

Building recording of the oast house at Maple Cross Farm, Cotheridge, Worcestershire



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Tim Cornah

Summary

Building recording was required to meet a planning condition relating to the redevelopment of the oast house at Maple Cross Farm, Cotheridge, Worcestershire.

The planning condition specified that the building should be recorded and to English Heritage specified standards. This required photographing the exterior and interior of the building and annotating existing survey drawings. This produced an archive of the building before any changes were made.

An element of historical research and synthesis was also a condition planning approval. Historic maps and trade directories relating to Maple Cross Farm were studied along with other online sources.

Analysis of the oast house was based upon the recorded fabric and documentary research. 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 oast house at Maple Cross Farm is a small three bay brick building likely to date to the first half of the 19th century and post-dating the farmhouse. Its original use appears to have been multifunctional, incorporating both crop storage as well as an unknown process which required heat. The building was converted for clear use as an oast house within the later 19th century at a time when hops were documented as being grown on the farm. The oast house had gone out of use by the middle of the 20th century.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

Recording of a historic building was undertaken of the oast house at Maple Cross Farm, Cotheridge, Worcestershire (NGR SO 79056 56167). It was commissioned by Ben Greenaway of EJ Planning Ltd, whose client intends the conversion of the oast house to single unit residential accommodation. A planning application has been submitted to Malvern Hills District Council (reference 15/01247/FUL).

The building is an undesignated heritage asset within the terms used by the *National Planning Policy Framework*. The building is also registered with the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER; WSM59623, WSM68080).

No brief was prepared though a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2016). This conformed to the generality of briefs.

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

The event reference for this project, given by the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) is WSM67936.

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 comply with the generality of briefs previously issued and are as follows:

- A programme of Archaeological Building Investigation and Recording to Historic England (formerly English Heritage) Level III standard is required prior to the conversion of the Oast House in order to ensure the preservation by record of this heritage asset in its current form. The aim of this survey is to:
 - Provide a descriptive and illustrative account and interpretation of the Oast house, including discussion of its local, regional and national significance.
- A Level III record is defined as follows:-
 - '... An analytical record, and will comprise an introductory description followed by a systematic account of the buildings origins, development and use, The record will include an account of the evidence on which the analyses has been based, allowing the validity of the record to be re-examined in detail. It will also include all drawn and photographic records that may be required to illustrate the buildings appearance and structure to support an historical analysis'. (*Understanding Historic Buildings – A guide to good recording practice*. Historic England 2006 p. 14).

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Timothy Cornah (BA (hons.), MS; who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006 and has been practicing archaeology since 2003. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (hons.); MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Laura Templeton (BA; PG Cert; MCIfA).

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

- 1703 Thomas Smith map (WROBAr970/5:93)
- 1884 Ordnance Survey map 1:10560
- 1904 Ordnance Survey map 1:10560
- 1930 Ordnance Survey map 1:10560

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 2016).

Fieldwork was undertaken on 6 May 2016. The site reference number and site code is WSM67936.

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 Phase sheets, 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 1-24. Phase plans and elevations have been reproduced as Figure 3.

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 following is taken from the HER, which was searched within a 500m radius, centred on Maple Cross Farm.

The region is comprised of a rolling lowland topography, with the underlying geology being comprised of Mercian mudstone. The farm is located to the north of the village of Cotheridge within an area of irregular fields, though some fields to the north appear typical of parliamentary enclosure. Some blocks of semi-natural ancient woodland and orchard remain in the area.

Only a small number of archaeological features are recorded or suggested within the search area. A small number of prehistoric finds have been found within the parish of Cotheridge (WSM42283) and the route of "Aeti's Road", an Anglo-Saxon track way is thought to pass across Broadheath Common (WSM47290). Its subsequent course is unknown. Some extant medieval ridge and furrow remains to the north of the farm (WSM42249).

The rest of the records relate to Maple Cross Farm itself. These are the farmhouse itself (WSM51973), outbuilding (WSM68080) and a cider press (WSM68077), all of which are extant. There were further buildings depicted on the historic mapping (WSM68081) and a cider house appears to have existed over the cider press (WSM68077). The record for the farmstead itself (WSM59623) is described as follows;

Maple's Cross Farm, Cotheridge. Partially extant 19th century (?) unlisted farmstead with unconverted buildings. Regular courtyard with L-plan range plus detached buildings to the third side of the yard. Additional, prominent detached elements to the main plan. The farmhouse is detached with side on to the yard. There has been a partial loss (less than 50%) of traditional buildings. Isolated location. Large modern sheds are located on the site.

