



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological building assessment at Old Bunsty Farmhouse Milton Keynes



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County Council**

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Report 10/53

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	
Project title	Archaeological buildings assessment at Old Bunsty Farmhouse, Milton Keynes
Short description	Building assessment and historic map consultation has shown that Old Bunsty farmhouse has been in existence on virtually the same footprint since at least 1810. Architecturally its form is likely to be of the 18th century although evidence for anything earlier is scant. Subsequent structural alterations have been considerable, but confined to the rear, service, wing which has undergone various subdivisions. Only a few historic non-structural features are visible in the interior.
Project type	Assessment equating to EH Level II building record
Previous work	None
Future work	Unknown
Monument type and period	Listed Building –Grade II (Bunsty Farmhouse)
PROJECT LOCATION	
County	Milton Keynes, formerly Buckinghamshire
Site address	Old Bunsty, Hanslope Road, Milton Keynes MK16 8LY
Easting	SP 83912
Northing	47063
PROJECT CREATORS	
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Project brief originator	Milton Keynes Council
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Director/Supervisor	
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Sponsor or funding body	Mr and Mrs Perry
PROJECT DATE	
Start date	March 2010
End date	March 2010
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING ASSESSMENT AT
OLD BUNSTY FARMHOUSE
MILTON KEYNES
MARCH 2010**

Abstract

Building assessment and historic map consultation has shown that Old Bunsty farmhouse has been in existence on virtually the same footprint since at least 1810. Architecturally its form is likely to be of the 18th century although evidence for anything earlier is scant. Subsequent structural alterations have been considerable, but confined to the rear, service, wing which has undergone various subdivisions. Only a few historic non-structural features are visible in the interior.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Mr and Mrs Woods, of Old Bunsty Farmhouse, are considering alterations to the property which lies on the Hanslope Road, outside Milton Keynes (NGR: SP 83912 47063; Fig 1). The farmhouse and an adjacent well-house are both listed Buildings (Grade II) and adjacent farm buildings are listed by curtilage. In pursuance of their statutorily listed status, Milton Keynes Council, has asked that an archaeological buildings assessment be carried out prior to the Local Authority considering their application for Listed Buildings Consent. This is to better understand and appreciate the historic character of the property, both as a structure and in its historic landscape context.

This report constitutes such an assessment which was based upon two visits in March 2010, during which the author was granted complete access to all parts of the property. The scope of the assessment broadly equates to a Level 2 record as set down in the English Heritage procedural document *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good practice* (2006). An archive has been created, consisting of this report, annotated plans of the property as existing, supplied by Mr and Mrs woods' architects 'g2 Design'. These have been verified on site as accurate. A photographic archive was created comprising 46 full colour digital images and a selection of exterior black and white negatives with associated prints.

1.2 Property status

The property was Listed Grade II in 1952. Its description is listed in the English Heritage website 'Listed Buildings Online' at <http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk>:

LBS number 350947

SP 84 NW Gayhurst, Hanslope Road

4/42

Bunsty Farmhouse

3.3.52

GVII

House. C17-18 altered. Stone, old tiled roof, coped gable ends on kneelers, flanking brick chimneys, 3 gabled dormers. 2 storeys and attic. 3 bay front, half glazed door in centre, windows with painted wood lintels, sashes to ground floor, modern casements to first floor openings. Older rear wing with lower roof and large projecting stone chimney stack, door to left and two casements to first floor.

As will be seen this description, necessarily brief in terms of what it records, may be erroneous in one or two aspects. For instance, there is no evidence for the rear wing pre-dating the front (although unsympathetic pointing means the junction between the wings is not apparent). Similarly there is no apparent evidence for a 17th-century date. The whole layout sits comfortably in an 18th-century vernacular tradition.

2 RESEARCH FROM HISTORIC MAPS

2.1 1810 Ordnance Survey – 2-inch Surveyor’s edition (not illustrated)

The property is shown, along with an adjacent building now called Barnstone. In 1810 it was the barn for the farm. No other buildings are depicted. The pond at the front of the house exists but perhaps not the well-house, which is not shown. The farmhouse appears to have a similar L-shape in plan that it does today, but more marked. The small scale of the map does not lend itself to more detailed analysis. In short the farmhouse as depicted in 1810 was little different in plan-depiction than its survival today.

2.2 1885 Ordnance Survey, 1st edition, 1:2500 (not illustrated)

This first, properly surveyed map shows that the farmhouse is seemingly broadly as depicted in 1810, while the adjacent barn has been joined by a range of buildings thought to be the stable and cow byre which stands on the Old Bunsty plot. The well-house is also shown for the first time.

3 METHODOLOGY

The property was comprehensively investigated for architectural and historically notable aspects which were photographed digitally and using Black and White print for archive purposes, the two producing a total of 70 + images. They were all generated using Nikon SLR equipment with dedicated lenses of 18-55mm and 17-35mm wide-angle capabilities. The use of wide angle facilitated the recording of small room-spaces together with an opportunity to record wider context for the whole building.

In the absence of certainty in terms of past room uses or attributes, the rooms in each property are known simply by a number and their current use.

Although strictly an assessment, the standard of recording equates to Level II as defined by English Heritage in their procedural document *Recording historic buildings: a descriptive specification* (2006). All rooms were accessed. The weather was bright but overcast for most of the recording, but low lighting in interiors meant that some use was made of dedicated electronic flash.

