



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING:
THE CROOKED BILLET
OLD SHIRE LANE
HORNHILL
HERTFORDSHIRE**

on behalf of Ms Tina Matthews



Nicholas A Crank BSc AIFA

January 2005

ASC: 635/HCB/02

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	HCB	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	635
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Hornhill		
<i>Parish:</i>	Chorleywood CP		
<i>NGR:</i>	TQ 01789 92528		
<i>Present use:</i>	Disused cottage		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Demolition and replacement by a new house		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	Not known		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Three Rivers DC		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	21 st December 2004		
<i>Client:</i>	Ms Tina Matthews Cross Keys Stables Old Shire Lane Hornhill Herts SL9 0QY		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Tina Matthews		
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Internal Quality Check

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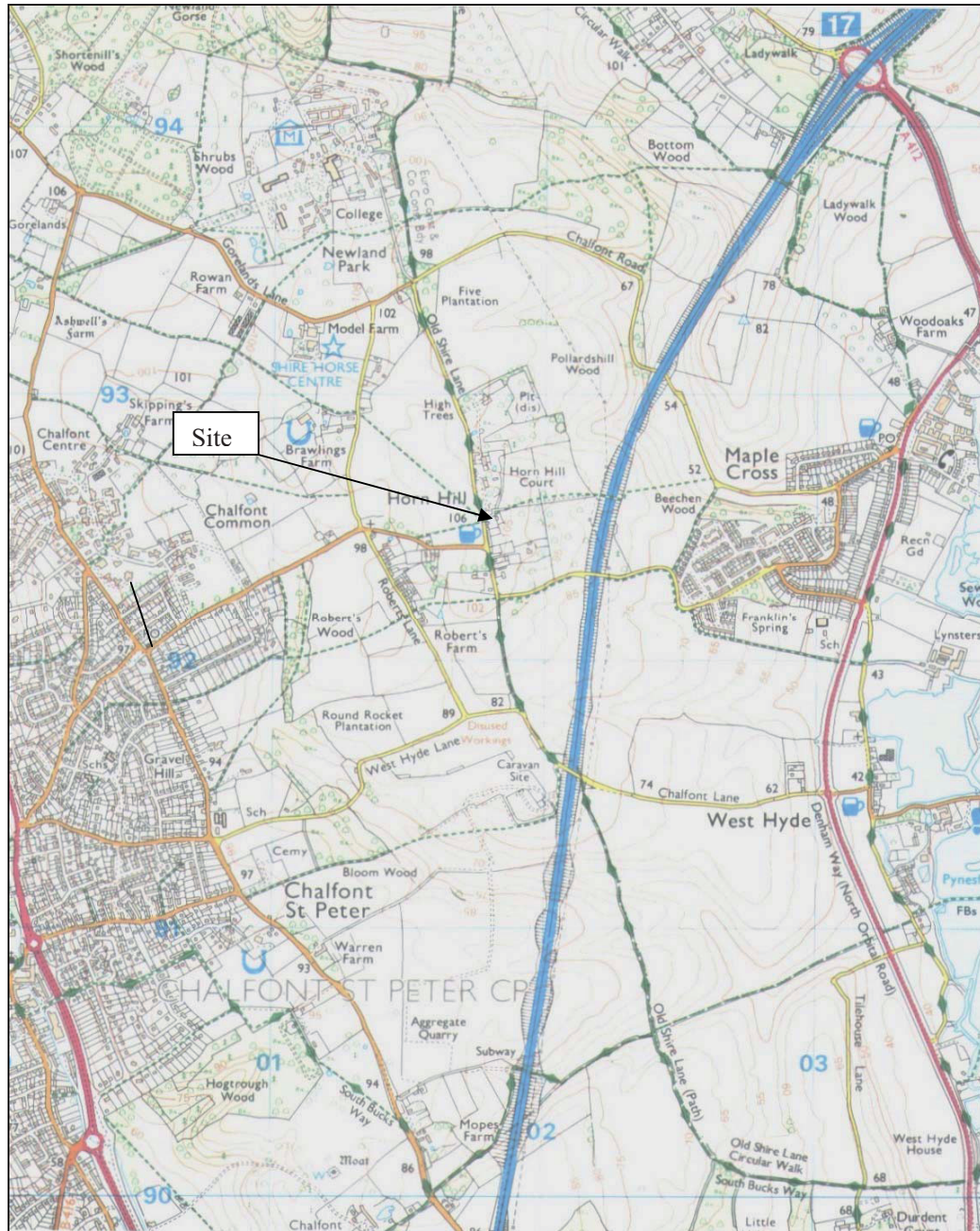