5 The building

5.1 Historical information

The earliest mapping dates to the Thomas Smith map of 1703 which covers the farm and its environs (WROBAr970/5:93). No buildings are visible on this plot, though there are buildings depicted to both the north and east. It is noticeable that a track runs from Cotheridge to the south and joins to the position to the extant access to Maple Cross Farm from the north. The Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping of 1884 shows that this track has largely become redundant to the south. It also shows the outbuildings outlined above and the oast house as recorded here. A yard is shown extending from the position of the extant external steps, enclosing the house and a further building. The farm is shown immediately surrounded by orchards. The same details are shown on the 1904 OS map (Figure 2) and again in 1930.

Some detail of the ownership and use of the farm is recorded in local trade directories. A farmer at Maples Cross is first mentioned in 1855 (Billings) and named as Nathaniel Daniel. The same name is given in both 1868 and 1876 (Kelly). By 1879 Joseph Daniel is the registered farmer, though resident at Elms Farm in St Johns (Littlebury's). By 1892 Joseph Daniels wife, not named, is listed

as farmer and hop grower (Kelly) and this is the same in 1900. Through to 1924, the ownership remained the same but she was registered only as a farmer, not a hop grower. By 1928, Nathaniel Daniel was the registered farmer (Kelly).

5.2 Building development

5.2.1 Phase 1: Early to mid-19th century

This phase of this building was a three bay brick built structure (Plate 3 and Plate 4) that post-dated the farmhouse, with the two floors containing two rooms each. The larger of the rooms on both floors were both accessed from the southern side, though extant steps to the first floor were Phase 2 replacements (Plate 5). The rooms were divided by a brick wall (Plate 6 and Plate 7) though that on the first floor was a Phase 3 replacement. The larger first floor room was itself split by an interrupted tie beam truss that allowed access throughout (Plate 8).

This tie beam truss was constructed of oak and converted by hand as opposed to mechanised saw. Though not conclusive, this would suggest an earlier 19th century date as throughout the century mechanised sawing became increasingly common (Jones and Simons 1961). The use of wooden pegs, iron bolting and a king post (Plate 9) are also typical of 18th and 19th century roof trusses.

There were a few features within this first floor larger room that suggest its use. The first were hooks attached to the truss and the purlins presumably used for hanging goods, potentially "pockets" of hops (Plate 9). Whilst these may belong to the original phase, they may date to Phase 2. The same may be said for a small hole in the base of the external door (Plate 10). This was a common feature in granaries to allow the farm cats in to control vermin (Lake 1989). Visible in the joists of the floor in the room below was a former opening (Plate 11), presumably to allow sacks of crops to be lifted into the room above. A further feature of interest was a candle burn mark on the first floor truss (Plate 12). These are increasingly recognised as apotropaic symbols of protection but this may not be the case here.

The larger of the ground floor rooms was spanned by an oak beam and common floor joists, also converted by hand. The function of this space (Plate 13) is not clear, though it had a chimney flue in its north-west corner (Plate 14). Its function is uncertain; it is unlikely to have been related to brewing, a back kitchen or feed processing given that these would create steam directly below where crops are likely to have been stored.

The smaller rooms on both floors had been changed to a large degree, leaving no obvious features of this phase (Plate 15 and Plate 16). Their function is therefore not clear. They were both accessed from the larger rooms and had windows in the gable end (Plate 17), though the first floor window was blocked during Phase 2.

Whilst this building was used in Phase 2 as an oast house, it is not certain that this was its original purpose. Crop storage was clearly part of its use, along with a process which required heat. Buildings such as brew houses, back kitchens and granaries were usually built close to the farmhouse, though it was not clearly any one of those, so a multi-purpose use is more likely.

5.2.2 Phase 2: Mid to late 19th century

This phase saw the clear conversion of this building into an oast house for the drying and storage of hops. The roof of the of the small first floor room was heightened using brick (Plate 3) and a softwood timber roof, itself capped by tiles (Plate 24). A vent is visible on its western gable (Plate 18) and it had two floors added internally, though these were removed in Phase 3. Evidence for their former presence could be seen in sections of replaced brickwork internally (Plate 19). These floors would have been vented and green hops laid on them in order to dry them out from a heat source below. No remains of the heat source in the ground floor room survive.

Probably during this phase, the brick staircase leading to the first floor was replaced (Plate 5), though the porch above is likely to date from Phase 1.

