

Building Recording at
Morton House,
Fernhill Heath,
Worcestershire



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Tim Cornah

Summary

Building recording was required to meet a planning condition relating to the demolition of the existing building which was used as a care home and is to be replaced with a new build 66 bed building of the same function. The planning condition specified that the building should be recorded and to a specified English Heritage standard, which required photographing the exterior and interior of the building and the annotation of existing survey drawings. This produced an archive record of Morton House before the building is demolished.

An element of historical research and synthesis was also a condition planning approval. Original records relating to Morton House were studied at Worcestershire Archives along with historic maps and trade directories. On-line census records were accessed along with digitised historic mapping and other on-line sources.

Analysis of Morton House was based upon the recorded fabric and the associated documentary research, with the building sequence being reconstructed and illustrated with phased ground plans and elevations. These have been reproduced at the end of the report along with relevant photographs.

Morton House was originally a substantial gentry's residence built between around 1840 and 1850, and set in a wider garden. It was constructed of brick with stone detail, utilising an Italianate style with a centralised façade, shallow pitch tile roof, and an over-hanging cornice. This style is consistent with a mid-19th century date and the dating of the materials used, along with cartographic evidence, confirm this. The majority of this original building remained and included a large house of five rooms on the ground floor broadly square in plan, divided by a cruciform passage. These rooms have been interpreted as a dining room, living room and possible study, along with two other service rooms. The first floor was split into three bedrooms, two of which were complete with washing or changing facilities and a further service room. The house also had a coal cellar with further storage spaces.

A further large wing to the north serviced the house. It was contemporary with the house and using the same materials though with simpler architectural detailing. This was accessible from the house and included its own internal service stair-case. The ground floor consisted of a kitchen with three further rooms, all linked by a passage. The first floor had a broadly similar layout and is likely to have been used for the accommodation of service staff.

To the north of the house and service wing was a contemporary yard and coach house. The coach house continued the use of the Italianate style, though with simpler detailing than the main house, as rubbed brick arches replaced much of the stone detailing.

This set of buildings continued in broadly the same form into the middle to the 20th century at which point it was utilised as a Civil Defence Headquarters. A substantial new wing was added at the south-east corner of the former house and some internal changes were made to the earlier buildings. These changes increased dramatically when the buildings were converted into a nursing home during and after 1986. These changes include many of the internal divisions which were evident at the time of recording. Further extensions were also constructed, most notably to the cart house, which was heavily altered at this point.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

Recording of a historic building was undertaken at Morton House, Fernhill Heath, Worcestershire (NGR SO 85999 58757). It was requested by Mr L Fallon of Fed3 Projects on behalf of Fernhill House Ltd (the Client) and planning permission was granted by Wychavon District in relation to the demolition of the existing care home and replacement with a new build 66 bed building of the same function.

The building is an undesignated heritage asset within the terms used by the *National Planning Policy Framework*, and is also registered with the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record WSM17092.

The project conforms to a generic brief prepared by Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service (2014), for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2014).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (IfA 2008), and *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The event reference for this project, as assigned by the HER, is WSM66546.

2 Aims

The aims and scope of the project, as detailed in a generic brief for building recording within Worcestershire, are as follows:

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

The Institute for Archaeologists further 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*, IfA 2012).

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Tim Cornah (BA); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006 and has been practicing buildings archaeology since 2004. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Shona Robson-Glyde (BA Post-Grad Dip Arch).

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

- 1831 Ordnance Survey Map scale 1:63,360
- 1840 Tithe Map transcription
- 1883-4 Ordnance Survey map scale 1:10,560
- 1903 Ordnance Survey scale 1:10,560
- 1925 Ordnance Survey scale 1:10,560

- 1938 Ordnance Survey scale 1:10,560

Documentary sources

- Published and grey literature sources as listed in the bibliography.
- Worcestershire Records Office ref 461 BA 91910/1,
- Worcestershire Records Office ref 461 BA 91910/30,
- Worcestershire Records Office BA 12203/12

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

Fieldwork was undertaken between the 2nd and 4th December 2014 (WSM66546), and 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 Pentax K30 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 forms 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 and 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 1–86. Ground plans, phase plans, elevations and sections have been reproduced as Figures 3-6.

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.

4 Context

The development site is located at a height of about 55m AOD. This area is situated to the east of the bank of the river Severn and broadly within its valley on geological deposits of both Mercian and Sidmouth Mudstones laid down in the Triassic period (British Geological Survey 2015). It is a rolling topography that remains in agricultural use, though many of the historic fields have been lost

through the development of the village of Fernhill Heath in the 20th century. The site is beyond the southern end of the village which is to the north of Worcester and on the road to Droitwich.

Within a radius of 500m of Morton House, few archaeological features are recorded within Worcestershire Historic Environment Record. A small scatter of prehistoric finds, such as a Bronze Age axe, WSM11973, have been recovered from the parish. It is not until the medieval period that there is evidence of more substantial activity is recognised in the form of a moat to the south-west, WSM07886, and evidence of field systems of the period to the south, WSM20864.

The character of the current village of Fernhill Heath became established from the 18th century onwards with a pair of cottages, WSM20475, and other 19th century buildings. One such was a working ladies hostel of military ownership, WSM38802. The remainder are farm houses such as Moat Farmhouse to the south, WSM51816, and Danes Green Farm to the north east, WSM24838.