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In December 2004, a programme of historic building recording was carried out at the Crooked Billet, Old Shire Lane, Hornhill, Hertfordshire, prior to its demolition. This small 'two up, two down' brick-built dwelling was probably constructed as a two-roomed structure in the eighteenth century and later extended to its present size and layout. Externally it has been coarsely rendered largely concealing any structural detail.

1 Introduction

1.1 In December 2004 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out historic building recording of a cottage at The Crooked Billet, Old Shire Lane, Hornhill, Herts. (NGR TQ 01789 92528: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Ms Tina Matthews, and was carried out according to a brief (dated 29/11/04) prepared by the Hertfordshire County Archaeological Office (HCC CAO), and a project design prepared by ASC (Zeepvat 2004).

1.2 The building recording has been required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15* (PPG15), in response to proposals for demolition of the cottage.

1.3 *Setting*

1.3.1 Hornhill is located in south-west Hertfordshire, on the county boundary with Buckinghamshire, midway between Maple Cross and Chalfont St Peter, just to the west of the M25 (Fig. 1). The settlement is a hamlet, consisting of some older dwellings, a public house and the site located on Old Shire Lane (which marks the county boundary), with a few newer houses across the boundary to the west, along Roberts Lane.

1.3.2 The site is located near the crown of an east-facing slope, at c.100m AOD, on the east side of the lane. Soils in the area belong to the Marlow association (Soil Survey 1983, 581e): the underlying geology comprises river terrace and plateau drift. The *Crooked Billet* comprises a derelict cottage fronting Old Shire Lane.

1.3.3 The brief notes that the Crooked Billet is an early eighteenth century house and is included on the district council list of standing structures of local architectural and historical importance. The 1839 Tithe map (fig. 3) shows a structure on the site of the present property and lists it as being occupied by Peter Coker and James Humphrey and its owner as Richard Biggs. The structure indicated also appears to be divided into two parts along an east-west boundary. By the 1899 Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition map (fig. 4) the property appears to have been extended eastwards. Subsequent Ordnance Survey maps up to the present day show little discernible change in the property.

