

Building recording at Riverside House, Holt Fleet, Worcestershire



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Summary

Building recording was required to meet a planning condition relating to the demolition and replacement of Riverside House, House Fleet, Worcestershire.

A brief for the works was prepared by the Planning and Advisory Section of Worcestershire County Council. This specified a survey to English Heritage standards requiring a photographic record of the exterior and interior of the building and annotation of existing survey drawings. This produced an archive of Riverside House before any changes were made to the building.

Historical research and synthesis was also carried out. Original records relating to Riverside House were studied at Worcestershire Archives along with historic maps and trade directories. Digitised historic mapping and other online sources were accessed.

The development of the building was reconstructed and illustrated on phased ground plans and elevations. These have been reproduced at the end of the report along with relevant photographs.

The settlement of Holt Fleet lies on the River Severn. Prior to 1828 ferry operated but in that year it was replaced by a bridge built by the engineer Thomas Telford. Construction of the bridge along with the landing stages brought an increase in commerce to Holt Fleet, and the majority of the buildings in the settlement were built subsequently including Riverside House which was situated on a lane which directly linked the landing stage and the bridge.

Riverside House initially comprised a house with a warehouse to the rear. The house was simple and of modest proportion, being three rooms on the ground floor and two on the first floor. All of these were consistent with domestic functions. The warehouse to the rear was accessible from the house but also had two doors onto the lane to the west. The configuration of the windows also showed that the building faced west. It had two rooms on both ground and first floors, and the presence of vent holes both above the warehouse and the house is evidence that loft spaces were used for storage.

The building was subsequently extended in four separate places. One of these was carried out before 1884 and the three subsequent extensions all dated to the 20th century and included a possible shop and a workshop.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

Recording of a historic building was undertaken at Riverside House, Holt Fleet, Worcestershire (NGR SO 82420,63430). It was commissioned by Queenie Cheng on behalf of her client Mrs Sharon Simpson Stern (the Client), who proposes the demolition of Riverside House and the construction of a replacement dwelling. A planning application for this work has been submitted to and approved by Wychavon District Council (reference number 15/00236) subject to conditions including provision of historic building recording.

The building is an undesignated heritage asset registered with the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER; WSM 38857).

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council (WCC 2015) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2015).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (ClfA 2014) and *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WSM67197.

2 Aims

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists defines the aims of building recording as 'a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building' (*Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*, ClfA 2014a).

The aims and scope of the project, as detailed in the Brief (Section 4), are as follows:

- To provide a descriptive and illustrative account and interpretation of the building including discussion of its local, regional and national significance.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Timothy Cornah (BA (hons.), MSc); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.)).

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.3 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

- 1840 Tithe Map
- 1884-5 Ordnance Survey Map
- 1903 Ordnance Survey Map
- 1927 Ordnance Survey Map

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2015).

Fieldwork was undertaken on the 21st of September 2015. The site reference number and site code is WSM48406.

Building recording consisted of a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of the buildings, analysis of their development, annotation of existing survey drawings and measured survey. All photographs were taken with photographic scales visible in each shot. The photographic survey was carried out with a Sony α350 digital SLR camera. All photographs were recorded on a pro-forma Photographic Record Sheet. Annotation of existing ground plans and elevations, and completion of pro-forma Building Record, complemented the photographic record.

The project conformed to the specification for a level 3 survey as defined in the English Heritage document *Understanding historic buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (EH 2006). This level of survey is described as ‘an analytical record’ comprising of ‘an introductory description followed by a systematic account of the buildings origins, development and use’ (EH 2006). This required the following elements of survey.

Survey and drawings

- Plans of all main floors and elevations as existing (provided by client).
- Measured drawings showing the form of any architectural or functional detail not more readily captured by photography.

Photography

- Overall appearance of rooms and circulation areas.
- Detailed coverage of the building’s external appearance.
- Any detail, structural or decorative, relevant to the building’s design, development and use, which does not show on general photographs.

3.5 Building analysis

Analysis of the building was based on the study of the photographic record, building recording forms, annotated drawings. It was also informed by the documentary sources listed above. This allowed plans to be drawn up showing the structural development of the building.

The building as recorded is depicted in Plates 1 to 37. Ground plans and phase plans have been reproduced as Figures 6-7.

3.6 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. The only caveat to this is that the ground floor of the Phase 3 building was not accessed and modern coverings in the first floor of the Phase 1 Warehouse obscured the original materials and did not allowing a complete inspection.

4 Context

Riverside House is located immediately next the River Severn, on its eastern bank. The bedrock geology is of Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation with superficial deposits of Power House Terrace Deposits.

Worcestershire Historic Environment Record, records a number of undated crop marks within 500m of Riverside House. One crop mark has been dated to the Romano –British period (WSM04541). Evidence for archaeology relating to the medieval period is limited within the area,

with only a remnant of ridge and furrow being recorded (WSM15151) and a possible fishery (WSM23807).

