

DODDERHILL BUILDING
RECORDING
Wychbold Court, Dodderhill

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Dodderhill Building Recording – Wychbold Court, Dodderhill

Shona Robson-Glyde

Part 1 Project summary

Building recording was undertaken at Wychbold Court, Dodderhill, Worcestershire (NGR SO 92250 66274). It was undertaken on behalf of the Dodderhill Research Group. The project aimed to establish the character and history of the building.

The survey of Wychbold Court showed that the first known phase of building on the site could be dated to the 15th or early 16th century. The only surviving fabric of this period consisted of the current kitchen wing. In the late 16th century the parlour wing was constructed and in the 17th century a long range was built to the rear of the wings, probably replacing an earlier structure. This range included a service area, open hall with smoke bay and a parlour area. Late in the 17th century the hall was floored over. In the 19th century a number of extensions were added to the rear of the building and internal fittings were added to some of the rooms.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

Building recording was undertaken at Wychbold Court, (NGR SO 92550 66274), Dodderhill, Worcestershire (Fig 1), on behalf of the Dodderhill Research Group.

1.1 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (IFA 2001) and *Recording historic buildings: a descriptive specification (3rd edition)* (RCHME 1996).

1.2 Aims

The aims of the recording were to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of the building.

2. Historical context

Wychbold Court is located on the Worcester Road in the centre of Wychbold. It is recorded on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record as WSM 1949 and is described as ‘a fine old timber black and white house ... 16th century nucleus with 17th century additions’. It is also a grade II listed house and is described in the listing text as follows:

Farmhouse. Early C17 with early C19 and C20 alterations. Timber-frame with some painted brick and some wattle-and-daub infill; partly faced in painted sandstone, tile roof. U-plan, cross-wings timber-framed, main block faced in sandstone. Two storeys; 1:2:1 windows: C20 3-light casements; ground floor: angled bays to projecting wings, main part has 3-light casement to left and half-glazed door to right in early C19 doorcase. Framing: left cross-wing: four square panels high with curved tension braces; gable: three queen struts to collar, V-struts above; right cross-wing: two square panels to first floor, ground floor close-studded with mid-rail; gable: two collars with queen struts, V-struts in apex (most of gable is painted, many timbers missing). Main block, framing visible at rear, four square panels high. Interior not inspected (DoE 1985, SO 96 NW 6/24).

There are a number of other records relating to the area around Wychbold Court on the Historic Environment Record. These include two areas of ridge and furrow in the fields to the south-east of the house (WSM 5635 and 5636). Wychbold Court was run as a farm, and the outbuildings seen on the map (Fig 1) were the farm buildings (now converted into dwellings) for the Court. At the time of the Dodderhill tithe in 1845, Wychbold Court was owned by William Lilley who was farming the land around the buildings. For a recent study of the history of Wychbold Court see Stewart (2002).

3. Results

Wychbold Court was recorded in February and March 2006, and this survey has allowed a basic chronology to be produced for the building.

3.1 Structural analysis

The results of the structural analysis are presented below and can be seen on Figure 2.

3.1.1 Phase 1 – 15th or early 16th century

The oldest surviving part of Wychbold Court dates to the 15th or early 16th century, the fabric dating to this earliest period occurs in the current kitchen wing (Fig 3). It is unknown what

function this part of the house originally had due to it being the only part of the medieval structure surviving. The framing of this wing suggests that the building originally ran further to the east but has been cut short by later additions. It is possible that this phase was not the earliest building on the site. An earlier, or contemporary, hall may have stood against which this medieval building was constructed.

3.1.2 **Phase 2 – Late 16th century**

At this time, the parlour wing (Fig 4) was constructed. This close studded and square frame built structure can be dated to a very short period of time, 1595-1625. This wing would have been an extension to an existing building, built at the same time or earlier than phase 1.

3.1.3 **Phase 3 – Mid to late 17th century**

At this time a large rectangular hall and service range was constructed. The roof timbers for this phase show that they are reused timbers (Fig 5) and probably were part of the medieval (pre phase 1) house that this range replaced. At the time of recording, the cellar was partly flooded so it was not possible to fully analyse the timbers visible within the cellar. However, when Nick Molyneux and Stephen Price visited the building they recorded that ‘the relationship between the [parlour] wing and the main range can be established from within the cellar. A gap between the wing and the main range enables us to observe that the wall of the main range is plastered over daub which was originally open to the wing. The unweathered nature of this wall demonstrates that the main range is secondary to the wing’ (Molyneux and Price 1997). This shows that the parlour (Phase 2) was built prior to the 17th century construction of the hall range (Phase 3).

Much of the framing for this main range is no longer visible on the exterior. It has been replaced on the front with a sandstone wall (Fig 6) and been partly replaced in brick on the rear elevation (Fig 7). The brickwork is probably 19th century, but the date of the sandstone construction is unsure and could be as early as the late 17th century.