The report below takes the reader through the property entering via the front door and dealing with each floor in turn by phase.

4 RESULTS

4.1 The original Bunsty Farmhouse (Figs 2, 3 and 4)

The earliest extant building appears to be constructed of coursed or roughly-coursed local limestone under a ceramic tile roof. The stonework is poorly presented by raised, hard-cement pointing particularly characteristic of the fashion in the 1960s and 70s. This alone may hide elements of constructional detail which would aid interpretation of the house's development.

The frontage comprises a simple, three-bay cottage over two floors and an attic with central passageway and stair which linked directly with a service wing lying perpendicular to the rear. The fireplaces of the frontage range were located in the gable ends, in a style and plan which quickly became an accepted layout during the 18th century.

The house is entered via its centrally-placed front door, leading onto a hallway from which the staircase rises next to a Victorian pine banister rail with machine-made balusters (G1; Front cover and Fig 5). This, like most of the doors, has been stripped back to the bare wood in the fashion of the 1970s and 80s. There is an understairs cupboard which may incorporate a cellar access. This may have been blocked in brick so the evidence for a cellar is equivocal. If one exists it probably only lies under one half of the frontage and may have been filled with rubble.

Through a doorway in a stud wall to the left of the entrance lies the Living Room (G2), formerly the farmhouse parlour, dominated by an inglenook fireplace which has probably

been largely rebuilt in recent times (Fig 6). The front window to this room may be original (although most of its glass is not; it is flanked by shutters folding back into shutter boxes in the splay (Fig 7). The side window appears to be a modern insertion since as an inglenook window it is both very large and derives no heat from the fire, from which it is separated. The exceptionally flat finish to the walls suggests that here, as in the rest of the house, early plaster has been taken off and replaced with modern. In room G2 that means that the picture rail has probably been re-set, if not imported.

The hallway has a chair rail, which although it looks to be of old timber, is not appropriate here and may once have been in either room G2 or G3 where chairs would once have been stood around the wall. It is continued upstairs as a wall-protector

Room G3, today a dining room, has a fine Art Nouveau fireplace of c1900 in the gable wall, flanked by convex-backed display niches with shaped shelves (Fig 8). These niches, although for display, may be original, despite (seemingly strangely to modern eyes) having the vestiges of hinges and a catch for a cupboard door across each of them. This is not uncommon in 18th-century display cupboards and these fit the accepted pattern perfectly (Hall 2005, 197-8). There is a picture rail and as in G2, the window has a pair of folding shutters in splay-mounted shutter boxes. This room was once the 'best room' of the house.

Both front rooms have boxed-in axial beams. These may have been ornately chamfered but were boxed in when such ornament was considered old-fashioned, usually in the Victorian period. Unfortunately the process of boxing-in may have damaged the decoration. Alternatively the boxes may conceal replacement beams, or Reinforced Steel Joists (RSJs).

The rear service wing originally comprised a single room, or possibly two at most. It is today divided into a corridor (G4), off which lead two main rooms (G5 and G6). G5, today a kitchen, contains a heating boiler in what was the location of a Victorian cooking range, possibly with an integral tub for boiling up mash. Adjacent to this was the former back door from the farm (Fig 9 and Fig 10, bottom right). This is now a window and the rear pedestrian access has been transferred to the end of the corridor (Fig 11).

The rear wing chimney stack, when viewed from the exterior, sits amidst an agglomeration of stonework which looks awkward, is suggestive of numerous structural alterations, but which does not readily conform to any obvious developmental model without some form of intrusive inquiry. From the inside there is no clue as to the mass of stone which sits above and adjacent.

Room G6 was once part of the larger kitchen or main room of the service wing. Its one remaining ceiling beam (made exactly for this span as it fits perfectly) is simply but deeply chamfered with a simple run-out stop, and its position marks it to have been one of three formerly across the service wing. The other two seem to have been lost, one replaced by the corridor wall. The west window to G6 is an old window in poor condition but scars on the outside of the building and a much longer lintel beam show that the embrasure once held a much wider window with no interior splay (Fig 12). This would have been commensurate with the bigger room size.

At first floor level the original layout is mirrored by a suite of four bedrooms (F2-3-F5-6), either flanking a landing or opening off the corridor (F1). There are also two modern bathrooms (F4 and F7). Three boxed-in axial beams tie the roof trusses of the front range, while none are visible in the service wing. The front bedrooms contain matching Victorian cast-iron fireplaces with classical vase and swag/foliate motifs in the style of Robert Adam (Fig 13).

The bedrooms of the service wing, all apparently divided by stud walls, are probably 19th-century creations, as is the smaller of the two south-facing windows, which has a sill of chamfered bricks on edge, a layout not repeated anywhere else in the house. A single window faces north, lighting the corridor (Fig 14). The corridor incorporates two steps down in its entire length, which may denote a change in status as one progressed further from the centre of the house along the service wing. What bedroom space pertained to the early house may have been designated for servants.

From the landing (F1) a narrow stair leads up to the attic spaces. Its age is unclear but the rear face of the simple planked and ledged door bears an ochre paint scheme beloved of the early 19th century (Fig 15).