There is a surviving air raid shelter, WSM31323 and a further one, now demolished, WSM17208. These may have been present due to the Civil Defence Headquarters at Morton house. The remaining buildings in this area are of 20th century origin

5 The building

5.1 Building description

The surviving buildings sat within the wider plot made up of established garden spaces, and were accessed by a drive from Grange Lane from its north-west, as shown in figure 2. The original main building was made up of a broadly rectangular, largely brick-built two storey house of mid-19th century style with a further largely brick-built wing on its north-east corner, also of two storeys. This wing and the north-western side of the house were bounded by a contemporary brick wall that formed a yard, accessed by a wide gate on the western side. At the northern side of this yard was a further building, built of the same materials as the house and bounding wall. This building had a wide entrance facing into the yard on its eastern side that may have been used as a cart or coach entrance. The western side of this building may have had a more domestic function, as it was also formerly of two storeys and has sash windows.

The existing character of this set of buildings was developed through the 20th century with the addition of further largely brick-built elements. These included a rectangular brick two storey addition at the north-east side of the former house, as well as a single storey brick addition to the service wing. Further additions were made on the western side of the house onto a former entrance, in the form of a single storey brick building and a timber-framed conservatory.

In the late 20th century, the cart house was altered with its first floor being removed and a rectangular brick two storey structure was added on its north-western side. Details on all these phases of development is given below.

5.2 Historical information

Cartographic evidence goes some way to both date these buildings and to illuminate their use. Neither an Ordnance Survey map of 1831 (Old Maps Online 2015) nor the transcribed tithe map of 1840 (Beckham and Guyatt 1994) show Morton house as existing, and the area is named as *Five Acres* on the 1840 map and so is likely to have been a field at that time. By the Ordnance Survey map of 1883--4 (Old Maps Online 2015) the building exists in a form consistent with phase 1 as discussed below. This also shows the building within the plot as broadly, though slightly extended to the east. To the east of the house is a further small building which is marked on a 1903 Ordnance Survey map as an observatory. Two further buildings to the north of this are labelled as glass houses and possibly a small walled garden area. The layout of paths and drives exists in the form which they remain. Both the 1925 and 1938 Ordnance Survey maps show the outline of the building as described in phase 1 below (Old Maps Online 2015).

The directories of Worcestershire list residents at Morton House from 1876 up until 1900. The first of these in 1876 is Thomas Barneby and is listed within the clergy and gentry section of the

directory. No title indicating his being a member of the clergy is given, so status as a member of the gentry may be assumed (Kellys Directory 1876). Thomas Barneby is listed until 1884 (Kellys Directory 1884) after which two further occupiers are registered, William Price Hughes in 1888 (Kellys Directory 1888) and Mrs Ashton in 1900 (Kellys Directory 1900).

The next known use of building is in the middle of the 20th century, when it was used as a Civil Defence Headquarters in, or shortly before, World War 2 (WSM17092). This continued until at least 1969, when it is proposed to be used as the Weights and Measures County Headquarters (WRO BA91910/1) though whether this change of use happened is unclear. The next clear change of use happened in 1986 when the building was converted into a nursing home (Worcester News 2015).

5.3 Building development

5.4 Phase 1: Mid-19th century

The initial phase of these buildings consisted of a house, a service wing, a yard and a cart house. All of these elements are contemporary and must be seen as a single unit but will be discussed separately for the purposes of clarity.

The largest element of this phase is the **two storey house itself**, figure 3 and Plate 1, Plate 2, Plate 3 and Plate 4. It is broadly rectangular and measures about 14.40m in width and 14.50m in depth. It is covered by a low pitch roof which has a central well, creating a rectangular ridge parallel to the exterior walls. The roof has a stone cornice extending over the external walls. It was not possible to ascertain to what extent the roof materials were original but it consisted of slate and lead when recorded. Only three original chimneys remain, and two of these are shown on Plate 3 and would be consistent with a broadly Victorian date. The main building fabric of the walls was handmade brick of 8 ¾ x 4 x 2 ¾ inch dimensions. Bricks of this dimension were produced between the period of 1784 to 1850 (WCC Brick Catalogue). The bricks are laid using a Flemish bond pattern with a lime render, Plate 5. The corners of the building, visible foundations and detailing around windows and doors were constructed of light grey yellow limestone blocks.

The external architectural detailing on the south-east facing side of the house, as seen on Plate 6, was symmetrical with three equally spaced windows at first floor level and two bay windows at ground floor level, flanking a central doorway. This symmetry would have been complemented by chimneys on the roof, only two of which still exist on the south-west corner of the roof. The central doorway had a carved stone porch above it, the detailing of which can be seen on Plate 7. The sashes of the bay windows were made up of single panes and can be compared with all the other windows which had at least two panes which would have been cheaper to install. The larger double pane and single pane sheets of glass were introduced from the 1830s onwards. A facing direction towards the south-east is common for detached Victorian houses (Wedd 2002), and this is the case here. A further entrance was located on the south-western wall and consisted of a contemporary single storey porch doorway with three entrances as shown in Plate 8, Plate 9 and Plate 10.

The position of these two entrances is also confirmed by a consideration of the original **ground floor** layout, figure 3. The internal space was divided into what is likely to have been four rooms by a cruciform pattern of wide passageways. The south-eastern and south-western passageways led to the external entrances, and were each heated by separate fire-places. The entire ground floor had a hung floor made up of 6.5 inch wide pine floor boards, apart from the porch on the south western elevation which had decorative tiling, as shown in Plate 11. Of the further two passageways, the north-western one contained the staircase, Plate 12, and the north-eastern was shorter than the others and lead to the service elements of the house, as will be discussed later. In the centre where these passages met were four large, open arches, Plate 13, a fifth of which led into the porch at the south-west, Plate 14.

