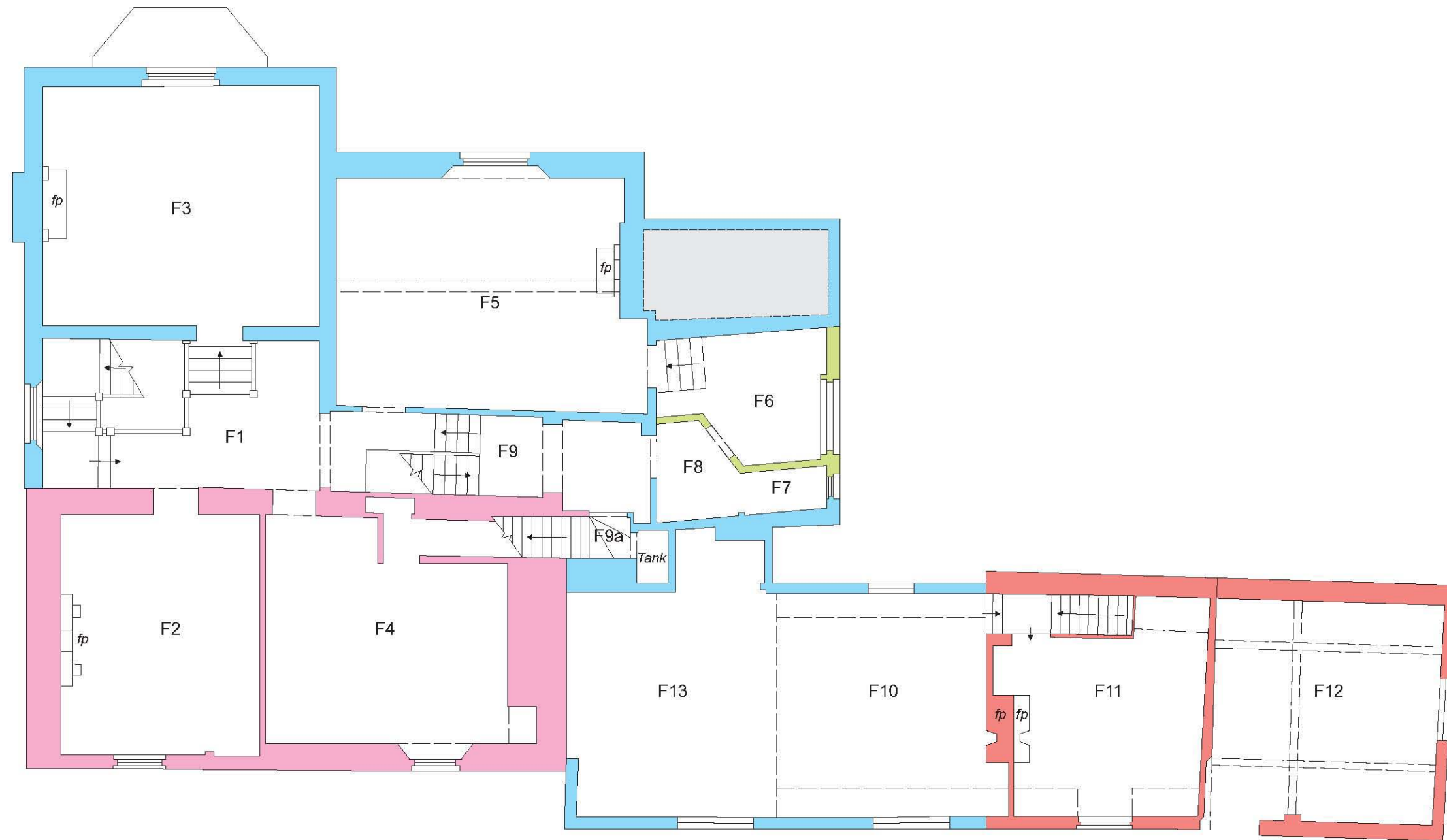


- Period 1 Cellar
- Period 1 House
- Stable/ Carriage house
- Period 2 House additions c 1840
- Period 2 Chapel addition c 1840
- Victorian or later additions
- Inaccessible