The buildings in Holt Fleet largely date to the 17th to 19th centuries. Six are listed buildings whilst a further nine historic buildings are recorded on the Historic Environment Record. The earliest building is the remains of Rose Cottage (WSM20260) which is 17th century. Apart from a single 19th century farmstead, two 19th century cottages and a 19th century lodge, it is noticeable that all the other recorded buildings owe their presence to the river and the bridge. These are buildings such as Lock House (WSM22796), Wharf Inn (WSM22816), Toll House (WSM22815), Holt Bridge Tollhouse (WSM22950) and of course the bridge itself (WSM38857) which is Grade II listed. On the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884, it is noticeable that there two landing stages depicted on either side of the river to the east of the bridge. The stage on the northern side accessed the road and bridge via a track which ran under the bridge and past Riverside House, making it an ideal spot for the unloading and storage of river borne goods.

Within the 20th century, the bridge was widened to allow further traffic and by the Second World War, it was seen as an important strategic point. This is reflected by the presence of an extant field gun emplacement below the river (WSM24910). The bridge itself also had a number of defences such as road blocks and flame fougasse which no longer remain. Further to this, the home guard had a headquarters near Rose Cottage as well as infantry trenches and a Spigot Mortar range.

5 The building

5.1 Historical information

Riverside Cottage is first seen on the 1884-5 Ordnance Survey map, Figure 3, but is absent from the 1840 Tithe Map, Figure 2. The building depicted in 1884-5 shows both Phases 1 and 2 as discussed below, as well as a small addition on the north-east corner of the house which no longer remained. The building remained unchanged at least until the time of the 1927 Ordnance Survey map, Figure 5.

No owners of this building are listed within the 19th or 20th century trade directories.

5.2 Building development

5.2.1 Phase 1: Mid 19th century

The initial phase of this building consisted of two elements, the first being a house aligned broadly east to west, Plate 1, and a north south range which appears to have been a storage building or warehouse, Plate 2 and Plate 3. The house has a centrally aligned door which is flanked by decorative wooden pilasters and a pediment above, Plate 4. The construction style visible in the front of the house of stretcher bond brick work a header course every fourth continues throughout this phase, as does the window style of low arch lintels. All of the brickwork is bonded with a lime mortar. Also visible from Plate 1 are three chimney pots on the eastern stack, whereas there are only two on the western stack. In front of the house was a small walled garden which is shown on the 1884 map, though many of these walls had been subsequently replaced, Plate 5.

Internally the house consisted of two rooms on the ground floor, bisected by a hall and staircase which accessed the rear of the building and the first floor, Plate 6, Plate 7 and Plate 8. The room to the west of the stairs had a fireplace which had a low arch lintel, supported by a steel bar. This room was originally split by a dividing wall with the smaller room being part of the north to south aligned warehouse range. However, this smaller room had no direct access to the rest of the warehouse, or an external access so must have been entered from the house. The function of this smaller room remains unclear, but the larger room was probably a living room. The living room was spanned by two chamfered floor beams, latitudinal to the house which were of a hard wood, either oak or elm, Plate 9 and Plate 10.

To the east of the hall was a further room, also furnished with fire place, though substantially remodelled at a later as the brick coursing is inconsistent with the rest of the phase, Plate 11 and

Plate 12. It was also bonded with a cement mortar and reduced in depth, as seen by the brick supports holding the first floor chimney breast above. It is probable that the chimney originally carried two flues from the ground floor to the roof as the chimney stack has three ceramic pots. It is possible that there were other features such as a bread oven alongside the fireplace within this room which may account for this anomaly. This would suggest that this room was a kitchen. No original floor structures remained visible within this room.

The first floor of the house had a similar arrangement in that it was split by a hall and staircase, Plate 13, with rooms to the east and west. The room to the east was furnished with a fireplace, and is likely to have been a bedroom, Plate 14. To the west was a further room, also furnished by a fireplace and was probably also a bedroom, Plate 15. What remains unclear at this point is where the walls original to the southern end of the warehouse range were located on the first floor, as this area has been changed in Phase 4. Whether there was originally first floor access to the warehouse from the house is unclear.

The ceramic tile roof of the house was supported by two King Post trusses, which were built of a hard wood, probably oak, Plate 16. These in turn supported purlins, common rafters and a ridge board. These roof trusses were carpentered using traditional methods. The timbers were initially converted using both hewing and pit sawing. The joints are scribed and marked with carpenters marks, so these trusses were made specifically for this building. The carpenters mark shown in Plate 17 is an "X" made with red chalk or ink, as opposed to the more traditional chisel cut numbering system.

The tie beams of the two roof trusses had two longitudinal beams jointed into them, Plate 16. It is probable that a lath and plaster ceiling was originally attached to the base of these. The longitudinal beams are of surprising width and depth considering that they did not support a floor within the roof space. It is possible that the roof space was used for storage right the way through above both the house and warehouse. This is supported by ventilation holes into the roof space on the western gable of the house, the northern gable of the warehouse and the intermediate wall within the warehouse, Plate 18, Plate 19 and Plate 3. Apart from the intermediate wall, the roof space of the house and warehouse were one open space.

The warehouse was of two rooms on each of the ground and first floors. On the ground floor, the room immediately to the north of the house was accessed by two doors on both the eastern and west, Plate 20 and Plate 21. It had no access to the room directly to the north, this having had further doors on its eastern and western sides and was the larger of the two rooms, Plate 22 and Plate 23. This room had two latitudinal chamfered hardwood floor joists surviving, which was also converted using pit sawing. There was no obvious function for either of these rooms, but were clearly not domestic as they contained no provision for heating. Both of these rooms appear to have been lit only by windows facing west onto the road. This facing of the building suggests it looks towards the track and landing jetties by the river.