The two rooms either side of the central entrance passageway were the largest in proportion and both lit by a bay window each, Plate 15 and Plate 16. A further, now blocked, window existed in

south-west corner, and whether an equivalent window existed in the south-east corner is unknown. Both of these rooms had fireplaces and appear to have been accessed from the doorways closest to the centre of the house. They both retained some decorative detailing, the central ceiling roses can be seen in Plate 17 and Plate 18, and the decorative coving can be seen in Plate 19 and Plate 20. The south-eastern room had two entrances, the eastern most of which may suggest that this room was a dining room, given its easy access to the service elements of the house. The decorative coving showing grapes in this room may support such a use. The south-western room may have been a living room.

The room in the north-western corner of the ground floor, Plate 21 and Plate 22, is less easy to interpret but was also heated, and was lit by a window in each external wall. Which of the two entrances into this room are original is unknown, but it is likely to have been that closest to the porch. An interpretation of this room as a study may be reasonable. The eastern element of the cruciform passage appears to have been shortened to include what is likely to be a serving room, given its access to both the dining room and service elements.

The north-easternmost room was split into a number of elements, the first of which was a north-west to south-east aligned passage, Plate 23, leading into the service elements of the house. This was flanked to the east by two sets of stairs which lead both down to a cellar, Plate 24, and up to the first floor, Plate 23. To the west of the passage was a further room, though which of the three doorways that existed at the time of recording were original, is unknown. This room, Plate 25, was heated, though a service function is likely given its position within the house.

Though few original features survived on the ground floor, some coving existed, as previously seen, along with the window shutters, details of which can be seen in Plate 26 and Plate 27. Full height shutters also existed within the former central entrance in the south-eastern elevation.

The **cellar** was split into six separate spaces, two of which are passageways, as shown on figure 3. The northernmost of the remaining rooms, Plate 28, is likely to have been a coal cellar, given the presence of a shoot which was accessible from the yard, Plate 29. This room also had two further windows facing into the passageway to the east, as shown in Plate 30. The rooms in shown in Plate 31 and Plate 32, appear to have been used for storage, as suggested by inbuilt shelves in Plate 33 and Plate 34. Within the south-eastern corner of the cellar, Plate 35, is a brick arch which spans the corner. This feature was also seen on the ground and first floors so may run as far as the roof. No corresponding chimney currently exists on the roof so to interpret it as a flue is speculative. It is possible that it drained the central roof well as a down pipe remains within it, though this may not be an original feature and where it would drain to is also unclear. Adjacent to this is a small, arched, half-height doorway, which could not be opened, so its use remains unknown.

The **first floor of the house**, shown in figure 4, was accessed primarily by the central staircase but also by the staircase above the access to the cellar. The latter is likely to have been used in the context of services. The staircase is original though altered by later additions, Plate 12. The detailing of this is typical of a Victorian period house with a spiral end and balusters of the same type as seen in a late Victorian catalogue (Hall 2005). From the top of the central stairs ran a wide passageway, running towards the south-east. This was spanned by two formerly open arches, Plate 36, and had a fireplace on its eastern side. Two doorways led off either side of this passage, the southernmost pair of which led into suites of two rooms each. These are likely to have been bedrooms, Plate 37 and Plate 38, with adjacent dressing or washing rooms. These were heated with a fireplace in each room, apart from the dressing or washing room on the east side, which could not be accessed. The other original elements retained in these rooms were the ceiling coving, window shutters and some tiling associated with a fireplace, Plate 39.

To the west of the central staircase was a further room lit by two shuttered windows and heated by a fireplace. The function of this room remains speculative but a bedroom is likely. To the east of the central stairs was a further room that had a fireplace and window, though with no shutters, and appears to have been a linking room between the house and the service element of the building. A

high doorway existed, Plate 40, which led to a staircase which descended into a passage into the service elements of the building. This height change corresponded with that seen externally in Plate 41.

The **service wing**, figures 3 and 4 and Plate 42, Plate 43 and Plate 44, was a further two storey building, though with a small single storey extension on its north-west end. The two storey element was L-shaped with a hipped roof at the same pitch as the house, but slightly lower in height. A single chimney stack that held four chimney pots existed at the southern end of the roof ridge. The exterior architectural detailing was simpler on this section of the building, with no stonework around the windows and the lintels comprising of rubbed bricks. At the corners of the building, render detailing was used to imitate the corner stones of the house.

The **service wing ground floor** was accessed externally from a doorway in the small two storey linking building, Plate 41, and a door in the northern end of the single storey building. Internally, it was accessed from a doorway next to the stairs to the cellar. The room to the east of the service stairs may also have been accessed from this passage, though whether this door position is original is not certain. This broadly square room, Plate 45, appears originally to have a wide fireplace, since removed by later alteration. This corresponds with the position of the chimney on the roof above. A wide fireplace such as this would be consistent with a kitchen. This room is lit by one small un-shuttered window in its eastern wall, Plate 46, though this wall had been heavily altered so others may have existed.

To the north of the likely kitchen, were a further two rooms linked by an L-shaped passage. Only the smaller of these two, Plate 47, was heated by a later removed fireplace and the formerly external wall had also been removed, so no windows were seen. The northernmost room of the two storey element is aligned north-east to south-west, and had once comprised of two further rooms which were originally heated by at least one fireplace. This arrangement had later been removed to create one large room, Plate 48. All un-altered windows within this room have shutters, and two further windows existed in the south-east corner of the room, though were blocked later. The function of this space is unclear, but storage seems likely.

The single storey extension at the northern end is split longitudinally into two spaces, Plate 49, one at the height of the internal floor, the other at external ground floor level, with stairs between them at the eastern end. These are both lit by windows on their eastern walls, though these were of a different style and, therefore later additions. A further window with a rubbed brick arch existed in the northern wall, Plate 42, as well a door which appears to be original, Plate 50.