0 5m

Ground floor plan with cellar marked Fig 6

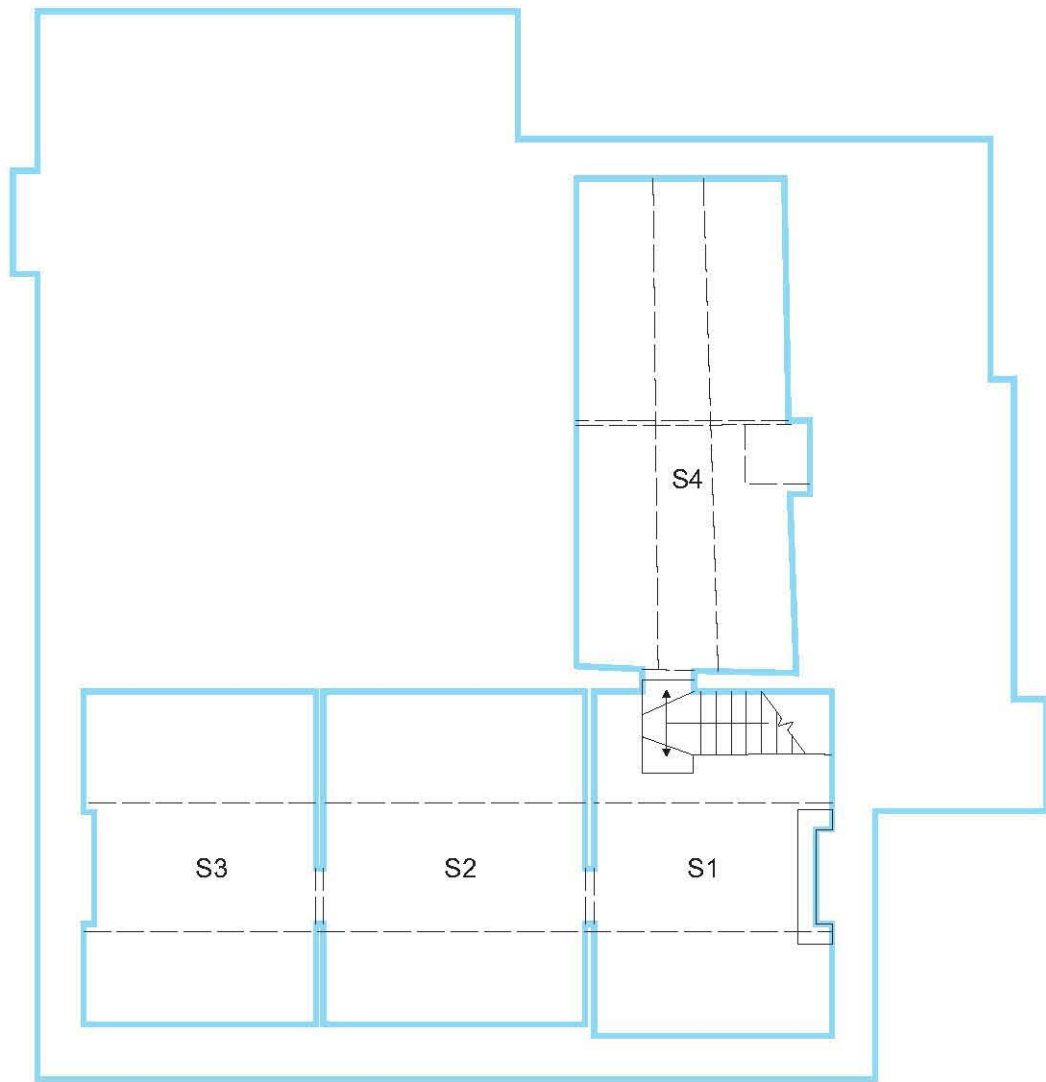
Scale 1:100



- Period 1 House
- Stable/ Carriage house
- Period 2 House additions c 1840
- Victorian or later additions
- Inaccessible