An interesting detail of this phase is some graffiti on the eastern gable wall. One inscription reads "H Daniel 1897" (Plate 20) whilst there are also further inscriptions of "H D" and "R D" (Plate 21). Near vertical striations are also present on the external brickwork next to the first floor door (Plate 22). It is possible that these were tallies of crop loads. Next to the ground floor door was some pictorial graffiti, also externally (Plate 23). The meaning or otherwise is unclear.

5.2.3 Phase 3: Mid 20th century

This phase saw the removal of the drying floors and the patch of the brickwork in these areas (Plate 19). This is contemporary with a new wall with opening in the first floor, for which the same bricks were used. Both of the two extant floors in Phase 2 addition were added at this time. This building is likely to have been used for storage at this time, a function which continued.

6 Discussion

The building recorded during this project was a three bay brick structure built with a style that would not be untypical of a 19th century date. The carpentry methods used may suggest an earlier 19th century date, though this is not conclusive. No buildings were visible on this site on a map of 1703, though the farm was certainly established by 1855, as highlighted by the documentary evidence.

The building was added onto the east end of the farm house though its early function is unclear. The first floor showed evidence of crop storage, whilst the ground floor retained a former chimney flue. It seems likely that this building had multiple functions. Its function may have related partially to cider production, given the proximity of the cider press.

The addition of an extra structure onto its eastern end was part of the buildings conversion into an oast house. This saw the addition of drying floors and venting. No heat sources remain within the building on the ground floor. The date of this addition is suggested by the record of a farmer in 1892 also being called a hop grower, and again in 1900. No mention of hop growing was given in 1879, likewise from 1924 onwards.

The building had certainly gone out of use as an oast house in the middle of the 20th century as the drying floors were removed, and other floors added. This coincided with the addition of an extra wall on the first floor.

6.1 Research frameworks

There are no specific research frameworks associated with this type of building within the wider West-Midlands region. However the north-east of the county is known to have the majority of these buildings. Questions remain as to how hop kilns developed; it is noticeable that within the county they were placed at the core of the farmstead, often attached to the house and in close association with cider houses. In contrast, the hop kilns of the south east of England were often separated from the farmstead (Lake, Hathaway and Robson-Glyde 2014).

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.

A Historic building recording was undertaken on behalf of Ben Greenaway of EJ Planning Ltd of the oast house at Maple Cross Farm, Cotheridge, Worcestershire (NGR SO 79056 56167; HER ref WSM67936).

The oast house at Maple Cross Farm is a small three bay brick building likely to date to the first half of the 19th century and post-dating the farmhouse. Its original use appears to have been multifunctional, incorporating both crop storage as well as an unknown process which required heat. The building was converted for clear use as an oast house within the later 19th century at a

time when hops were documented as being grown on the farm. The oast house had gone out of use by the middle of the 20th century.