At attic (second floor) level there is a landing (S1) flanked by two bedrooms (S2 and S3) in the front range, but there is no evidence that they were configured as such in the early house. They are each lit by a dormer of uncertain age. Neither bedroom appears to have been heated other than by the warmth of the gable chimneys. The interiors are entirely modern, although the soffits of the original purlins and trusses of the roof can be viewed from within.

The roof space over the rear service wing (S4) has never been converted for occupation, nor is there apparent access for a storage use (Fig 16). The common rafters are halved and pegged at the apex and there is no ridge plank or pole. At the junction of the rear wing and the front range, the purlins here have unpegged and unfixed ends, indicating that at least the rear face of the front range roof has been completely rebuilt or re-configured. This aspect is perhaps the origin of the Listing-based assertion that the rear wing is older. Structurally these ends stand out in mid-air, un-linked to anything, although the weight at their ends is supported in each case by an upright prop standing up from the front-range wall-plate (Figs 17 and 18).

All of the roof coverings on both wings have been replaced in recent decades, the roofs having been felted.

4.2 Extension to the service range

The rear service range was subsequently extended on the ground floor to the north to form a single long room (G7-8 as one: Fig 2), leaving a small yard between its east end and the front range, probably where an outside doorway lay into the service range from the north, directly opposite its southern counterpart. The new extension probably had a doorway in both ends.

The use of this new extension is not known but it remained in the same stone as the early house. Its roof angle is unclear, but it was undoubtedly configured as a single-storey outshut, if not similar to the rather excessive catslope roof which exists today.

There is no evidence as to the date of the extension. A wall extending to the north which eventually may have housed a WC was contemporary, but its purpose is unclear although it may have been part of a wider extension.

It may have been at this time that the brick-built cooking range was inserted into the kitchen (G5). It probably replaced an earlier fireplace (Fig 9). This new one would have been plastered (not bare brick) and would have incorporated a cast-iron range.

4.3 Infill and subdivision

A need for separate room uses led to the interior of the extended service range being extended once more, by a simple process of infill to create room G9 (Fig 19). At about the same time the whole interior was divided up to create a smaller kitchen and add separate functions around the edge. This phase is characterised by the widespread use of brick as the principal material.

The recent extension was itself subdivided in brick to create G7 and G8 as separate entities, the former a store, the latter a larder, which still has its original door and lock in this function. The outside door was blocked up to configure G9 as a separate space, although whether this was for a WC (as it now is) is unknown.

The insertion of a brick-built wall along the north and west sides of the original range created a new corridor (G4) which allowed G6 to function independently as a new room, but without heating. It is likely that its window was reduced in size accordingly for this reason. A door from G4 into G5 was left, opposite that into G6, which was fully split off by the insertion of its own east wall in brick (Fig 20). The door into G5 had a glass light panel and a window was put into the corridor wall between G4 and G5, in order for the otherwise dark corridor to borrow light from the much smaller kitchen.

In order for the new, smaller kitchen to keep its heat in and be separated from the grime of the farmyard, the former doorway in the south wall was moved from its location directly adjacent to the cooking range to a new position at the far end of the corridor, again with an integral light panel (Fig 11). A small window was inserted adjacent to this but actually lay on the other side of the corridor wall, and allowed additional light into the kitchen, which was otherwise darkened by the loss of the large window it had once used in the far gable wall of G6.

An outside WC may have been constructed against the north wall of G7 but this has been demolished and its form is now unclear (Fig 21).

This is the layout which pertains today.

4.4 The farm buildings

The adjacent property, now called 'Barnstone' is the former farm barn of Old Bunsty. It is substantially that shown as long ago as the 1810 Map. It has been converted into houses.

Close to Old Bunsty farmhouse is a low range of single-storey brick farm buildings around a small yard, which face inwards towards 'Barnstone'. These were in existence

by 1885 but may not date to much earlier than this. There was no indication of them in 1810 and their bricks are standard machine-made Victorian examples. The range is divided up as cow-byre and cart hovel, with wood-shed closest to the service range (Figs 22 and 23). The face closest to the farmhouse is blind so as to maintain the family's privacy from the less savoury aspects of farming life. The roof, which was once probably either ceramic tile or Welsh slate, has been replaced in corrugated asbestos. The trusses inside are original to the range. It remains the only part of the complex not converted to modern uses or structurally upgraded.

A square, stone-built well-house under a ceramic tile pyramidal roof stands in front of the farmhouse on the same property (Grade II listed, number 350948; Fig 24). It may post-date 1810 as it is not depicted on the map of that year. It is derelict and is now ideally used as a garden store, since it is believed that the well no longer functions.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Old Bunsty farmhouse is basically an 18th-century dwelling whose service wing has been altered a number of times as the farm-related and subsequent needs have changed.

The original farmhouse was constructed primarily in stone, with some interior stud walls. Subsequent alterations and phasing have been mainly in brick. In each case the bricks used, where visible, appear to be of the post-brick tax fuller dimensions (9 inch x 4.5 inch x 3 inch) suggesting that all such alterations date from the later 19th or 20th centuries. No bricks with appreciably smaller, (usually 18th century) dimensions are present, so far as can be observed.