First floor plan Fig 7



 Period 2 House additions c1840

0  5m



0002 View along hallway G1 Fig 9



0029 Curiosity window in cellar Fig 10



0004 Doorway in G1 to Parlour G2 Fig 11



0003 Parlour G2 Fig 12



0007 Kitchen G3 Fig 13



0049 Bedroom F2 Fig 14



0056 Bedroom F3 Fig 15



0089 Altered gable on main house (zoom in) Fig 16



0069 Servants' bell in S2 Fig 17



0066 View through attics S3 - S2 Fig 18



0074 Attic S4 Fig 19



0091 Rear of stable and coach house, later Ousebank Cottage Fig 20



0098 Blocked-in former carriage entrance Fig 21



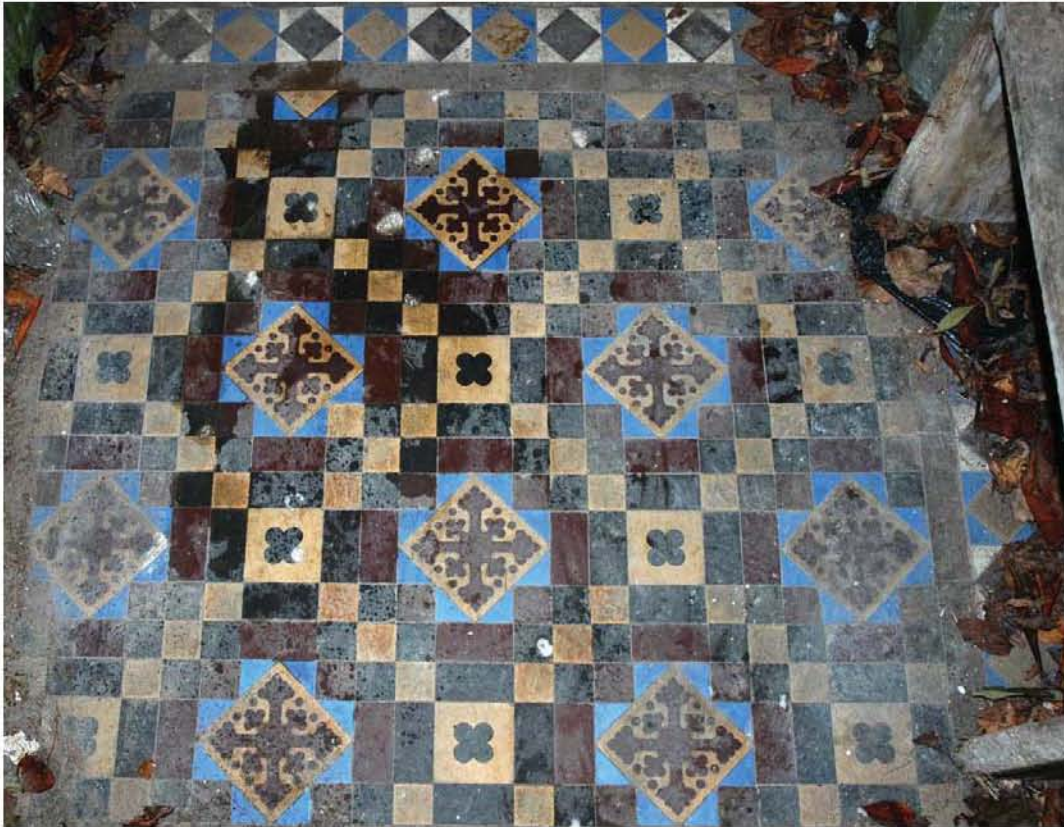
0118 Stable G11 Fig 22



0010 Hallway and stairs G4 Fig 23



0013 Rear doorway in G4 Fig 24



3005 Porch tiling Fig 25



0022 Radiator in G4 Fig 26



0021 The back stairs G5 Fig 27



0023 Steps down to the cellar from G5a Fig 28



0031 Servery and cupboards in G6 Fig 29



0032 Stone fireplace in G6 Fig 30



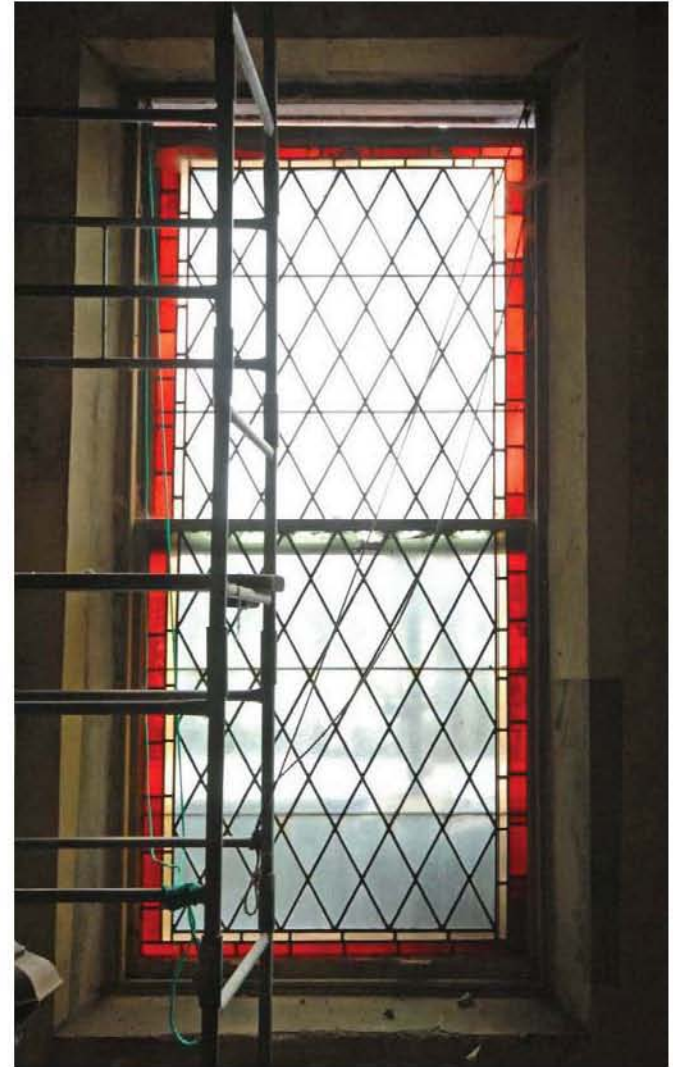
0035 Sash window in G6 Fig 31



0036 Ceiling detail in G6 Fig 32



0037 View across G7 towards bay window Fig 33



0044 Window on quarter landing in F1 Fig 34



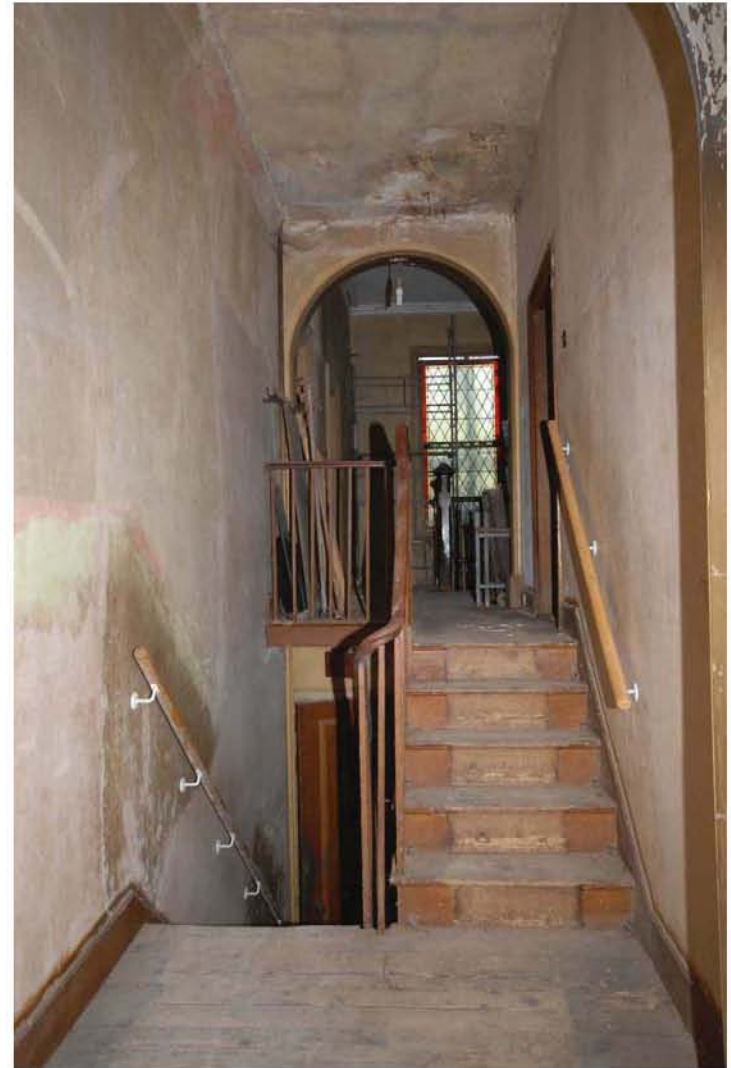
0042 The first floor landing F1 Fig 35



0050 View across F3 towards fireplace and window Fig 36



0053 Tile scheme on fireplace, F3 Fig 37