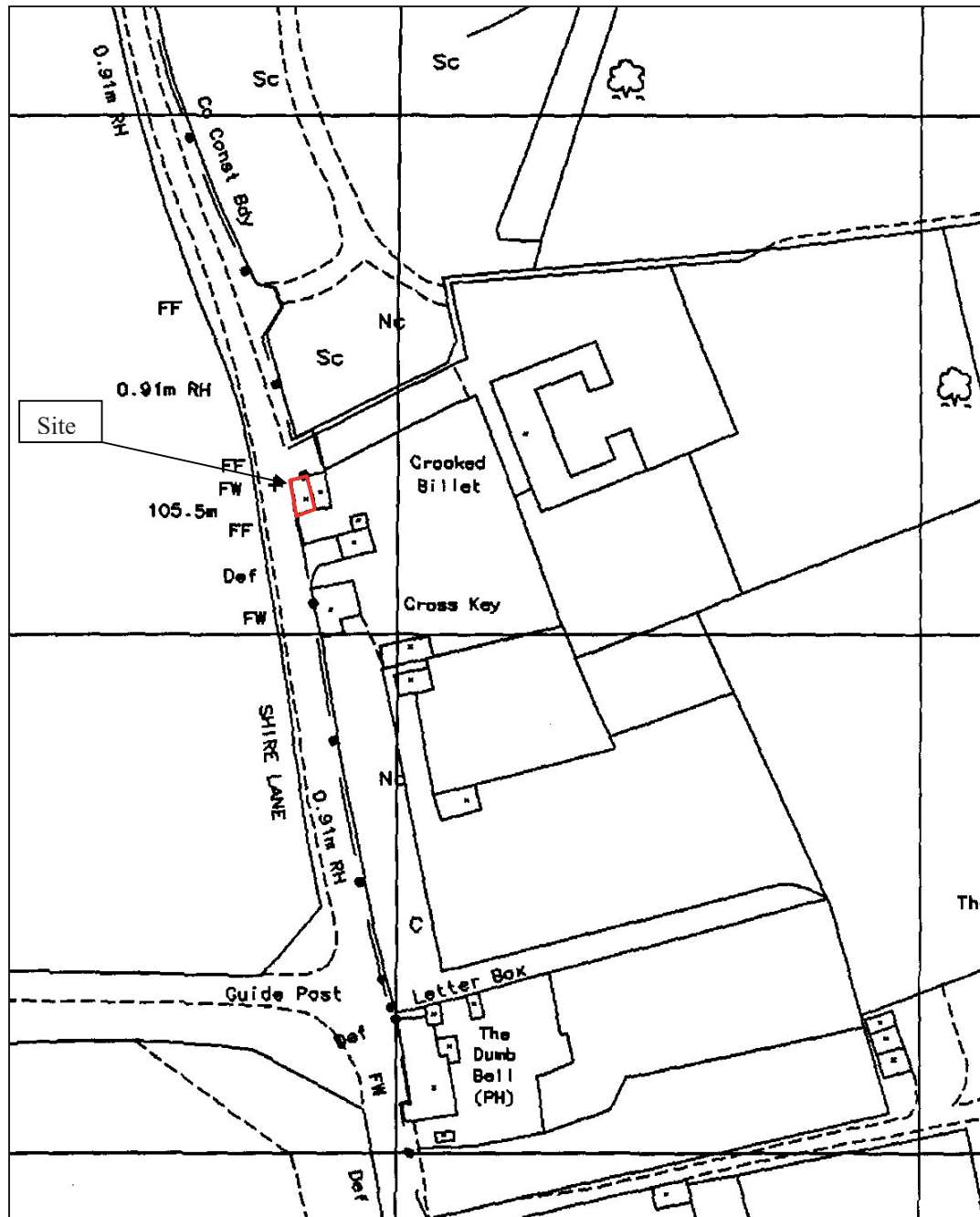


Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:1250)



Figure 3: Tithe Map 1839 (Not to scale)

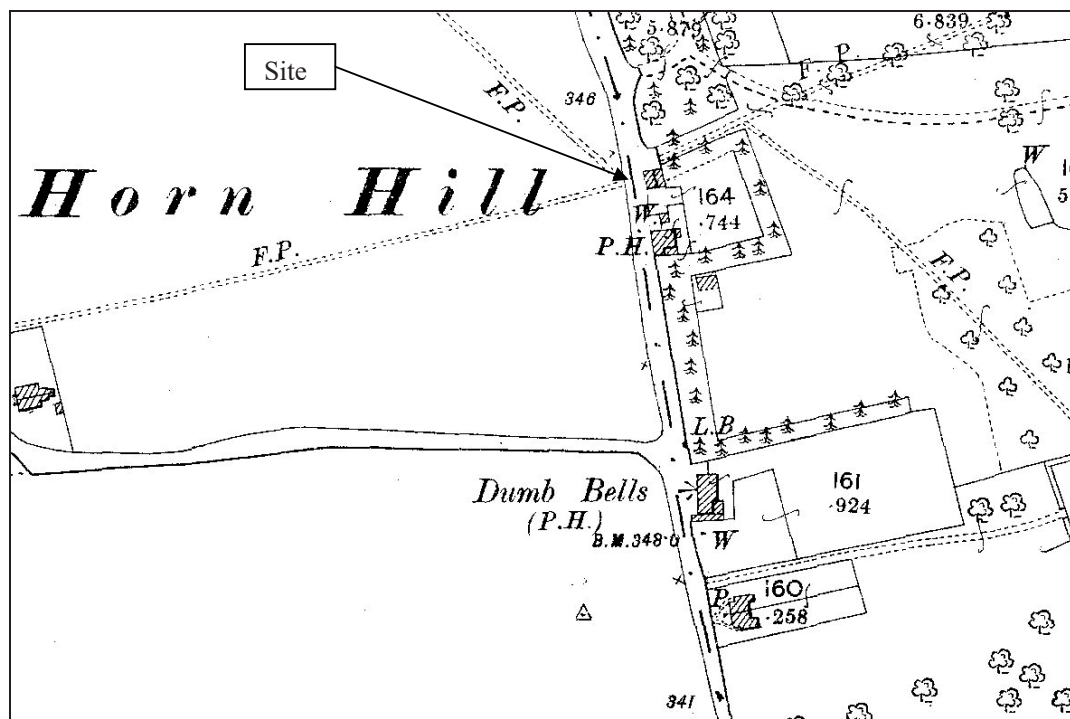


Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 1899 (25in: mile)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