There is no evidence apparent that the service wing is older, as the 1952 listing suggests, although upgrading subsequent to that date may have hidden tell-tale elements which were visible with ease at the time of listing. In any case south Northamptonshire and north Buckinghamshire were not particularly forward-looking and elements of structural style were only very slowly replaced and were still in use long after fashion suggested otherwise. Since 1952 there have been considerable alterations to decor and fittings, such as the current fitted kitchen and the replacement of old plaster with dry-lining and plasterboard which have masked or removed many elements which might have proved decisive in dating interiors without the aid of scientific dating techniques such as dendrochronology or intrusive recording. Unsympathetic pointing, probably from the 1960s or 1970s is a bar to the fullest understanding of the exterior.

Few original features survive, although there are indicators visible of each period of alteration, each of which has primarily affected the ground floor. This includes skirtings and picture rails, some at least of which appear to have been re-set at re-decoration.

While the house undoubtedly retains historic character, it is the accumulated character of a long period of relevant and continuous use. There are few features of historic character which might point the property out as, for example, a fine Georgian property, a fine Regency property or a fine Victorian property. It is characterised by a suite of

accumulated spaces which reflect its steady, if not always sympathetic, upgrading in each of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

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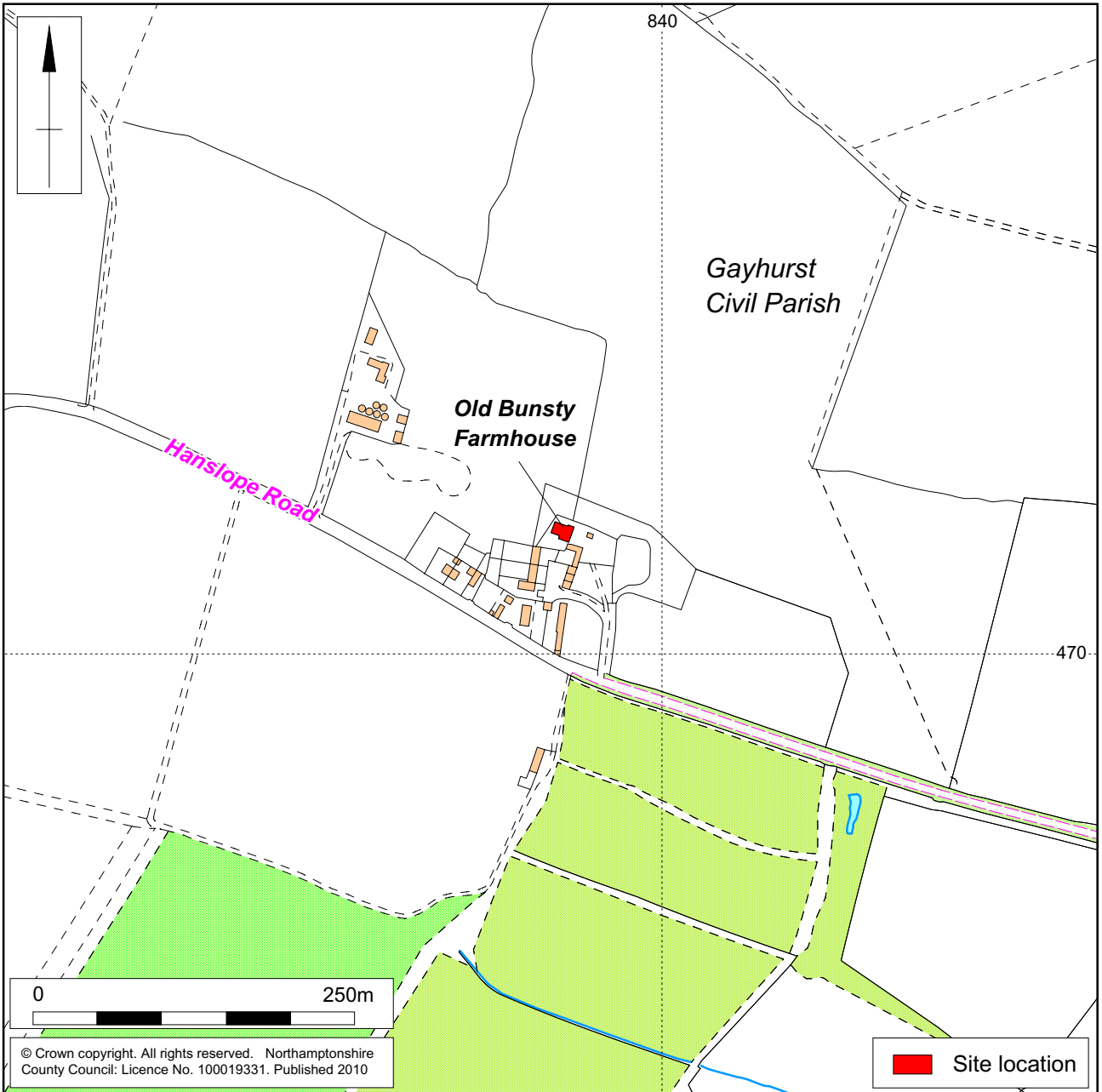
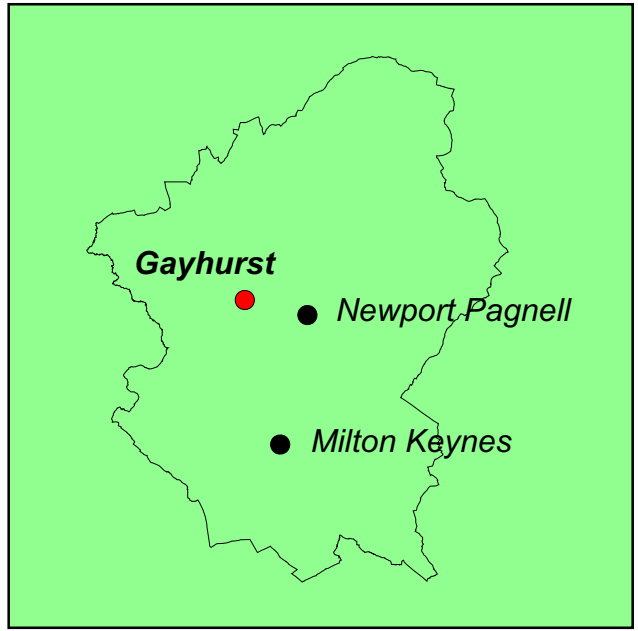
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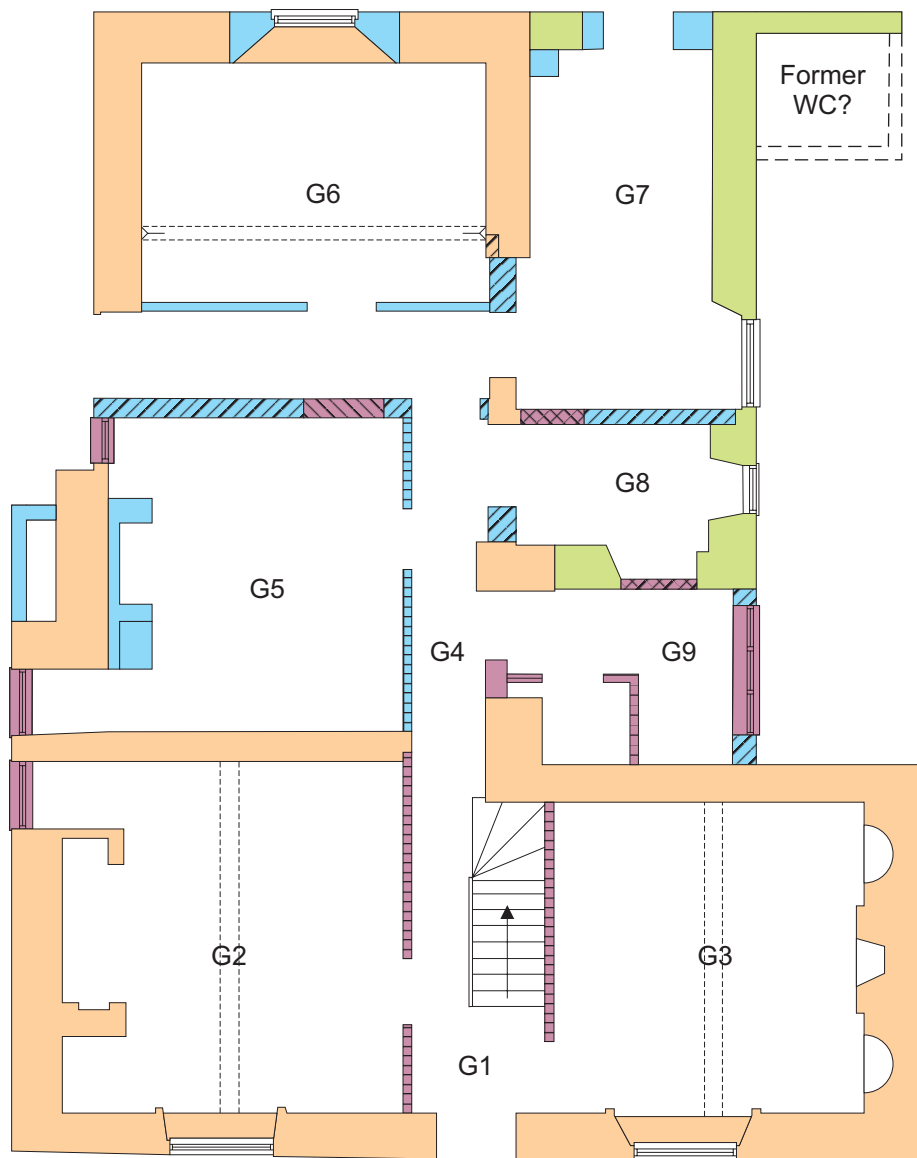
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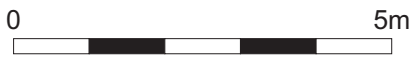
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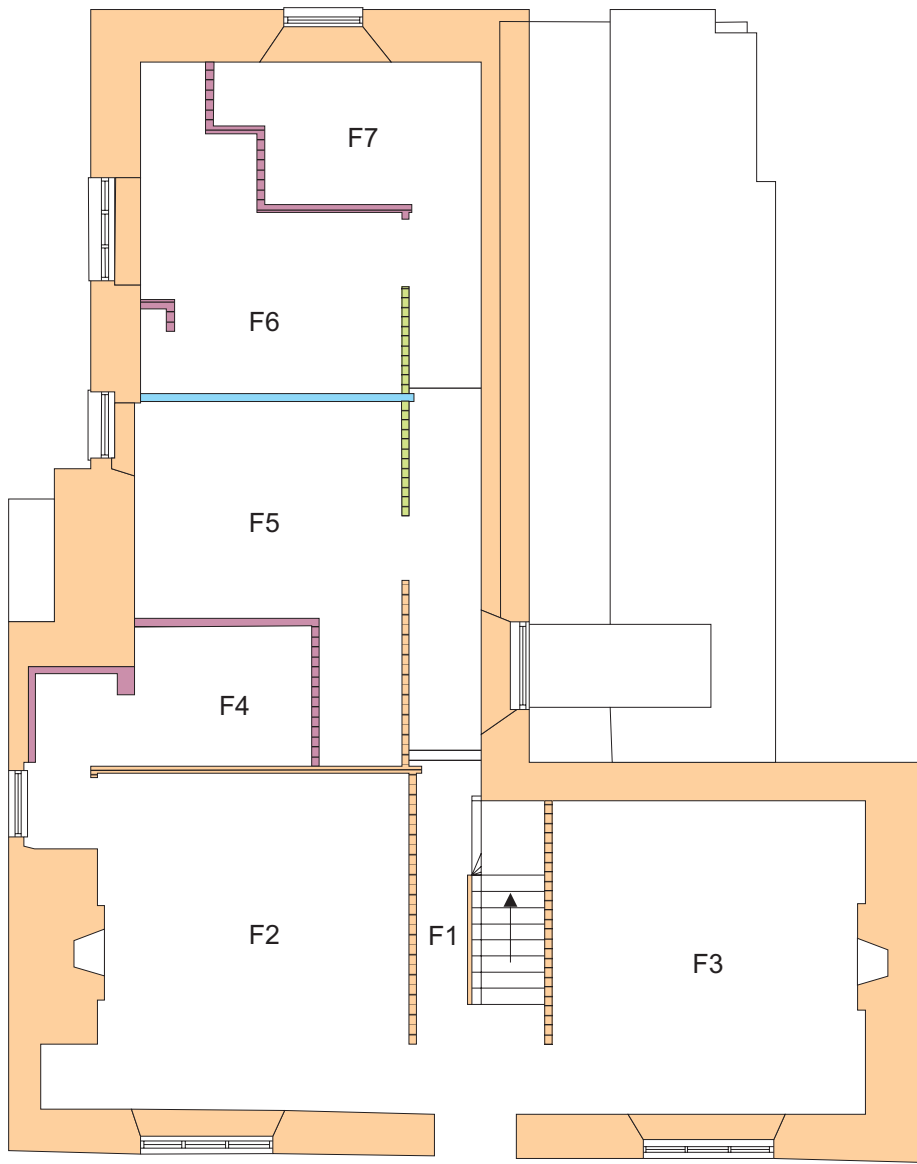
Site Location Fig 1