0061 Corridor F9 Fig 38



0059 Bedroom F5 Fig 39



0060 Fireplace in bedroom F5 Fig 40



0063 End of corridor F9 Fig 41



0062 Vertical shutter in F6 Fig 42



0083 View of rear of house Fig 43



3011 Vermiculated stressed quins at north-east corner o...



0073 Landing between S1 and S4 Fig 45



0064 High window lighting second floor stairs Fig 46



0105 Stair-tower viewed across F13 Fig47



0100 Rooms G8-G9, looking frontage to rear Fig 48



2999 Floor G12 Fig 49



2996 Plaster scar denoting former stair from G15 to F13 ...



3002 Pump mechanism against wall of G16 Fig 51



0099 Room G9, looking from rear to frontage Fig 52



0097 Butt joint in brickwork of converted carriage house (left) and Ousebank...



0106 Floor remains in F13 Fig 54



0110 Room F11 Fig 55



0107 Room F10 Fig 56



0080 Exterior view of chapel G17 Fig 57



2966 Interior of chapel G17 Fig 58



2979 Corbel supporting roof truss on wall-post, G17 Fig 59



2968 Fireplace in chapel G17 Fig 60



0081 Collapsed conservatory superstructure G18 Fig 61



2986 Cast iron heating grates reused in conservatory G18 Fig 62



2984 Edwardian tiled floor in conservatory G18 Fig 63



0088 Narrow yard-space G12 behind Ousebank Cottage Fig 64



0094 Garage Fig 65



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