The **service wing first floor** was accessed from the stairs next to the kitchen, Plate 51, as well as from the first floor of the house as discussed previously. The arrangement of rooms and doors is broadly the same as the ground floor, along with the arrangement of fireplaces, Plate 52. None of the windows on this floor of the service wing had shutters, supporting a lower status use of this area.

To the north of the house and enclosing the western side of the service wing was a **yard** figure 1 and Plate 53. The wall which encloses it is of the same bricks as the other buildings in this phase. On the eastern side, this wall is continuous without break from the single storey extension to the service wing. The yard was accessed by a wide gateway on its western side, as well as a pedestrian access the latter of which has a brick arch spanning it. Another arched pedestrian access gate existed on the eastern side of the yard, Plate 54.

On the northern side of the yard a further building existed that was interpreted as a **cart house**, figure 1 and Plate 55. The materials and building techniques are the same as those used elsewhere in the building, apart from for the two wide arches which used rubbed brick in combination with central key stones. The ground floor of this building was accessed at three different points. The easternmost of the two brick arches in Plate 55 is 2.80m wide and shows evidence of having had double gates, Plate 56, suggesting a use as a cart or carriage entrance. The central arched access is 2.40m wide, though no evidence for this having been gated or

enclosed was seen. The one further entrance was central on the northern side of the building and was of 1m width, suggesting pedestrian access.

The internal spaces were split into three areas. The room at the western end was lit by two sash windows, as seen on Plate 57, possibly suggesting a domestic or administrative use for this space. These windows may be a replacement of the original given the presence of horns at their base, a feature not seen elsewhere. On the western gable, Plate 58, two small arches can be seen, the function of which was undetermined, though windows seem most likely.

The central room of the ground floor, Plate 59 and Plate 60, has internal access to the room to the west through a 1.4m wide door, as well as two further doors into the room to the east. A possible fireplace was located in its northern corner which corresponds to the position of a chimney on the roof. How this space was laid out originally is unknown due to later alterations but it is clear that a first floor existed over at least part of this space, given the presence of a window in the gable shown in Plate 55 and Plate 61. No original first floor exists and the staircase is a later addition. On the northern side of this room, above a possible external door, is a full height doorway, Plate 62. Whether this was originally a doorway to a demolished element of the building or an extended window is unclear. A ground plan of 1969 (WRO ref 461 BA91910/1) shows a small two-roomed building on the northern side of the cart house, though no first floor plan is given. No element of this building survives so little can be said of its form, function and date.

The eastern ground floor room was accessed from the entrances already mentioned, though a further key stone can be seen on the eastern gable, Plate 63. These key stones are only used for arches within this building, so similar to those seen on the opposing gable in Plate 58.

Although much of the evidence for a first floor within this building is missing, Plate 55 shows two stone sills. These are located centrally above the sash windows and as well as above the cart entrance gateway. A partial elevation of the building in 1969 (WRO ref 461 BA91910/1) shows these as small dormer windows protruding from the roof, confirming that this was a single storey building, apart from the central element.

5.5 Phase 2 Late 19th to mid-20th centuries

One change which predates the conversion of the building into a nursing home is the addition of a staircase within the northern end of the former service wing, Plate 64. At this point a window, figure 6, was blocked. This cannot be closely dated, and how this end of the building was divided at this point is not clear, with all the walls that are not original being of light stud work. A further small alteration was the insertion of a doorway into the former bay window on the front elevation, Plate 6.

5.6 Phase 3 Mid-20th century

The middle of the 20th century saw a change in use of the building when it became a Civil Defence Headquarters, either shortly before or during World War 2. One major extension to the existing building was which probably dates to this period was a single storey brick building at the south-eastern corner of the former house, figure 3 and Plate 65 and Plate 66. This was accessed from a new doorway in the eastern wall of the original house on the ground floor. A ground plan of 1969 (WRO ref 461 BA91910/1) shows this space split broadly into two, with a broad open room to the east, and thin internal walls to the west making two rooms. The use of these rooms is unclear, and, similarly, their original use. This extension later had a first floor added, though at what point and how the space was divided is unclear. It was accessed through the former eastern bedroom on the first floor.

The former living room in the south-west corner of the ground floor of the house was altered at around this time. Its eastern wall was knocked through into the passage to the east, creating one large room. The northern end of the passage was subsequently blocked, Plate 13.

5.7 Phase 3 1986 to present

This set of buildings was altered greatly when it was converted into a nursing home in 1986. This included three separate areas of extension to the existing building from this time onwards as well as numerous changes to the internal divisions of the existing buildings. It is possible that some of these changes to internal divisions occurred previously to its use as a nursing home, though none can be clearly stated as such. These changes are best expressed on figures 3 and 4 but will also be further described below.

The extension added when the building was used as Civil Defence Headquarters was internally split at this point. The ground floor was split into six bedrooms, Plate 68 and Plate 69, linked by a passage, Plate 70, and a bathroom. The first floor was split into five bedrooms, Plate 71 and Plate 72, also linked by a passage, Plate 73, and a bathroom, sluice room and toilet. A fire escape on the northern side which serviced both floors, was also added at this point.

At some point broadly contemporary with this, the former kitchen and room to its north was converted into a wider kitchen and dining room. This included a single storey extension to the east and heavy alterations to the former exterior wall, Plate 44. A further single storey extension to the porch was added on the western side of the former house that comprised of two rooms, Plate 74, which necessitated blocking a former external window, figure 6. Further to this a conservatory was added, Plate 75. A small rear porch was also added at the northern end of the service block, Plate 42. This could not be accessed internally.

Much of the internal character of the former house and service elements were greatly changed at this point, mostly by the division of the building into individual bedrooms, as expressed on figure 4. It is likely to have been this point that the cruciform passage in the centre of the ground floor of the house was further blocked. The eastern element was blocked by a lift shaft that extended into both the cellar and the first floor. The south-eastern room was split into a passage-way and two bedrooms, and the north-western room was split into two bedrooms. An office was added under the stairs, and toilets and a sluice in the former north-eastern service room.