Ground Floor

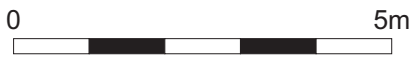
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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
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|  | Phase 2 |  | Blockings |
|  | Phase 3 |  | Blocked in Brick |
|  | Phase 4 |  | Stud Partition |





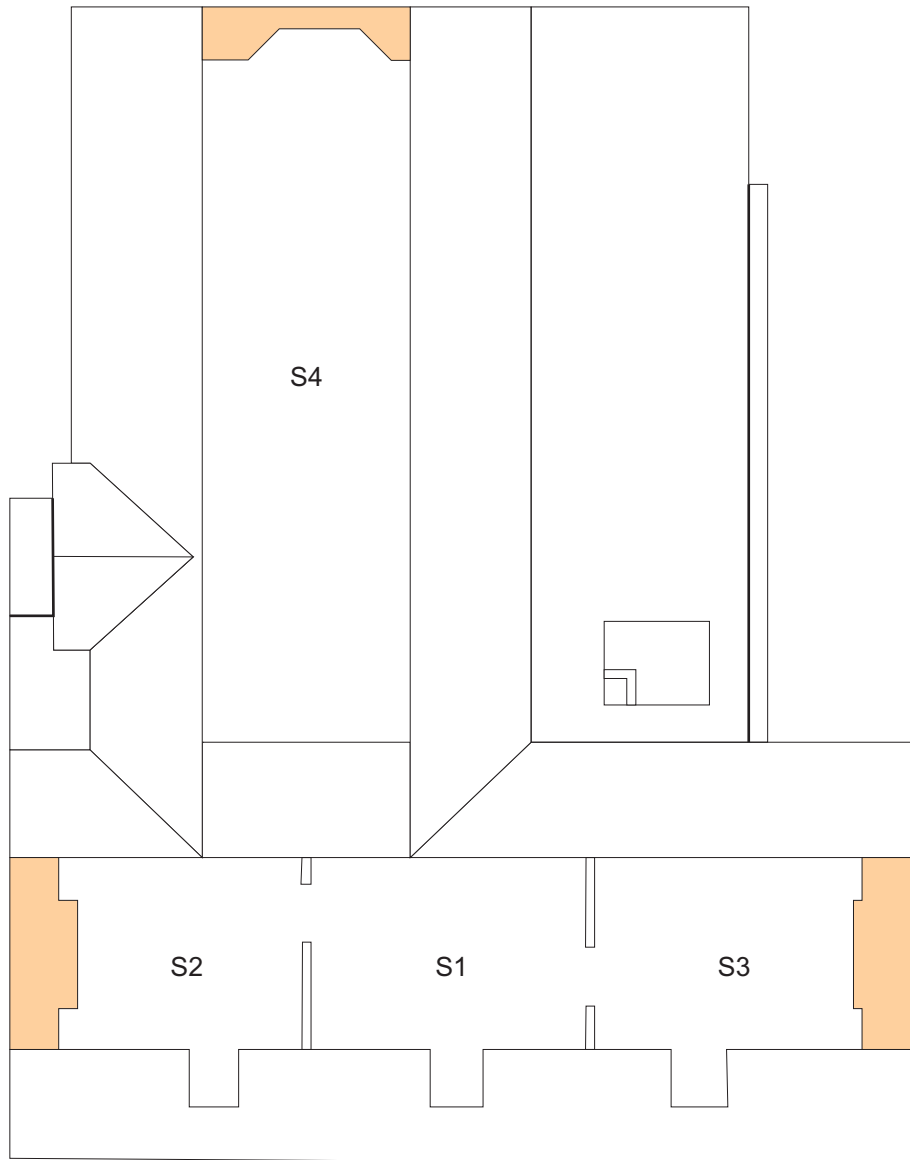
First Floor

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
|  | Phase 1 |  | Brick |
|  | Phase 2 |  | Blockings |
|  | Phase 3 |  | Blocked in Brick |
|  | Phase 4 |  | Stud Partition |











Scale 1:100

Old Bunsty Farmhouse First Floor plan Fig 3



Second Floor (Attic)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
|  | Phase 1 |  | Brick |
|  | Phase 2 |  | Blockings |
|  | Phase 3 |  | Blocked in Brick |
|  | Phase 4 |  | Stud Partition |



Scale 1:100

Old Bunsty Farmhouse Second Floor (Attic) plan Fig 4



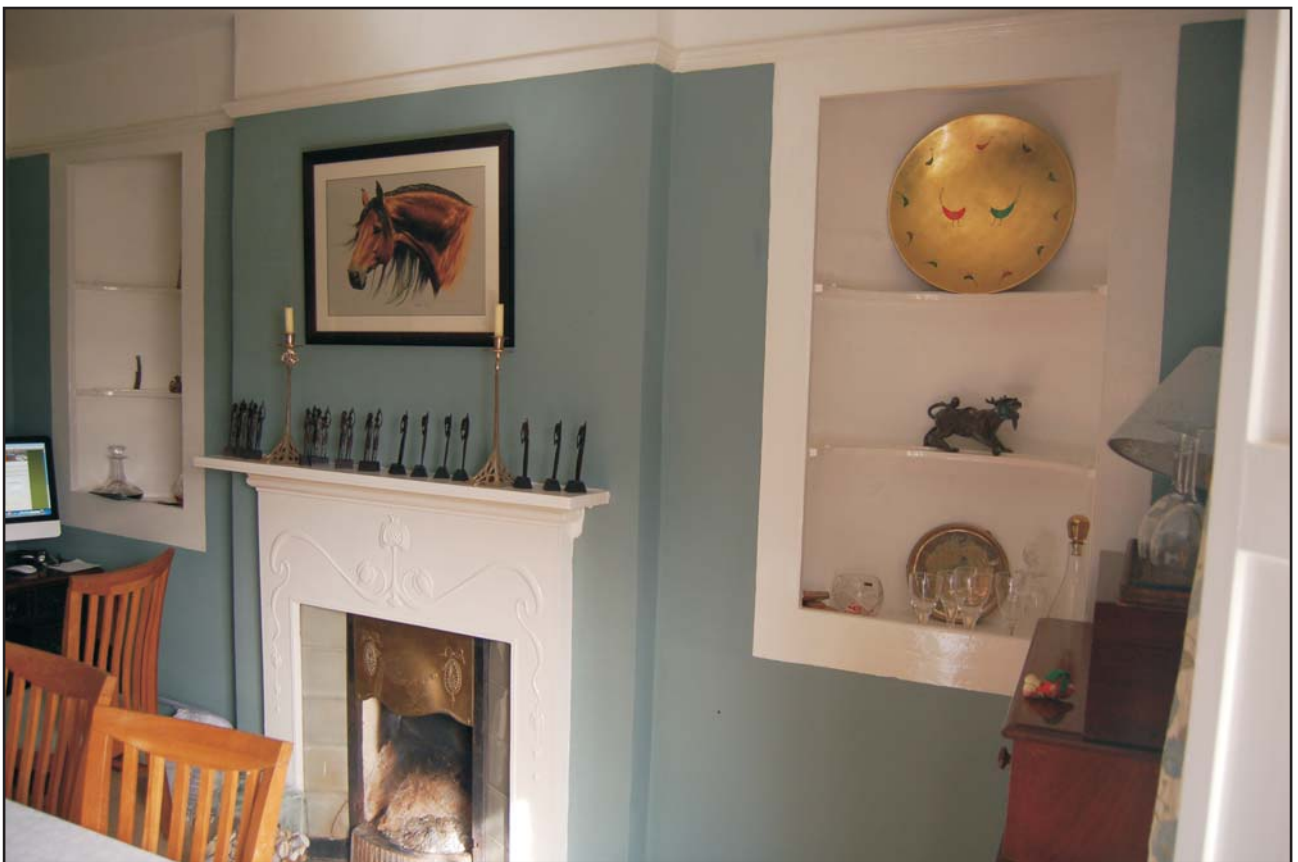
View of the entrance lobby and stairs from the front entrance Fig 5