In line with the requirements of the Brief (Section 3), the aims of the building recording were:

- To compile a record of the structure identified for demolition, with appropriate analysis and interpretation of that structure;
- to provide a review of the local and regional historical context of the structure recorded by the project. This will be adequately detailed to place the findings of the recording in their context;
- to produce a high-quality, fully integrated archive suitable for long-term deposition, in order to ‘preserve by record’ the building in its current form, prior to demolition.

2.2 Methods

In line with the requirements of the Brief (Section 4), the survey followed the standards, conventions and specifications defined by English Heritage (RCHME 1996) up to Level 3.

2.3 Standards

The survey conforms to the Brief, the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists’ *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England’s *Recording Historic Buildings: a Descriptive Specification*, 3rd Edition (RCHME 1996), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC’s own *Operations Manual*.

3 Description

3.1 *General*

The Crooked Billet comprises a two-storey brick built detached cottage. The building measures 6.65 x 4.25m overall, and rises to 3.70m at the eaves, and *c.*5.5m to the ridge. In plan it is essentially a 'two up, two down' cottage with a hipped, tiled roof, single chimney stack and no cellar.

3.2 *South Elevation* (Plate 4)

The south elevation is coarse rendered and bears the scars of a single-storey extension, now removed. A plywood door with wood frame and lintel is set into the west side. To the right of this is a large sideways-sliding window with a wood frame, lintel and sill. Above, on the first floor is another smaller metal-framed casement window with a moulded wood lintel and tile sill. A small square patch of unpainted render to the right of this may be a blocked window. In addition the presence of brick dentilling at the eaves is worthy of note.

3.3 *West Elevation* (Plate 1)

This elevation is also coarse rendered and is pierced by four windows, two above and two below, all with tile sills. The ground floor windows are large identical 4 pane casements with metal frames, the southern one having a visible wood lintel. The first floor windows are smaller metal-framed casements. The positioning of the four windows is asymmetrical. The single brick chimney stack is on this side of the ridge offset to the north, two non-identical clay chimney pots are present.

3.4 *East Elevation* (Plate 3)

This forms the rear of the building and bears the scar of a single storey extension along its length, the first floor level being coarse rendered. A softwood door with wood frame and lintel is set into the north end. Adjacent to the south of the door is a small square blocked window. A single long and narrow metal framed window with secondary internal glazing and a tile sill is set into the south half of the first floor. Brick dentilling is again present at the eaves.

3.5 *North Elevation* (Plate 2)

Again coarse rendered this elevation has no features of note except two windows. The ground floor window is set in the west side and is fixed with a wood frame and lintel and a tile sill. Slightly off centre the first floor window is a metal framed casement with a tile sill and internal secondary glazing.

3.6 *Ground Floor* (Fig. 5)

Room 1 (Plates 5 & 6)

Size: 2.73 x 3.77m

Function: Kitchen?

Description: Accessed via the door at the rear of the building (east elevation), this room is dominated by a substantial brick fireplace and chimney breast on the south wall. The fireplace and chimney breast appears to have two phases. The original fireplace and chimney breast being replaced but retained with a later fireplace and chimney built against it. This later fireplace houses a solid fuel stove, a cast iron decorative overmantel is now removed and was leant against the west wall at the time of the survey. The ceiling was plasterboard with east-west aligned sawn timber joists supporting the floor of Room 4.

The walls are a mixture of bare brick and plaster, the floor is concrete. No skirtings are present other than around the fireplace. The room is devoid of other decorative features. Apertures to the east and west sides of the fireplace open on to the under stairs space and Room 2 respectively. A butt joint is clearly visible in the brickwork on the east wall of Room 1 where it meets Room 2 and the under stairs space, suggesting that Rooms 2 and 3 (above) are later additions.

Room 2 (Plates 7 & 8)

Size: 3.28 x 3.88m

Function: Living room?