Similar changes were made on the first floor of the house with most of the rooms becoming bedrooms after the insertion of stud walling. Two further doors were added, the first from the former dressing or wash room into the room to the north, as well as another door into the former eastern dressing or washing room, shown in figure 4. The north-eastern service room was similarly split. Whether the fireplaces of these northern rooms of the house, on both floors, were removed at this point or earlier is unclear. Two further new windows were also added into the southern and western elevations of the house, Plate 6 and Plate 3. The first floor of the former service wing was similarly split into bedrooms, and the ground floor split into a kitchen and dining rooms, Plate 46, as well as a staff room, Plate 49, and toilets. It is likely to have been at this point that all of the original internal doors were removed and replaced with modern equivalents.

A major alteration was made to the former coach house, probably within the 1990s. This included a major new two storey extension on its northern side, figure 3 and 4, Plate 76, Plate 77 and Plate 78, as well as major changes to the coach house itself. The ground floor of the extension included three communal spaces, Plate 79, Plate 80, Plate 81, an office, Plate 82, and a kitchen, Plate 83. These spaces were accessible from the coach house which had two new doorways inserted in its northern wall.

The first floor of the extension comprised of further bedrooms, Plate 84 and Plate 85, accessed by a passage, Plate 86. This passage also allowed access into two further bedrooms to the south. These were accommodated after the roof of the coach house in these areas was removed and the gables lowered. The four dormer windows seen in Plate 55 also belong to this phase of alteration. The staircase in the centre of the building, Plate 59, was also added at this point along with the floor within the central first floor room.

6 Discussion

The building at Morton House was originally a substantial residence built utilising an Italianate style with a centralised façade, shallow pitch tile roof, and over-hanging cornice, utilising brick with stone detailing. This style is consistent with a date of the middle and the second half of the 19th century, as such buildings in the early 19th century are likely to have been rendered (Wedd 2002). Further dating evidence is that the sash windows are consistent with a post 1830s date and the bricks are of a type used until 1850. The cartographic evidence refines this date further to after 1840, suggesting a construction date between around 1840 and 1850. Cartographic evidence also shows the house from 1883-4 onwards within a wider plot that includes a garden, complete with an observatory and glass houses. The high status nature of this residence is confirmed by its owners being classed as gentry in late 19th century documentary evidence.

The majority of this original building remained and included a large broadly square house of five rooms on the ground floor, divided by a broadly cruciform passage. These rooms have been interpreted as a dining room, living room and possible study along with two other service rooms. The first floor was split into three bedrooms, two of which were complete with washing or changing facilities and a further service room. Though many original features had been removed during its later uses, some features such as window shutters, coving and ceiling bosses remained. The house also had a coal cellar with further storage spaces.

A large wing to the north serviced the house and was contemporary, using the same materials though with simpler architectural detailing. This was accessible from the house and included its own internal service stair case. Here the ground floor consisted of a kitchen with three further rooms, all linked by a passage. The first floor had a broadly similar layout, and is likely to have been used for service staff accommodation.

To the north of the house and service wing was a contemporary yard and coach house. The coach house continued the use of the Italianate style though with simpler detailing than the house as rubbed brick arches replaced much of the stone detailing.

This set of buildings continued in broadly the same form into the middle to the 20th century at which point it was utilised as a Civil Defence Headquarters. A substantial new wing was added at the south-east corner of the former house and some internal changes were made to the earlier buildings. These changes increased dramatically when the buildings were converted into a nursing home during and after 1986. These changes include many of the internal divisions which remained at the time of recording. Further extensions were also constructed, most notably to the cart house, which was heavily altered at this point.

6.1 Research frameworks

Few archaeological frameworks exist for this period of building and it may be acknowledged that the post-1840 built environment is poorly served by the designation process. It is becoming increasingly realised that more building studies are required for the purposes of integrating above and below ground archaeology (Hodder 2011).

Organisations such as The Victorian Society have long realised the importance of buildings such as this, and work to awaken public interest and appreciation of Victorian and Edwardian arts, architecture, crafts and designs. The wider study of these buildings and their related social history is encouraged in order to aid their preservation and repair, as well as informing their broader conservation (The Victorian Society 2015).

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.

Recording of a historic building was undertaken at Morton House, Fernhill Heath, Worcestershire (NGR SO 85999 58757) on behalf of Fernhill House Ltd, and this was recorded within the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record as WSM66546

The building at Morton House was originally a substantial gentry's residence built between around 1840 and 1850 set in a wider garden. It was constructed of brick with stone detail, utilising an Italianate style with a centralised façade, shallow pitch tile roof, and over hanging cornice. This style is consistent with a mid-19th century date and the dating of the materials, along with cartographic evidence, confirm this. The majority of this original building remained and included a large broadly square house of five rooms on the ground floor, divided by a broadly cruciform passage. These rooms have been interpreted as a dining room, living room and possible study along with two other service rooms. The first floor was split into three bedrooms, two of which were complete with washing or changing facilities and a further service room. The house also had a coal cellar with further storage spaces.

A further large wing to the north serviced the house. It was contemporary with the house and using the same materials though with simpler architectural detailing. This was accessible from the house and included its own internal service stair case. The ground floor consisted of a kitchen with three further rooms, all linked by a passage. The first floor had a broadly similar layout and is likely to have been used for service staff accommodation.

To the north of the house and service wing was a contemporary yard and coach house. The coach house continued the use of the Italianate style though with simpler detailing than the house as rubbed brick arches replaced much of the stone detailing.