The two rooms of the first floor, Plate 24, Plate 25 and Plate 26, have windows that similarly face west, and are also of unknown function but warehousing and storage seems likely. These rooms were covered by modern finishes so much of the original structure of the building could not be determined. What is clear is that there was a brick dividing wall between these rooms which extended through to roof level. It was not possible to determine the original access between these rooms and the house within this phase. It was also not possible to determine how these spaces were accessed from the ground floor.

The roof space above the warehouse was supported by the intermediate brick wall and two further King Post trusses of the same style, materials and techniques as those above the house. The tie beam of the truss above the northern room had mortices for individual floor joists, further suggesting the roof spaces were usable for a function such as storage, Plate 27. The tie beam has also been whitewashed above and below this former floor. How these spaces were accessed originally was unclear.

5.2.2 Phase 2 mid-19th century to 1884

This phase consists of one single building which was a single pitch roofed lean-to on the north eastern side of the house, Plate 28. The walls are brick built with a ceramic tile roof. The roof structure was not visible. The walls were brick built with alternate stretcher and header bonds, though not in a regular pattern. No original windows were visible, but a blocked door can be seen accessing the exterior of the building to the east, Plate 29.

The original function of this room is not immediately obvious as it has no original features remaining, but it certainly linked the rear of the house to the warehouse. It was dated based on that fact that it butted the house and warehouse as well as the fact that it is visible on the 1884 map.

5.2.3 Phase 3 Post 1927 to mid 20th century

This phase is a two storey building on the eastern end of the house, that was originally open at ground floor level, as seen by wide arches at both its northern and southern end, Plate 30, Plate 31 and Plate 32, though were later blocked. It was brick built with a stretcher bond pattern. Its original roof structure did not remain as the second floor had been replaced in the middle of the 20th century with wood and asbestos walled structure. This also had a low pitch corrugated asbestos roof. The original function of the first floor may have been storage related but the second floor, certainly during its rebuild, was a roadside shop and this function also seems likely for its original use.

5.2.4 Phase 4 Second half of the 20th century

The two structures which made up this phase were brick clad but the main walling structures were of breeze blocks, so are considered to date from the second half of the 20th century.

The first attached to the northern side of the Phase 2 building and was single storey with a low single pitch felt clad roof. It consisted of a reception area that accessed the garden to the north as well as two further rooms, which were probably utility rooms, Plate 33.

The second building was also single storey with a single pitch corrugated asbestos roof that attached to the western side of the Phase 1 house and warehouse, Plate 34, Plate 35 and Plate 36. It was made up of a single large room accessed internally from the former warehouse and externally from its northern and southern ends. This was used as a workshop.

It was probably also within this period that much of the warehouse that was split up into a domestic function with bathrooms and bedrooms on both the ground and first floors. These were clearly defined on the ground floor as they were constructed of breeze blocks. On the first floor these dividing walls were largely made of light studwork.

At some point within this phase, the house may also have been used as a tea rooms, as shown by a painted wooden sign, Plate 37.

6 Discussion

Holt Fleet is centred largely on the bridge which was built in 1828 by Thomas Telford. Whilst there was a ferry crossing on the site prior to this point, much of the remaining built heritage dates from after the construction of the bridge. It is clear that the bridge along with the landing stages brought increased commerce to Holt Fleet, and it is in this context that Riverside House must be seen as it was situated on a lane which directly linked the landing stage and the bridge.

Riverside House initially comprised a house with a warehouse to the rear. The house was simple and of modest proportion, being three rooms on the ground floor and two on the first floor. All of these were consistent with domestic functions. The warehouse to the rear was accessible from the house but also had two doors onto the lane to the west. The configuration of the windows also showed that the building was faced to the west. It had two rooms on both ground and first floors, and the presence of vent holes both above the warehouse and the house is evidence that loft spaces were used for storage.

The building was subsequently extended in four separate places. One of these was carried out before 1884 and the three subsequent extensions all dated to the 20th century and included a possible shop and a workshop.

6.1 Research frameworks

This building recording is likely to be useful in a local context in understanding the impact of construction of the bridge in 1828. The building's presence highlights the increased commerce as a result and is a relatively complete example of a 19th century house with warehouse to the rear.

The archaeology of the West Midlands: a framework for research (Watt 2011), the publication of the West Midlands Regional Research Framework for Archaeology, is decidedly lacking in the discussion of upstanding archaeology and the recording of historic buildings. The section regarding post-medieval archaeology recognises that the archaeology of buildings is a 'well-established component' of the discipline of archaeology. However, it also regards that the recording of above ground archaeology is worthless without the excavation of the surrounding remains (Belford in Watt 2011, 226). This is a limited view of buildings archaeology and disregards the information that can be gained from investigating and analysing an upstanding structure without any excavation. Mike Hodder discusses the need to record more historic buildings and to integrate above and below ground archaeology (Hodder in Watt 2011, 251). He states that the study of buildings 'not just the exceptional but also the typical, would be useful'.