Description: Accessed from Room 1 or an external door in the southwest corner this room has no features of note. Its walls are bare brick and plaster with no skirting, the floor concrete. A modern brick gas fire surround stands against the north wall and a triple arched partition in the same style and materials separates the room from the stairs and under stairs. The ceiling was plasterboard with north-south aligned sawn timber joists supporting the floor of Room 3.

In the southeast corner of the room a staircase consisting of 8 steps curves up to the first floor. The staircase lacked a handrail, and both it and the landing were lined with 20th century fibreboard false panelling.

3.7 *First Floor* (Fig. 5)

Room 3 (Plates 9 & 10)

Size: 3.15 x 3.25m

Function: Bedroom?

Description: Accessed via a plank boarded door in the northeast corner this roughly square room has a hardboard east wall separating it from the stairwell. Plain skirtings are present on the north and south walls, the floor is boarded with east-west planks (0.13m width) and sags noticeably in the centre. The north, south and west walls are plastered but unpainted. The ceiling was plasterboard with predominantly north-south aligned sawn timber joists.

Room 4 (Plates 11 & 12)

Size: 2.7 x 3.9m

Function: Bedroom?

Description: Accessed from the small landing this rectangular room features the continuation of the brick chimney breast on its south wall. Again as in Room 1 the chimney appears to have a two phase construction with the later chimney built outwards onto the earlier one. The wall thickness is reduced in this room and strengthening brick piers are spaced along the walls and in the corners. A plain skirting runs around the larger part of the room, the floor is boarded with north-south planks (0.14m width). The north, west and east walls are plastered and painted, the south wall and chimney breast are painted brick. The ceiling was plasterboard with predominantly east-west aligned sawn timber joists.

3.8 *Attic & Roof*

An open hatch above the first floor landing leads to the attic, which was not entered for reasons of safety. The interior of the roof was lined with felt thus restricting its inspection. The only timbers visible comprised a single ring of purlins with diagonal braces.