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8 Acknowledgements

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Figures

Plates



Plate 1 View of the house looking east



Plate 2 View of the house looking north east



Plate 3 View of the house looking north east



Plate 4 View of the house looking south west with the service wing to its left



Plate 5 Detail of the pointing and brick work



Plate 6 South east facing Italianate elevation of the house, looking north west



Plate 7 Details of the carvings above the front door, looking north west



Plate 8 Porch entrance to the house, looking south west



Plate 9 Porch entrance to the house, looking north east



Plate 10 Porch entrance to the house, looking north east



Plate 11 Tiling within the porch, looking north west



Plate 12 Stairs within the house, looking north east



Plate 13 Former centre of the cruciform passageway, looking south



Plate 14 Passageway, looking south west towards the porch



Plate 15 Former living room and passage, looking south west



Plate 16 Former dining room, looking south east



Plate 17 Ceiling boss in former living room



Plate 18 Ceiling boss in former dining room



Plate 19 Decorative coving in former living room



Plate 20 Decorative coving in former dining room



Plate 21 North western ground floor of the house, looking north west



Plate 22 North western ground floor of the house, looking north west



Plate 23 Former service passage, looking north west



Plate 24 Stairs to cellar, looking south east



Plate 25 Former ground floor service room, looking west



Plate 26 Shutter in the former dining room, looking south west



Plate 27 Shutter in the former dining room, looking south west



Plate 28 Former coal cellar, looking north east



Plate 29 Former coal shoot in the cellar, looking north west



Plate 30 Blocked windows into the coal cellar looking north east



Plate 31 Former storage room in the cellar, looking north west



Plate 32 Former storage room, looking south west



Plate 33 Shelves in a former storage room in the cellar, looking south west



Plate 34 Shelves in a former storage room, looking north



Plate 35 Possible flue in cellar, looking south east



Plate 36 View from the top of the stairs on the first floor of the house, looking south east



Plate 37 Former south eastern bedroom, looking south east



Plate 38 Former south western bedroom, looking southwest



Plate 39 Decorative tiles for the fireplace in the south western bedroom, looking south west



Plate 40 Passage into the first floor service wing



Plate 41 The service wing, looking south west



Plate 42 Northern end of the service wing, looking south west



Plate 43 Service wing with 20th century addition, looking north west



Plate 44 Service wing with 20th century addition, looking west



Plate 45 Former kitchen, looking north



Plate 46 Former kitchen looking north west



Plate 47 Ground floor of the service wing, looking south west



Plate 48 Ground floor of the service wing with the central wall removed, looking south west



Plate 49 Single storey element of the service wing, looking north east



Plate 50 Single storey element of the service wing, looking north west



Plate 51 Service wing stairs, looking north east



Plate 52 Service wing first floor, looking north east



Plate 53 The yard area, looking north east



Plate 54 Pedestrian access to the yard, looking south west



Plate 55 Former coach house, looking north



Plate 56 Former coach entrance, looking north west



Plate 57 Western ground floor room of the coach house, looking south east



Plate 58 Western gable of the coach house, looking east



Plate 59 Central room of coach house ground floor, looking north



Plate 60 Central room of coach house ground floor, looking south



Plate 61 Central room of coach house first floor, looking south



Plate 62 Central room of coach house first floor, looking north west



Plate 63 Eastern gable of coach house, looking west



Plate 64 Inserted stairs in the service wing, looking north east



Plate 65 Mid 20th extension, looking north west



Plate 66 Mid 20th extension, looking south east



Plate 67 20th century kitchen extension, looking south west



Plate 68 20th century extension ground floor, looking north east



Plate 69 20th century extension ground floor, looking south east



Plate 70 20th century extension ground floor, looking north east



Plate 71 20th century extension first floor, looking south east



Plate 72 20th century extension first floor, looking south east



Plate 73 20th century extension first floor, looking north west



Plate 74 20th century entrance extension, looking south west



Plate 75 20th century conservatory, looking south east



Plate 76 Late 20th century extension to the coach house, looking north east



Plate 77 Late 20th century extension to the coach house, looking south west



Plate 78 Late 20th century extension to the coach house, looking north west



Plate 79 Late 20th century extension to the coach house ground floor, looking south east



Plate 80 Late 20th century extension to the coach house ground floor, looking north east



Plate 81 Late 20th century extension to the coach house ground floor, looking south west



Plate 82 Late 20th century extension to the coach house ground floor, looking north west



Plate 83 Late 20th century extension to the coach house ground floor, looking north east



Plate 84 Late 20th century extension to the coach house first floor, looking north east



Plate 85 Late 20th century extension to the coach house first floor, looking west



Plate 86 Late 20th century extension to the coach house first floor, looking south west

The archive (site code: WSM66546)

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress report AS2
- 8 Photographic records AS3
- 592 Digital photographs
- 8 Annotated drawings
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