The layout seems to have included a central hall with service area at the north end, including the phase 1 kitchen wing and a parlour at the south end, including the Phase 2 parlour wing. When the owner of the building died in 1690, the inventory recorded the following rooms: ‘kitchen, buttery parlour, kitchen at the great house, pantry, hall, parlour, parlour chamber, pantry chamber, painted chamber, cheese chamber, and the kiln house’ (Stewart 2002, 8). Obviously there are some buildings not surviving that are included on this list (eg the ‘kiln house’), and it is also possible that this inventory dates to prior the construction of the hall range. It has been possible to place at least some of these rooms into the surviving building (see Fig 2).

The hall possibly had a cross or screens passage at its south-end. The position of a possible cross passage door can be seen in the garden elevation of the building (Fig 8). It is unusual for a cross passage to be between a hall and parlour only. The usual arrangement is that the passage would be between the hall and a servant’s area, such as a kitchen, buttery or pantry. At this time the position of the kitchen is unknown and it may even have been detached from the hall. Therefore the door visible on the rear elevation may have been an entrance into the hall only. A more likely position of a cross passage is at the north end of the building between the current utility area and dining room and suggests that this end of the building has always been a service area.

The hall included a large ground-floor inglenook fireplace. The evidence for this can be seen in the roof space where a small area is found between two trusses that are completely blackened (Fig 9). This is a smoke bay, which was a space used as a chimneystack for a ground-floor fireplace.

3.1.4 **Phase 4 – Late 17th century (potentially post-1690 based on the documentary evidence)**

At this time the hall appears to have had a floor inserted and the fireplace was moved to the east wall. The twin stacks of the chimneys for this fireplace date this change to the late 17th century. The ceiling in the dining room, part of the hall flooring, has carved timbers of this date (Fig 10). The flooring of an open hall was typically carried out by the early 17th century, and as such

Wychbold Court seems to be a late construction of an open hall that was then floored over relatively soon after it was built.

3.1.5 **Phase 5 – Early to mid 19th century**

In the early 19th century a brick extension was added to the rear of the building (Fig 11). It has been suggested by Molyneux and Price (1997) that this might be a kitchen extension. However, it is also likely that this extension was a washhouse or part of a stabling area.

In the later 19th century one of the ground floor rooms was fitted out as a cold room or dairy, the fittings of which included a slate cold shelf (Fig 12) that still exists. It is possible that this room was used as a service area prior to the 19th century.

Also at this time the oldest surviving part of the building became a kitchen, the fittings of which also still exist including the sliding shutters (Fig 13) and fireplace surround (Fig 14). This would then have superseded the earlier brick built possible kitchen extension (mentioned above) that had been built against the rear of the building.

Also in this phase, the main chimneystacks (Phase 4) were rebuilt (see Fig 7 right-hand side), reusing the original bricks but using 19th century cement-based mortar. It is likely that the rebuilding of the rear elevation of the hall in brick took place at this time as well.

The farm buildings attached to the rear of the house and now converted to dwellings, were an integral part of the farm business run from Wychbold Court. The most interesting feature of these buildings is the incorporation of bee boles (shelves for bee skeps) into the south face of the long range (Fig 15). This feature is a fairly unusual feature of farm estates in the Midlands. There are only three bee boles recorded in Worcestershire on the International Bee Research Association 'Bee Boles Register' (IBRA 2006).

3.1.6 **Phase 6 – Late 19th century/early 20th century**

The last phase of development at Wychbold was the construction of the stables and office to the rear of the 19th century (Phase 5) possible kitchen extension (Figs 16-17). A later office building has obviously been created by the conversion of a washhouse or other outbuildings.

At this time the frontage of the house looked totally different to the way it does today, due to the large number of extra timbers painted onto the infill of the timber framing, and a postcard of 1903 shows the building as it appeared prior to this superficial alteration to its appearance (Fig 18).

4. **Synthesis**

Wychbold Court has proven to be a building of great interest, and the scale of the medieval building at Wychbold Court, as represented by its surviving range, would indicate the home of a notable Wychbold family. The surviving structure of the kitchen wing (Phase 1) shows that there was a medieval house on the site that probably covered much of the footprint of the current building prior to the building of the 17th century hall (Phase 3). This construction, which reused medieval timbers, caused some confusion as to the date of the building initially and also because it was such a late date to for the construction of an open hall with smoke bay. The layout of the main house, despite later additions and slight alterations, has not changed since its plan of c1700.

5. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service 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.

Building recording was undertaken on behalf of the Dodderhill Research Group at Wychbold Court, Dodderhill, Worcestershire (NGR ref SO 92250 66274; SMR ref WSM 34064). This survey showed that the first phase of building on the site could be dated to the 15th to early 16th century, the surviving fabric of this period being the current kitchen wing. In the late 16th century the parlour wing was constructed and in the 17th century a long range was built to the rear of the wings, probably replacing an earlier structure. This range included a service area, open hall with smoke bay and a parlour area. Late in the 17th century the hall was floored over. Later alterations have not substantially affected the main building plan as it had developed by c1700, as these were mainly service additions to the rear of the main house.