Plate 1: West elevation



Plate 2: North elevation



Plate 3: East elevation



Plate 4: South elevation



Plate 5: Room 1, looking north west



Plate 6: Room 1 fireplace



Plate 7: Room 2, looking south east



Plate 8: Room 2, looking north east



Plate 9: Room 3, looking north west



Plate 10: Room 3, looking south east



Plate 11: Room 4, looking south east



Plate 12: Room 4, looking north west

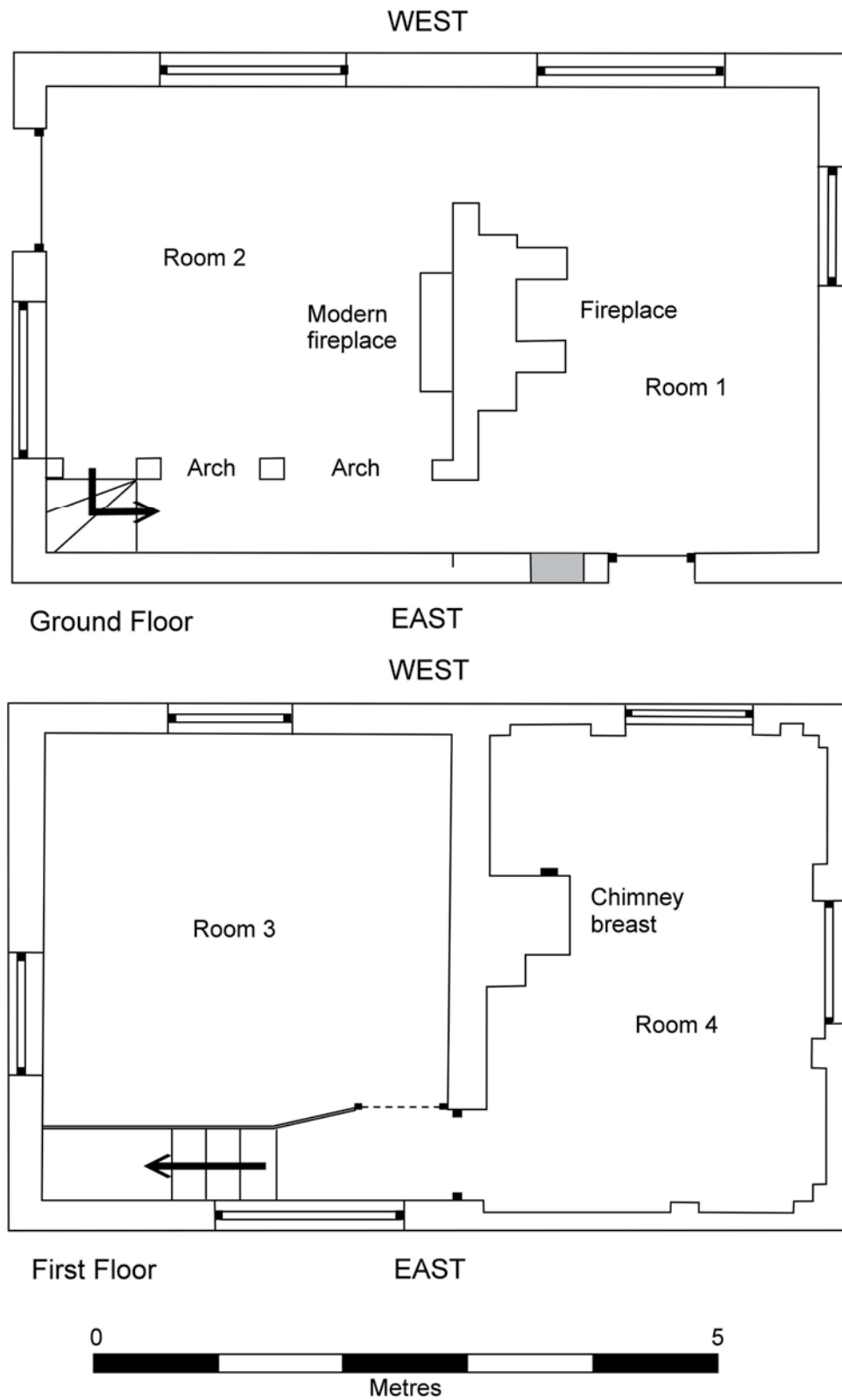


Figure 5: Floor Plans (scale 1:50)

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The available historical and documentary evidence for both the hamlet of Hornhill and The Crooked Billet itself is rather sparse. However, the tithe map of 1839 shows that the cottage was in existence by this time, showing the property as a single unit with an east-west division. The tithe apportionment lists the property as being tenanted by two individuals. It is therefore suggested that although consisting of a single structure, the cottage was probably two small semi-detached units during this period. Later Ordnance Survey maps indicate that the cottage was further extended to the east during the late 19th century, at which time it may have become integrated as a single dwelling.
- 5.2 External structural evidence has been masked by the extensive coarse rendering in addition to the scars left by modern extensions/‘lean tos’ on its south and east elevations. Internally some phasing can be distinguished by the presence of a butt joint in the brickwork of the east wall of Room 1 and the presence of strengthening brick piers in Room 4. This evidence and the difference in alignment of ceiling joists between the rooms suggests that the southern part of the cottage is a later addition and corresponds with the limited historical evidence above.
- 5.3 In the light of the historical and structural evidence, albeit limited, it seems reasonable to conclude that The Crooked Billet began life as a small ‘one up, one down’ cottage perhaps intended to house a worker on one of the nearby farms or estates in the early 18th century. It then appears to have been later extended southwards initially forming two separate dwellings for single estate workers, until in the later 19th century the cottage was remodelled into a single dwelling, assuming roughly its present form. Either at this time or later during the 20th century, small single storey extensions (now demolished) were added to the south and east elevations, perhaps bringing with them some plumbing and bathroom facilities.

6 Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Ms Tina Matthews for commissioning and funding this survey, and for her hospitality. The writer would also like to acknowledge the staff of Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, and the input of Mr Jonathan Smith of HCC CAO who acted as curatorial officer. The survey was conducted by the writer, and managed by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

7 Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Report
4. Survey notes and drawings
5. List of photographs/slides
6. Colour slides
7. B/W prints
8. B/W negatives
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Three Rivers Museum.

8 References

HCC CAO 2004 *Design Brief for Historic Building Recording: The Crooked Billet, Old Shire Lane, Maple Cross*

IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.

IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.

IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings)*.

RCHME 1996 *Recording Historic Buildings: a Descriptive Specification* (3rd Edition).