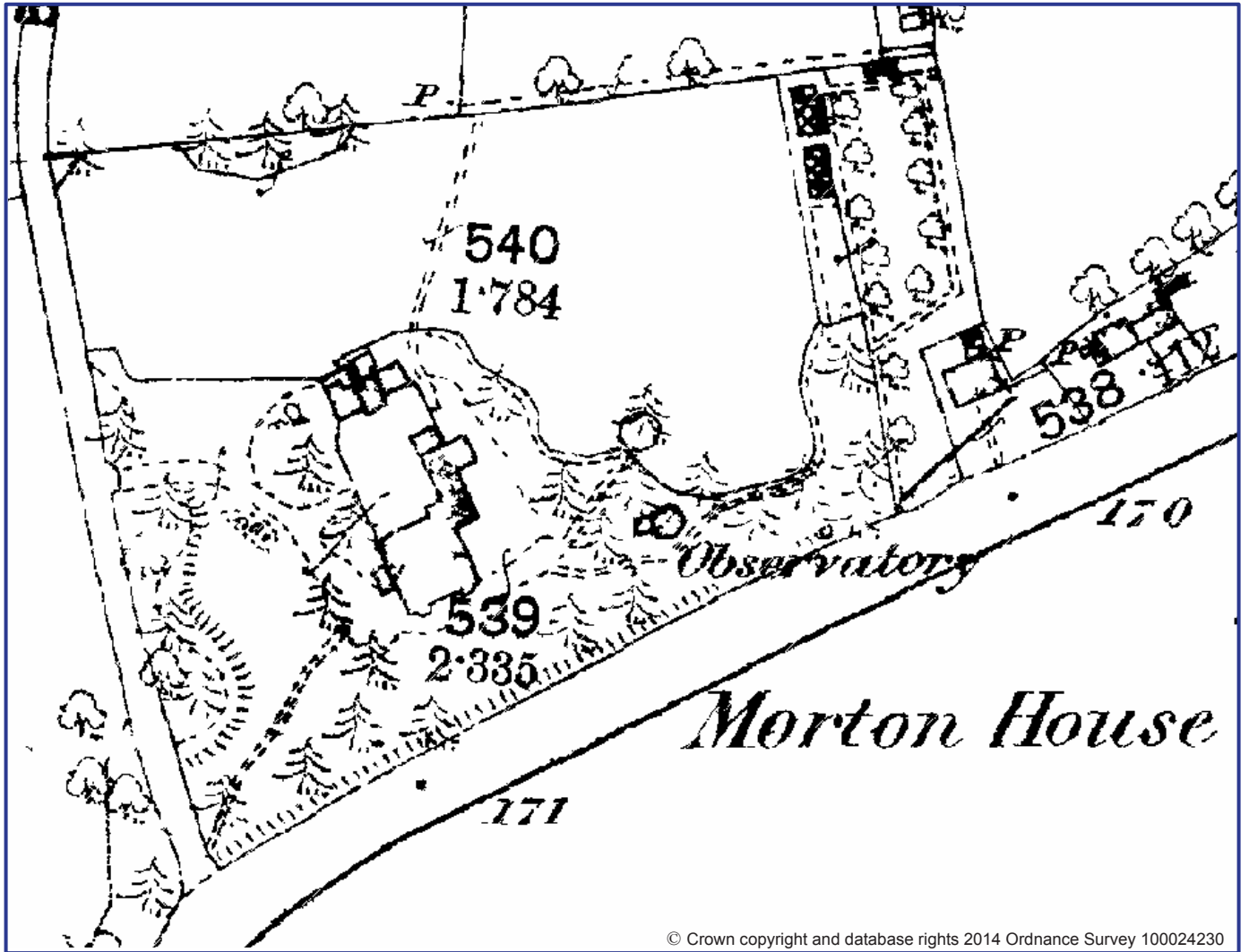
Archaeological Data Service (ADS)