8 Acknowledgements

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9 Bibliography

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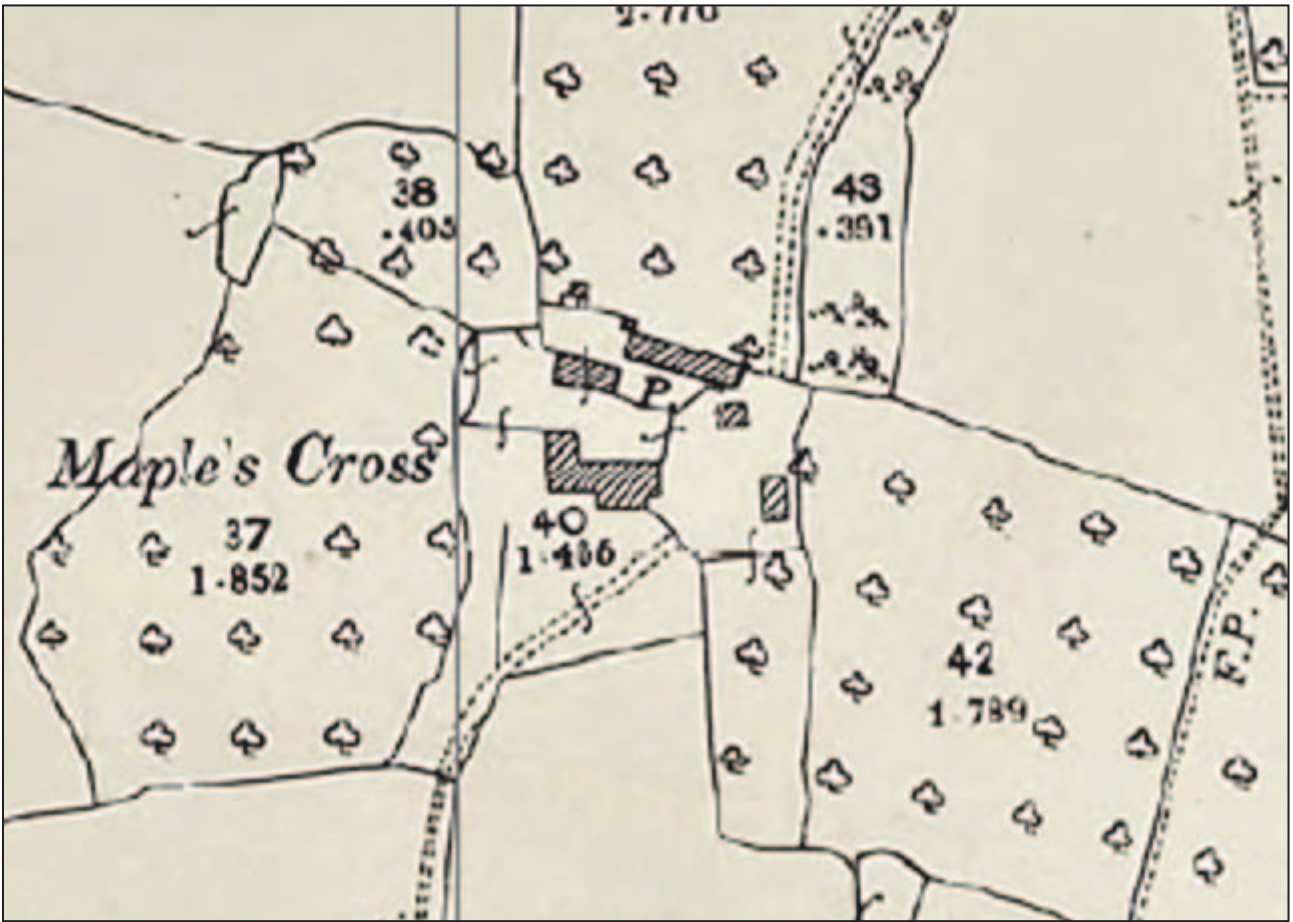
Figures



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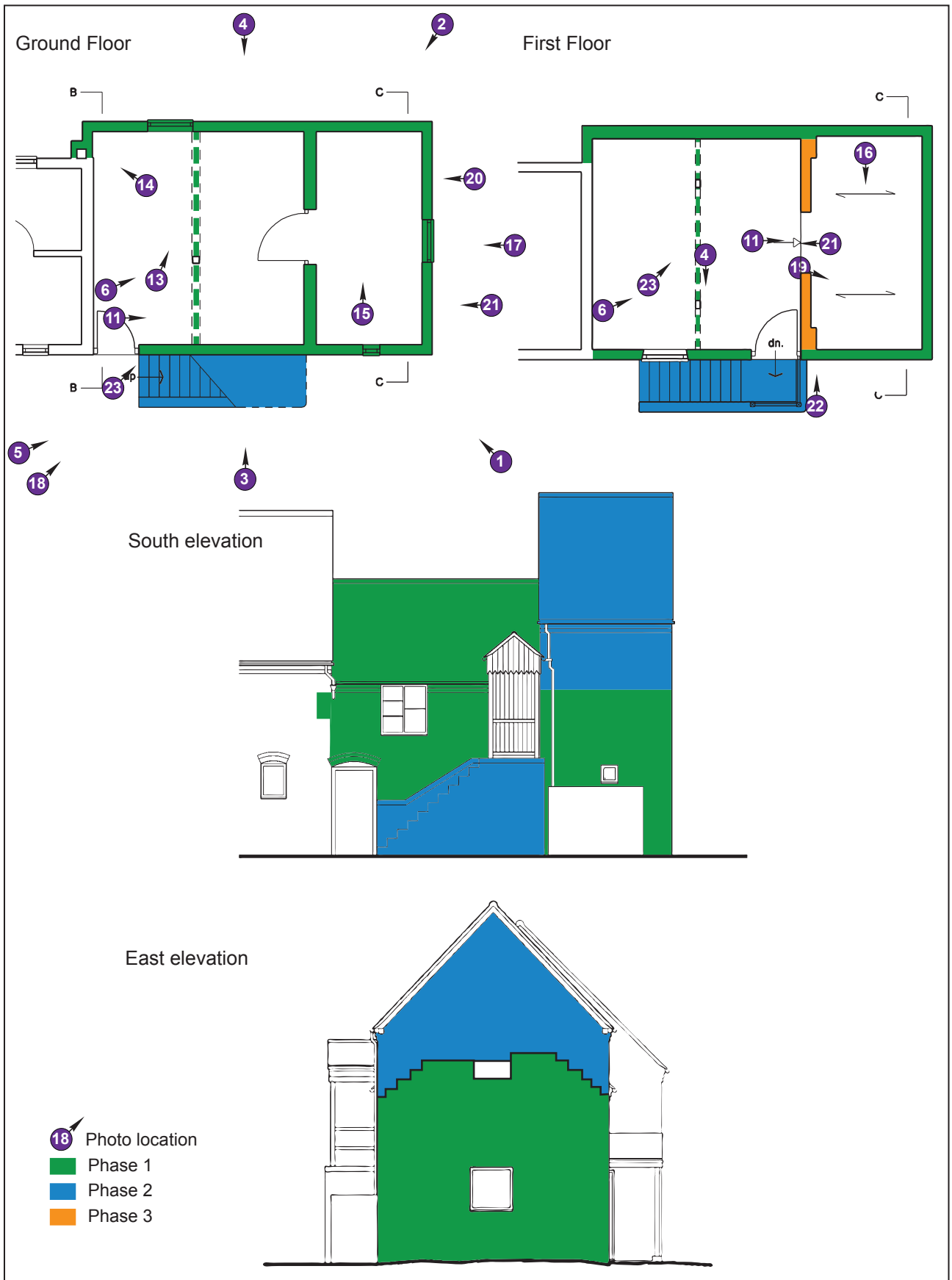
Location of the site