Zeepvat, B 2004 *The Crooked Billet, Old Shire Lane, Hornhill, Hertfordshire: Project Design for Historic Building Recording* (ASC: 635/HCB/01)

Maps

The following cartographic sources were consulted as part of this investigation:

1839 Tithe Map, Rickmansworth, Ref: OFF.ACC.550

1839 Tithe Apportionment, Ref: DSA.4.80.1

1899 Ordnance Survey 25in, sheet XLIII.14

1914 Ordnance Survey 25in, sheet XLIII.14

1974 Ordnance Survey 1:2500, sheet TQ0192

Appendix 1: List of Photographs

No.	View	Description
1	E	W Elevation
2	S	N Elevation
3	S	N Elevation
4	W	E Elevation
5	N	S Elevation
6	N	S Elevation
7	N	S Elevation: Detail of window moulded lintel & brick dentilling
8	NE	Room 1
9	SW	Room 1
10	NW	Room 1
11	SE	Room 1
12	S	Room 1: Fireplace
13	S	Room 1: Fireplace
14	S	Room 1: Fireplace
15	W	Room 1: Cast Iron Overmantel
16	E	Room 1: Ceiling Joists
17	NW	Room 2
18	SE	Room 2
19	NE	Room 2
20	SW	Room 2
21	NE	Room 2: Fireplace detail
22	NE	Room 2: Partition detail
23	S	Room 2: Under stairs
24	S	Looking down the stairs
25	NW	Room 3
26	SE	Room 3
27	NE	Room 3
28	SW	Room 3
29	NW	Room 3: Ceiling
30	NW	Room 4
31	SE	Room 4
32	NE	Room 4
33	SW	Room 4
34	S	Room 4: Chimney breast
35	W	Room 4: Ceiling
36	SW	Attic
37	NW	Attic
38	SE	General exterior view
39	SE	General exterior view
40	SE	General exterior view
41	W	E Elevation: Brick dentilling at eaves
42	SW	General exterior view
43	SW	General exterior view



Shot 1



Shot 2



Shot 3



Shot 4



Shot 5



Shot 6



Shot 7



Shot 8



Shot 9



Shot 10



Shot 11



Shot 12



Shot 13



Shot 14



Shot 15



Shot 16



Shot 17



Shot 18



Shot 19



Shot 20



Shot 21



Shot 22



Shot 23



Shot 24



Shot 25



Shot 26



Shot 27



Shot 28



Shot 29



Shot 30



Shot 31



Shot 32



Shot 33



Shot 34



Shot 35



Shot 36



Shot 37



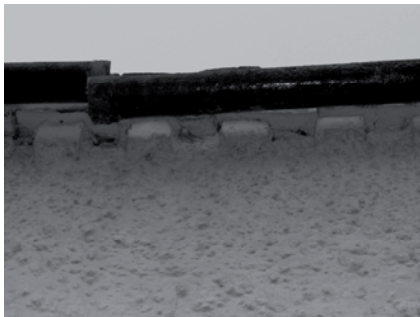
Shot 38



Shot 39



Shot 40



Shot 41



Shot 42



Shot 43

Appendix 2: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: The Crooked Billet, Old Shire Lane, Maple Cross, Herts		
County: Hertfordshire	District: Three Rivers	
Village/Town: Hornhill	Parish: Chorleywood CP	
Planning application reference: Not known		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Ms Tina Matthews Cross Keys Stables Old Shire Lane Hornhill Herts SL9 0QY Tel: 01494 873218		
Nature of application: Demolition of existing cottage		
Present land use: Disused cottage		
Size of application area: n/a	Size of area investigated: n/a	
NGR (to 8 figures): TQ 01789 92528	Site code: HCB04	
Site director/Organization: Nick Crank / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Building recording		
Date of work:	Start: 21/12/04	Finish: 21/12/04
Curating museum: Three Rivers		
Related SMR nos: N/A	Periods represented: Post Medieval / Modern	
Relevant previous summaries/reports: N/A		
Summary of fieldwork results: In December 2004, a programme of historic building recording was carried out at the Crooked Billet, Old Shire Lane, Hornhill, Hertfordshire, prior to its demolition. This small 'two up, two down' brick-built dwelling was probably constructed as a two-roomed structure in the eighteenth century and later extended to its present size and layout. Externally it has been coarsely rendered largely concealing any structural detail.		
Author: Nick Crank	Date: 6 th January 2005	