7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mrs Sharon Simpson Stern and Adrian Scruby Historic Environment Planning Advisor.

9 Bibliography

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VCH I, Page, W (ed), 1913 *Victoria History of the County of Worcestershire*, I

WA 2012 *Manual of service practice, recording manual*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, report **1842**

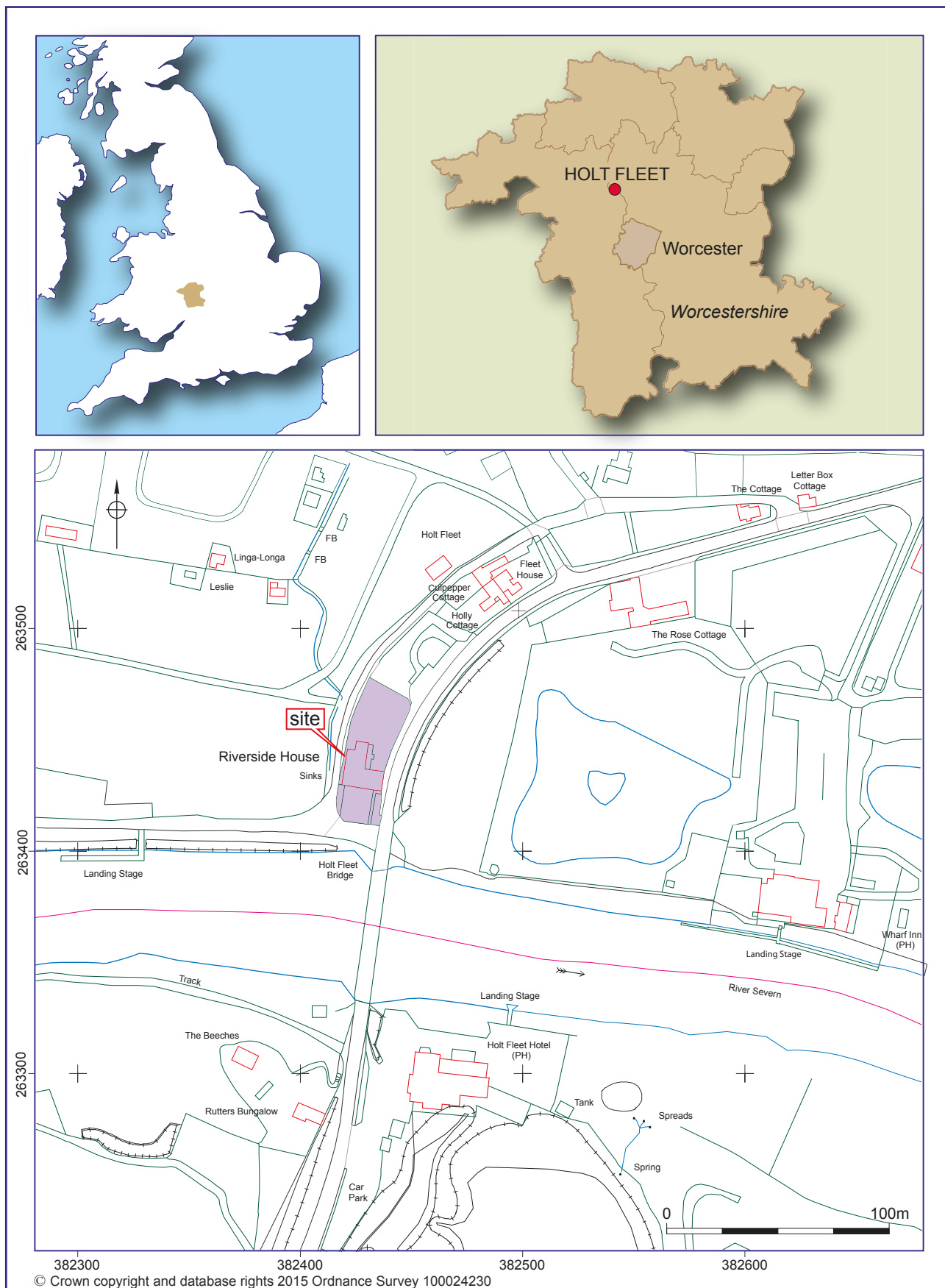
WA 2015 *Proposal for recording of an historic building at Riverside House, Holt Fleet, Worcestershire*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 9th of September 2015, P4675

Watt, S (ed) 2011 *The archaeology of the West Midlands: a framework for research*

WCC 2010 *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire*, Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished report **604**, amended July 2012

WCC 2015 *Brief for Historic Building Recording Riverside House, Holt Heath, Holt Fleet, Worcestershire.*, Information and Advisory Section, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished document dated September 2015