6. The archive

The archive consists of:

- 6 Photographic records AS3
- 247 Digital photographs
- 1 Building record form AS43a
- 6 Building record phase forms AS43b
- 1 Scale drawing
- 1 Computer disk

7. Acknowledgements

The Service would particularly like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the conclusion of this project: Julie Kriss and her sons. Mrs Brettell made available by kind permission of the John Brettell Collection an early postcard of Wychbold Court (Figure 18), and Cheryl Stewart helpfully commented on aspects of the historical background to the house.

8. Personnel

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Shona Robson-Glyde. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Derek Hurst. Fieldwork was undertaken by Shona Robson-Glyde, and illustration by Shona Robson-Glyde and Carolyn Hunt.

9. Bibliography

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RCHME, 1996 *Recording historic buildings: a descriptive specification (3rd edition)*, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

Stewart, C 2002 A history of Wychbold Court, *Dodderhill Parish History Notes*, pp6-11

10. **Abbreviations**

SMR Sites and Monuments Record.

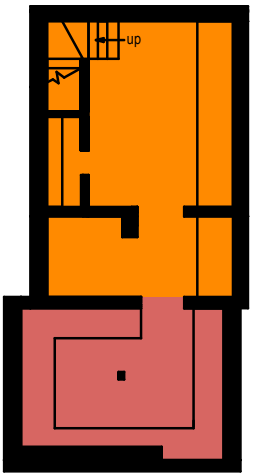
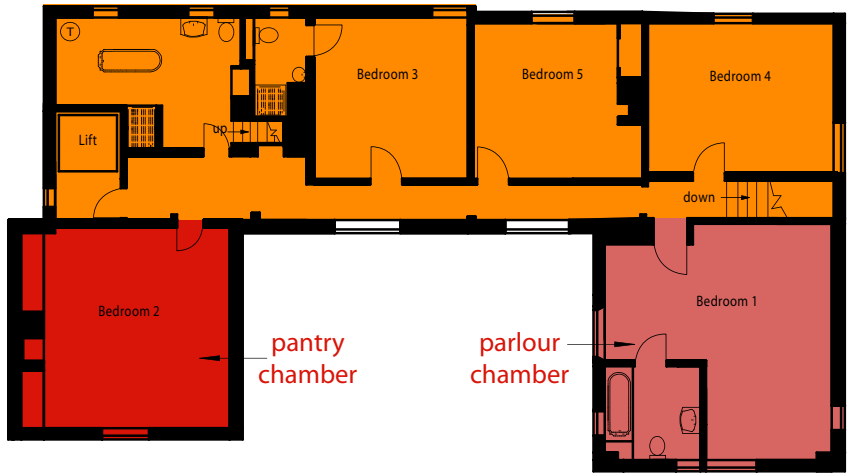
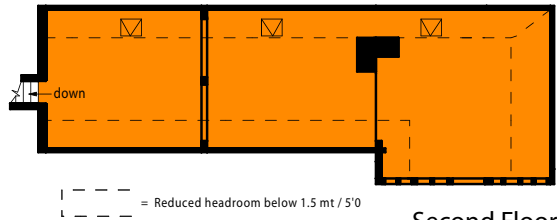
WSM Numbers prefixed with ‘WSM’ are the primary reference numbers used by the
Worcestershire County Historic Environment Record.

11. **Appendix 1 Figures**



Figure 1

- Phase 1: 15th or early 16th century
- Phase 2: Late 16th century
- Phase 3: Mid to late 17th century
- Phase 4: Late 17th century
- Phase 5: Early 19th century
- Phase 5: Mid 19th century
- Phase 6: Late 19th / early 20th century
- Mid to late 20th century



Not to scale. Based on estate agents particulars.

Phased ground plan of Wychbold Court (red labeling indicates possible 17th century room functions)

Figure 2



Figure 3: Front elevation of original building phase (15th – early 16th century)



Figure 4: Late 16th century parlour wing



Figure 5: Reused timbers in roof space of 17th century main range



Figure 6: Front elevation of 17th century range, later rebuilt in sandstone



Figure 7: Rear elevation of 17th century range partly rebuilt in brick.



Figure 8: Rear elevation of 17th century hall range showing position of possible cross passage



Figure 9: Blackened plaster and timbers of smoke bay in roof space



Figure 10: Carved joists in ceiling of the dining room



Figure 11: 19th century possible kitchen extension to rear



Figure 12: Cold shelf in dairy



Figure 13: Sliding shutters in 19th century kitchen (shown on left hand side)



Figure 14: Fireplace surround in 19th century kitchen



Figure 15: Bee boles in barn wall



Figure 16: Late 19th century 'office' extension



Figure 17: Late 19th century stable extension



Figure 18: 1903 postcard of Wychbold Court (© John Brettell Collection with permission)