<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/>



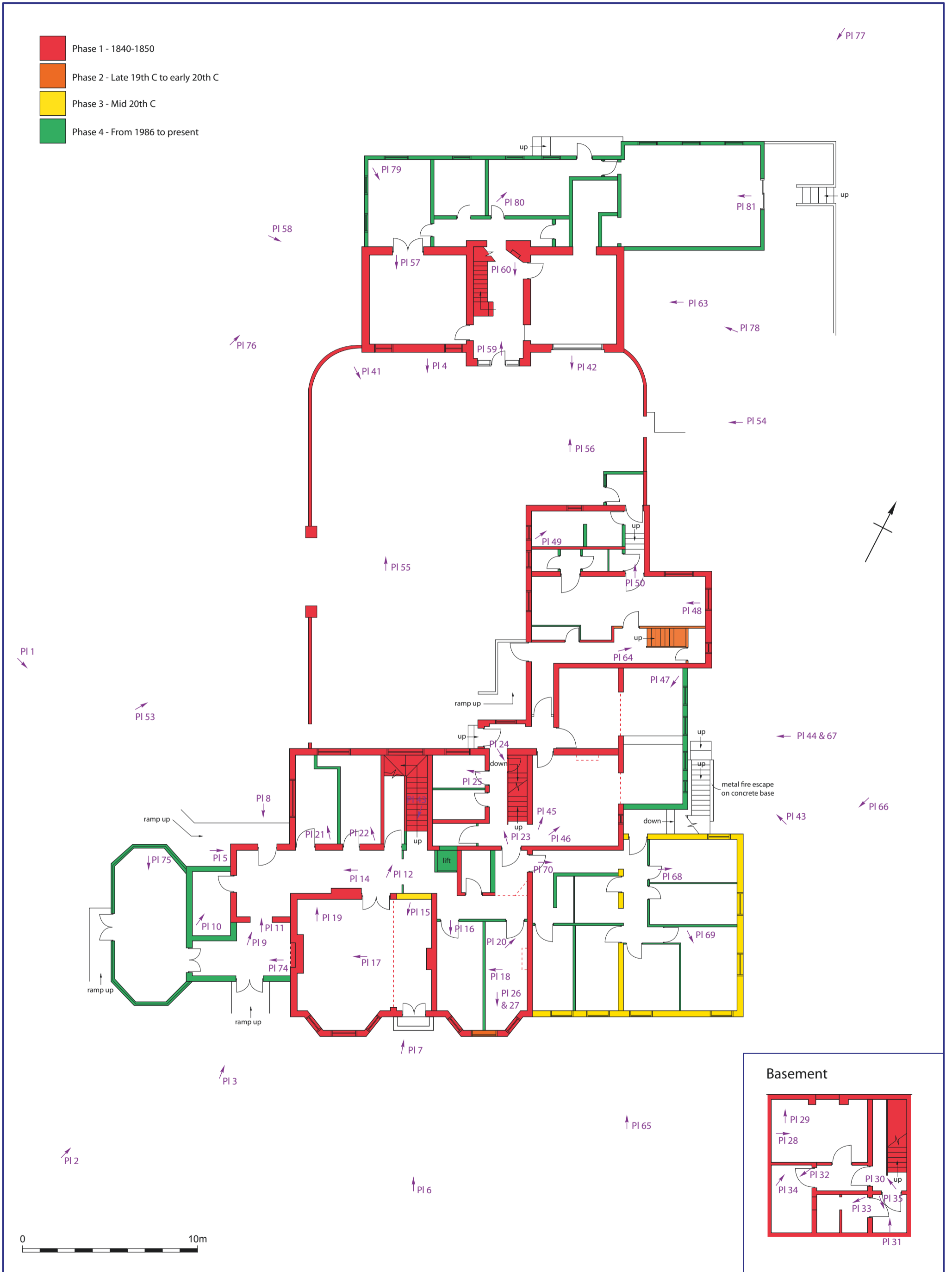
Location of the site

Figure 1



1883-4 Ordnance Survey map of the site

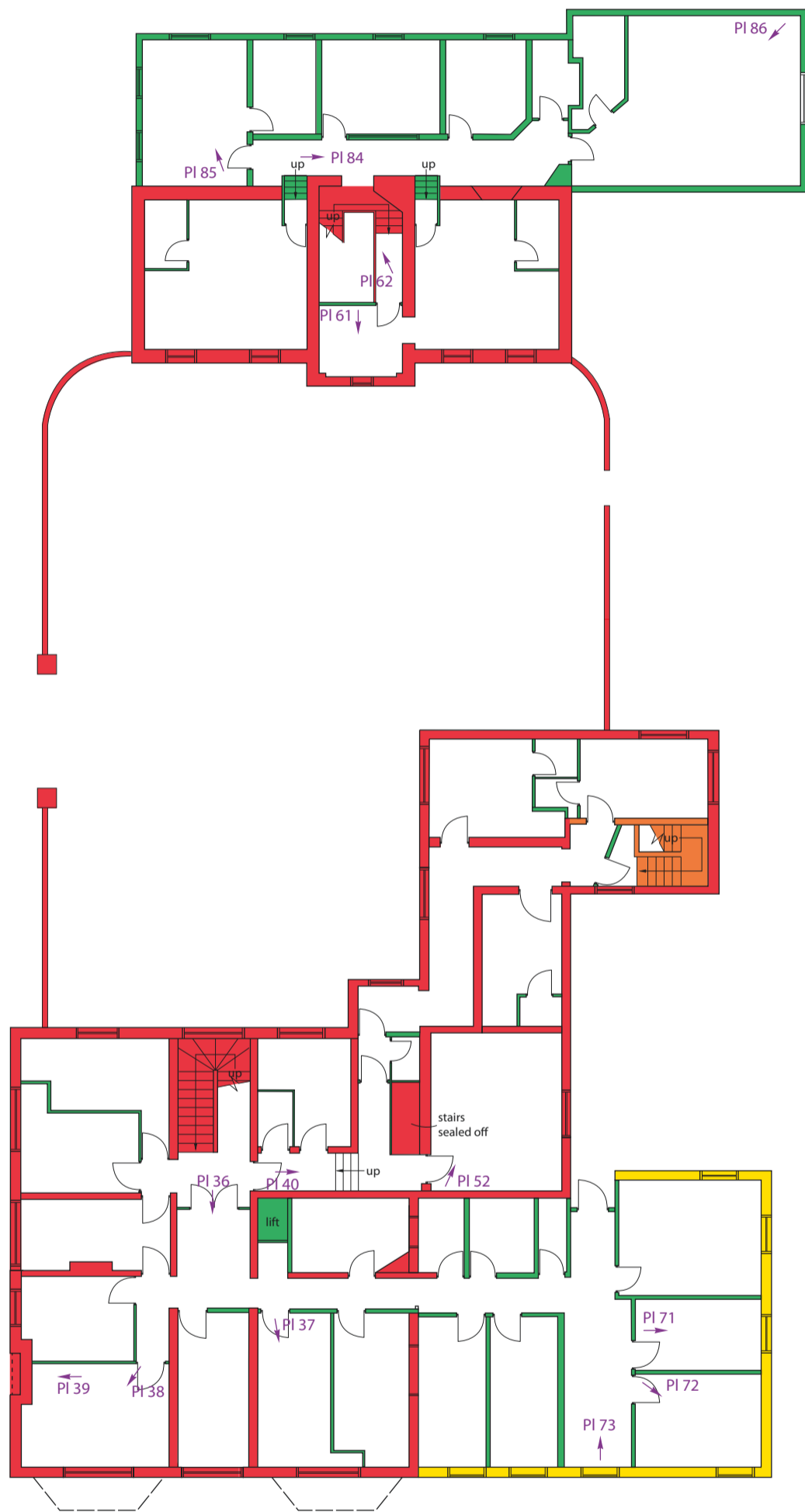
Figure 2



Ground floor and basement plans

Figure 3

- Phase 1 - 1840-1850
- Phase 2 - Late 19th C to early 20th C
- Phase 3 - Mid 20th C
- Phase 4 - From 1986 to present



0 10m

First floor plans

Figure 4



1980s or later extension

stone quoins

inserted window

inserted and blocked door

mid 20th C extension



South east elevation

Figure 5

SOUTH WEST ELEVATION



NORTH EAST ELEVATION



South west and north east elevations

Figure 6