Figures



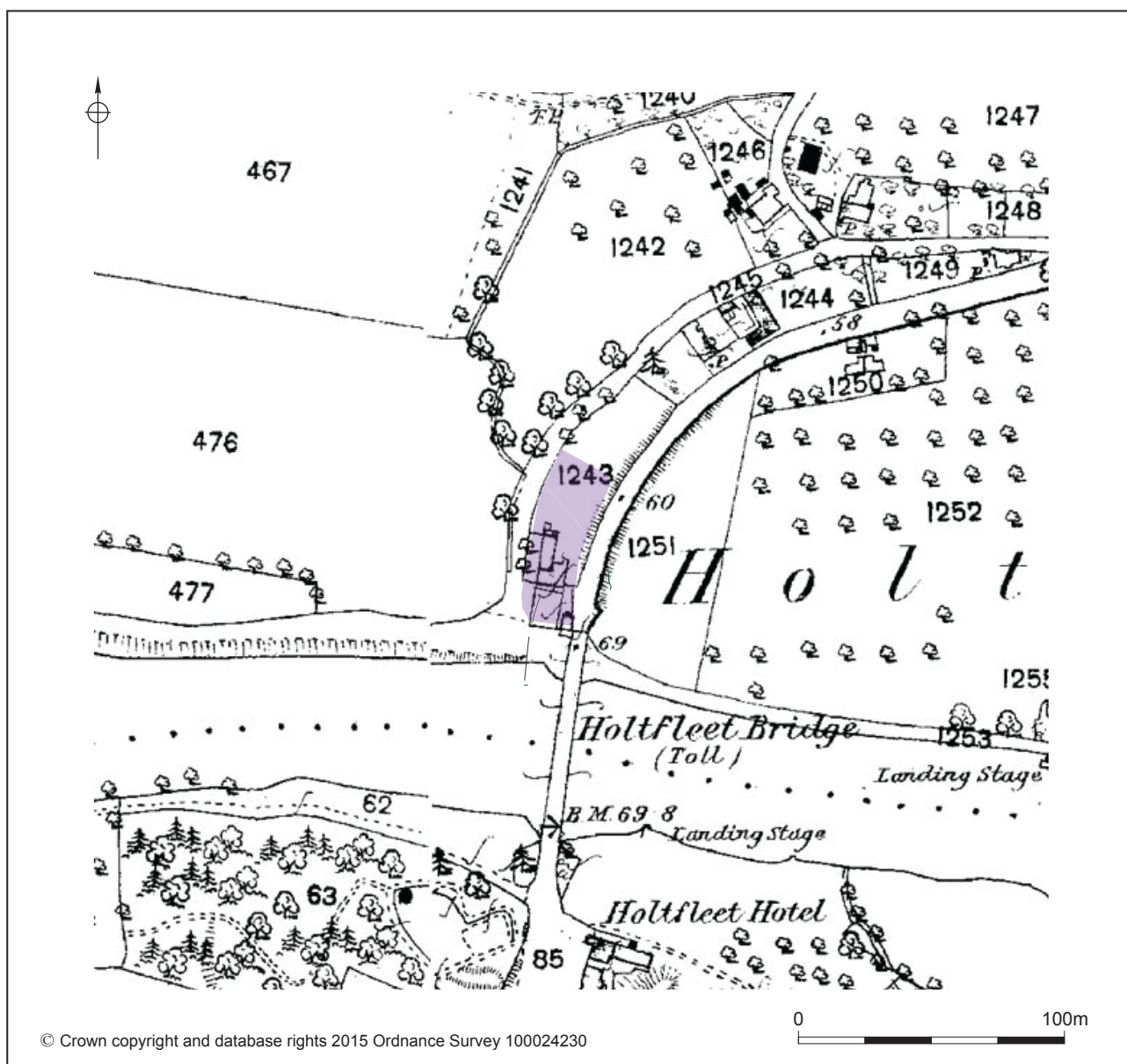
Location of the site

Figure 1



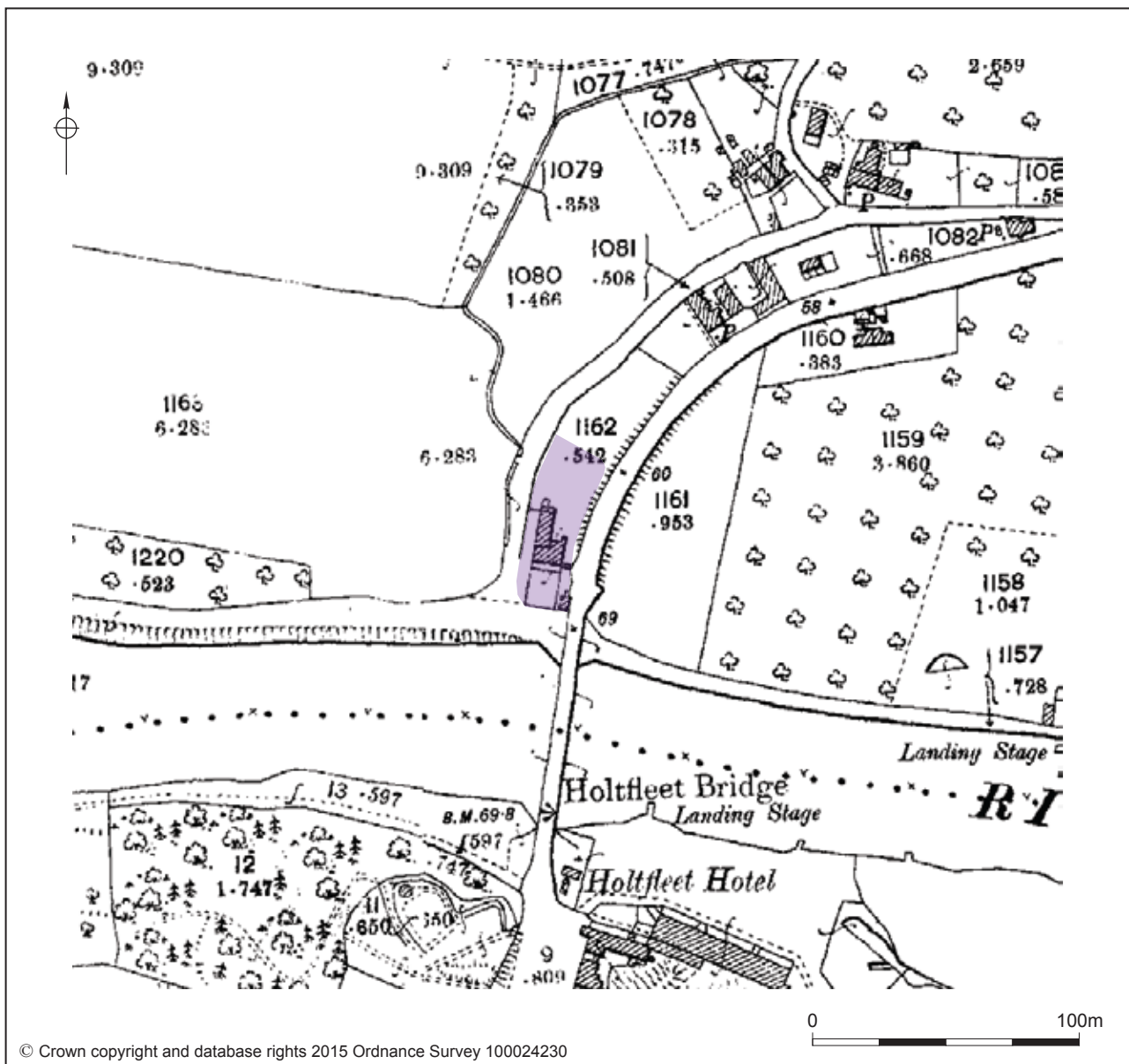
Extract from Tithe map, 1840

Figure 2



Extract from 1st edition OS, 1884-5

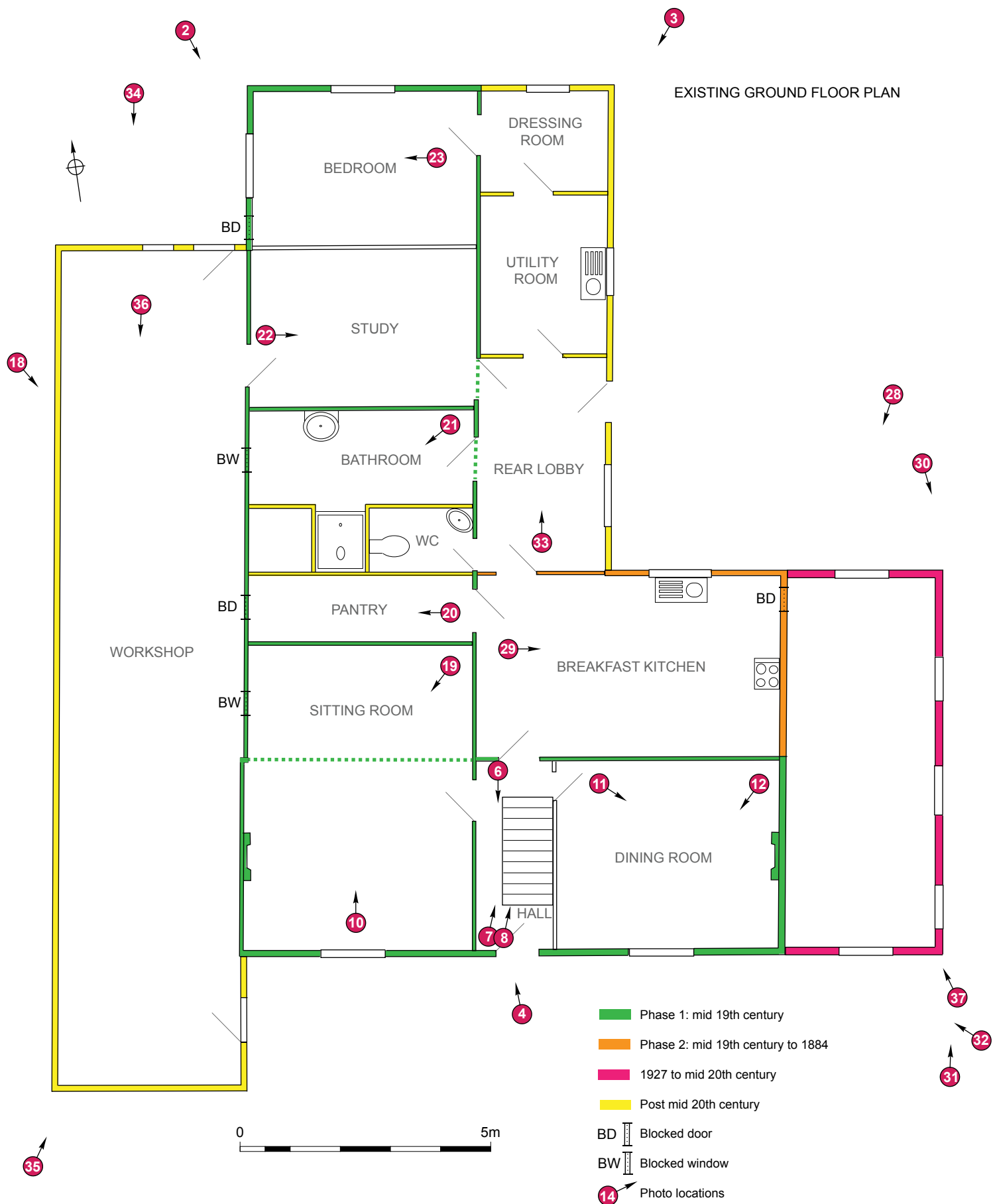
Figure 3



Extract from 1903 OS

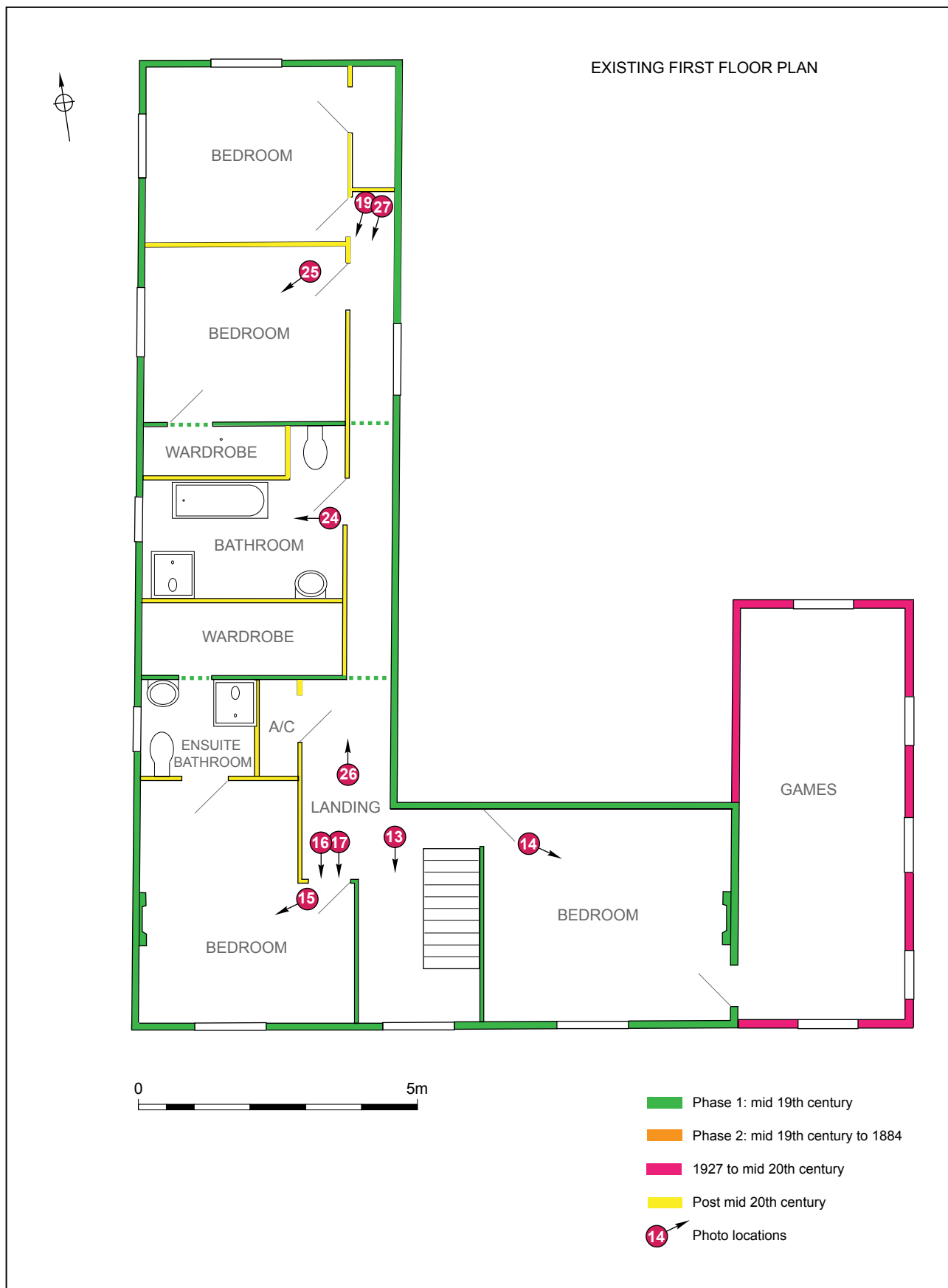
Figure 4





Ground floor plan showing phasing and photo locations

Figure 6



First floor plan showing phasing and photo locations

Figure 7

Plates



Plate 1 Phase 1 house, looking north



Plate 2 Phase 1 warehouse, looking south



Plate 3 Phase 1 warehouse, looking south west



Plate 4 Phase 1 house front door looking south



Plate 5 Phase 1 house and garden looking north