Figure 1



Ordnance Survey, 1904

Figure 2



Phased plans and elevations

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1 The building and farmhouse, looking north-west



Plate 2 The building and farmhouse, looking south-west



Plate 3 The building, looking north



Plate 4 The building, looking south



Plate 5 Phase 2 steps, looking north-east



Plate 6 Ground floor room, looking east



Plate 7 First floor room, looking east



Plate 8 First floor room, looking west



Plate 9 King post truss, looking north-east



Plate 10 First floor door, looking north-east

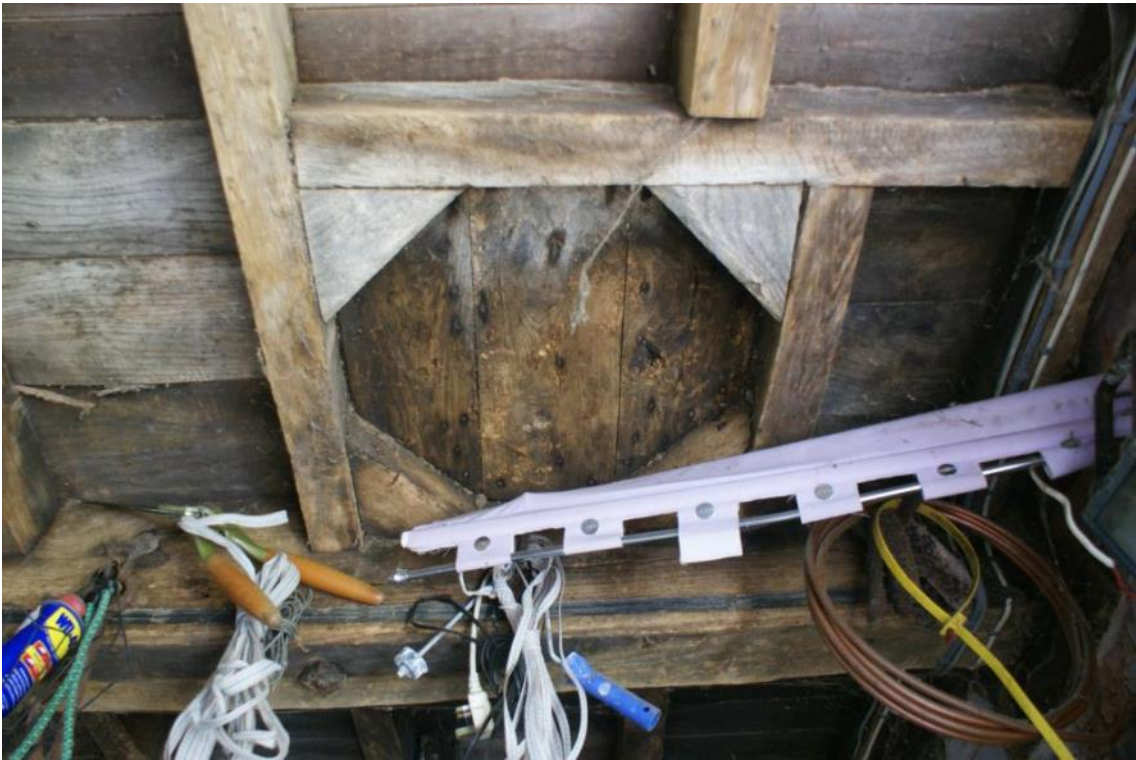


Plate 11 Former goods hole in first floor, looking east



Plate 12 Candle burn mark on first floor truss, looking south-east



Plate 13 First floor room, looking north



Plate 14 Former chimney flue, looking west



Plate 15 Smaller ground floor room, looking north



Plate 16 Smaller first floor room, looking south



Plate 17 Eastern gable, looking west



Plate 18 Vent hole in western gable, looking north-east



Plate 19 Replaced brickwork visible in smaller first floor room, looking west



Plate 20 Graffiti on eastern gable, looking west



Plate 21 Graffiti on eastern gable, looking west

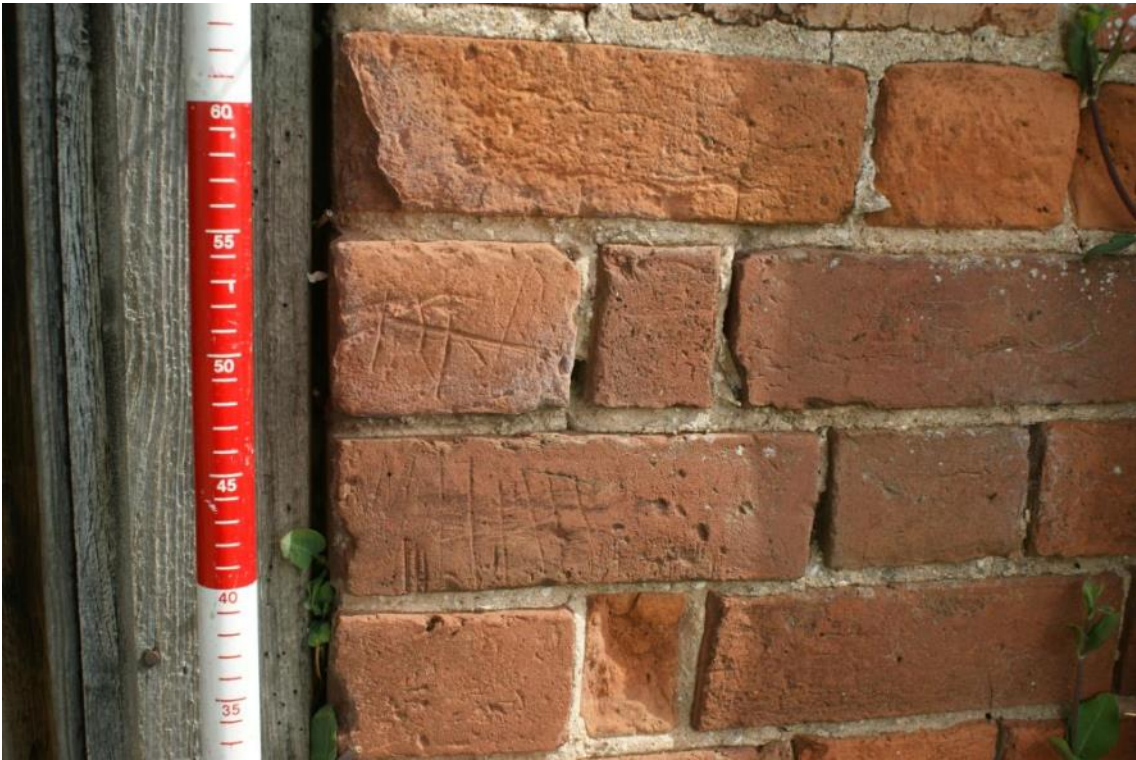


Plate 22 Graffiti by first floor door, looking north



Plate 23 Graffiti by ground floor door, looking north



Plate 24 Roof of Phase 2 addition, looking east

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 67936)

The archive consists of:

- 4 Building Phase Records AS45
- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 2 Photographic records AS3
- 136 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