The rebuilt inglenook fireplace in G2 Fig 6



The early sash window and shutter/boxes in G2 Fig 7



Dining room G3; note convex display niches Fig 8



Kitchen G6; the range to the right, Fig 9
former doorway to the left



Agglomeration of stonework at the Fig 10
junction of the wings



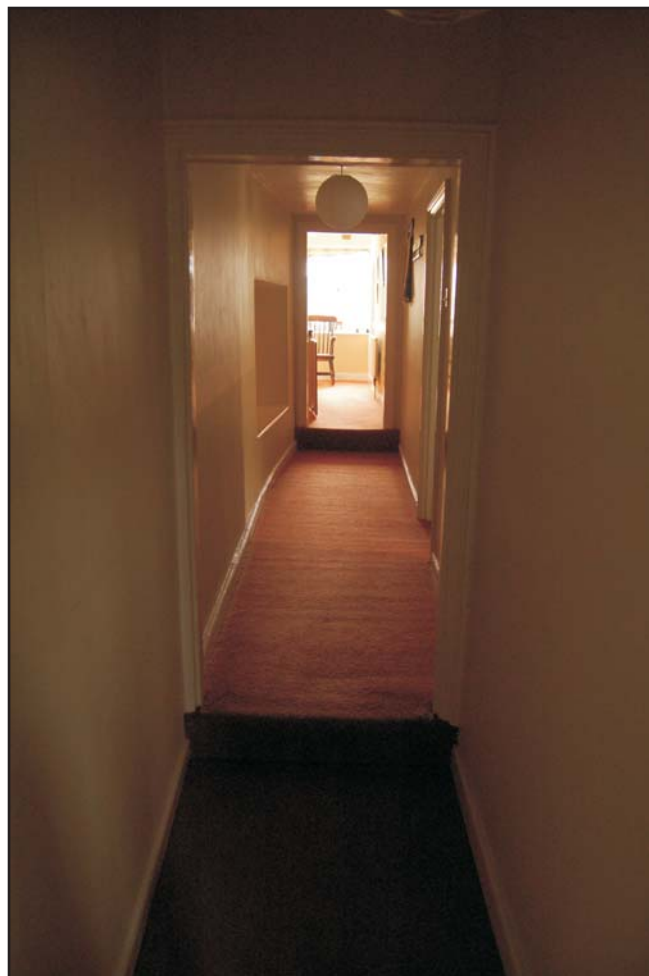
South face of the rear service wing Fig 11



Rear gable of the service wing; reduced window width at ground floor Fig 12



Cast iron fireplace in bedroom F2 Fig 13



View along corridor F1 from F7 Fig 14



View of stairs and door to second floor attic Fig 15



View along service wing roof Fig 16



Propped south purlin of service wing roof Fig 17



Propped north purlin of service wing roof Fig 18



Former yard-space, enclosed and blocked to create G9 Fig 19



View along corridor G4 at its corner; front of the house to the left Fig 20



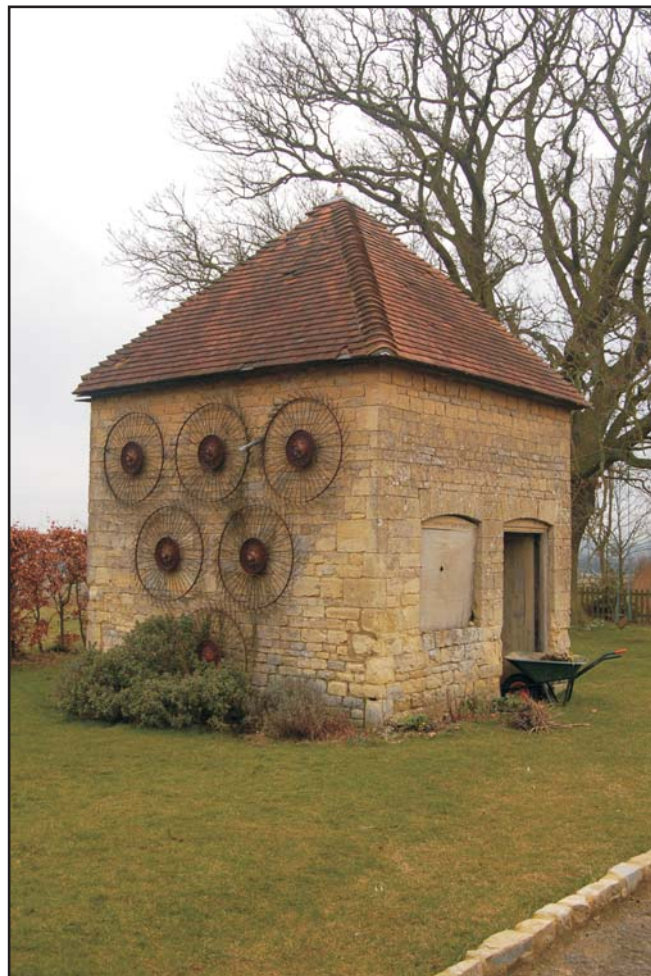
Location of possible former outside WC Fig 21



Victorian farm buildings and the farmhouse in the background Fig 22



Victorian farm buildings, looking from the farmhouse Fig 23



Listed well-house (Grade II) Fig 24



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