Plate 6 Phase 1 ground floor hall, looking south



Plate 7 Staircase, looking north east



Plate 8 Staircase, looking north



Plate 9 Phase 1 Living room, looking south west



Plate 10 Phase 1 Living room, looking north



Plate 11 Phase 1 kitchen, looking south east



Plate 12 Phase 1 kitchen, looking south west



Plate 13 Phase 1 first floor landing, looking south



Plate 14 Phase 1 bedroom looking south east



Plate 15 Phase 1 bedroom looking south west



Plate 16 Phase 1 house roof structure, looking south west



Plate 17 Detail of Phase 1 roof carpenter's mark



Plate 18 Ventilation holes in western gable of Phase 1 house, looking south east

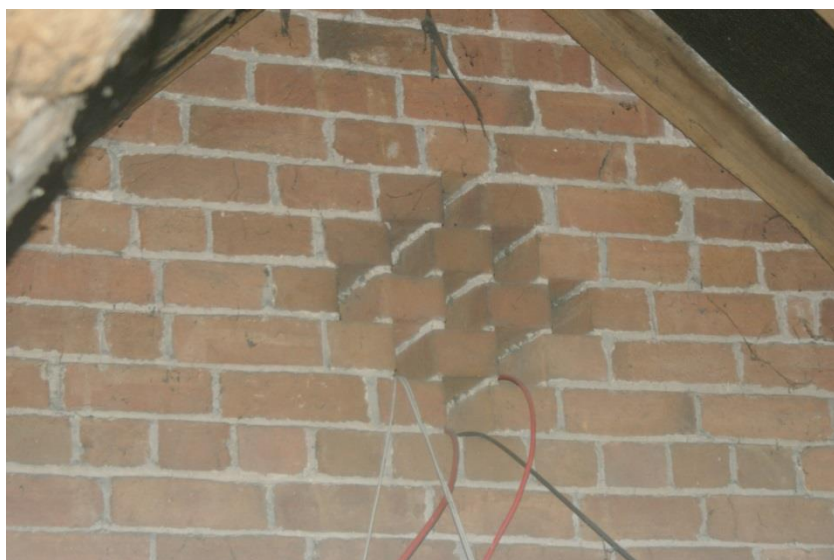


Plate 19 Ventilation holes in intermediate walls of Phase 1 warehouse, looking south west



Plate 20 Phase 1 warehouse, ground floor, looking west



Plate 21 Phase 1 warehouse, ground floor, looking west



Plate 22 Phase 1 warehouse, ground floor, looking east



Plate 23 Phase 1 warehouse, ground floor, looking west

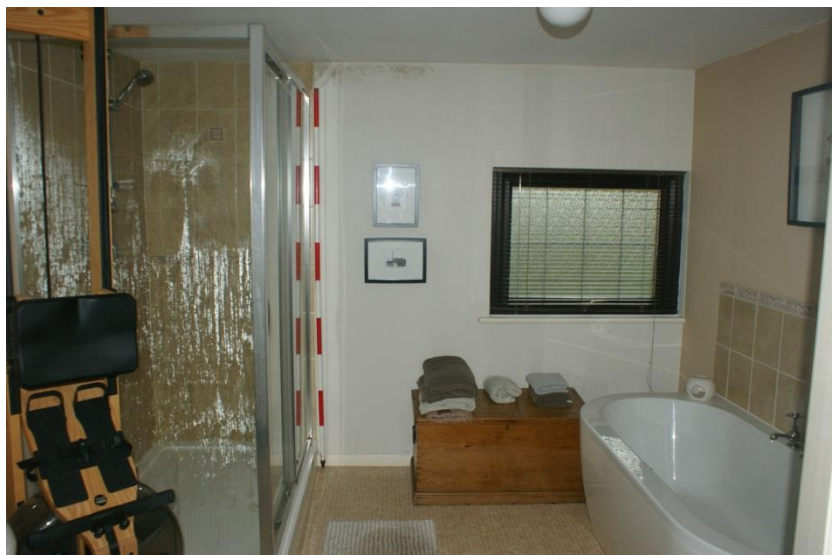


Plate 24 Phase 1 warehouse, first floor, looking west



Plate 25 Phase 1 warehouse, first floor, looking south west



Plate 26 Phase 1 warehouse, first floor, looking north



Plate 27 Phase 1 warehouse, evidence of floor joists in roof truss tie beam, looking south west



Plate 28 Phase 2 exterior, looking south



Plate 29 Phase 2 interior, looking west



Plate 30 Phase 3 structure, looking south west



Plate 31 Phase 3 structure, looking north



Plate 32 Phase 3 structure, looking north west



Plate 33 Phase 4 interior reception room, looking north



Plate 34 Phase 4 Workshop exterior, looking south



Plate 35 Phase 4 Workshop exterior, looking north east



Plate 36 Phase 4 Workshop interior, looking south



Plate 37 Phase 4 tearooms sign, looking north west

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 67197)

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 3 Photographic records AS3
- 159 Digital photographs
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Museums Worcestershire
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416