

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT

AND WATCHING BRIEF

ON

THE THREE HORSESHOES,

OLD MARSTON, OXFORD

NGR SU 39960 87900

On behalf of

Highland Projects

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REPORT FOR Highland Projects
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Three Horseshoes

Building Assessment and Watching Brief

SUMMARY

A building assessment was carried out on the former Three Horseshoe Public House, Oxford Road, Old Marston by John Moor Heritage Services. The building is a listed building and its structure makes it comparable to a three celled building of the 17th century, although only fragments of the original structure remain internally and most of what survives may be an 18th century rebuild. All of the outside walls of the structure remain.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location (Figure 1)

The former Three Horseshoe public house (NGR SP 52702 08724) is located in the historic village of Marston, now referred to as Old Marston. This was previously placed outside of Oxford, but has now been incorporated into the city; the reference Old is to distinguish the old established village from the suburbs, which have been given the designation New. The old public house lay on the old route into Oxford.

Topographically the village was located on a terrace alongside the River Cherwell, between 60-65m AOD.

The village is located on the second river terrace, which in turn lies over the Oxford clays (BGS 1982 Sheet 236).

1.2 Commission

The work was commissioned by Mr. Ray Foulk of Highland Projects.

1.3 Aim of Investigation

The aim of the investigation of the report is to identify what survives of the historic building and to make a record of the structure as it now stands and any exposed below ground remains found during the development.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Designations

The building is a grade 2 listed structure and lies in the conservation area of Old Marston Village. The listing (EHBID 246666: SP 52702 08724) is as follows:

Public house. Mid/late C18. Limestone rubble, partly rendered and colourwashed, with timber lintels; plain-tile roof with brick gable stacks. 3-unit plan. 2 storeys. 3-window front, at right angles to road, has 2 entrances between 3 windows; casements to left and centre and, to right, sash 6 panes wide. C20 casement at first floor. Rear has 3 casements at ground floor and runs

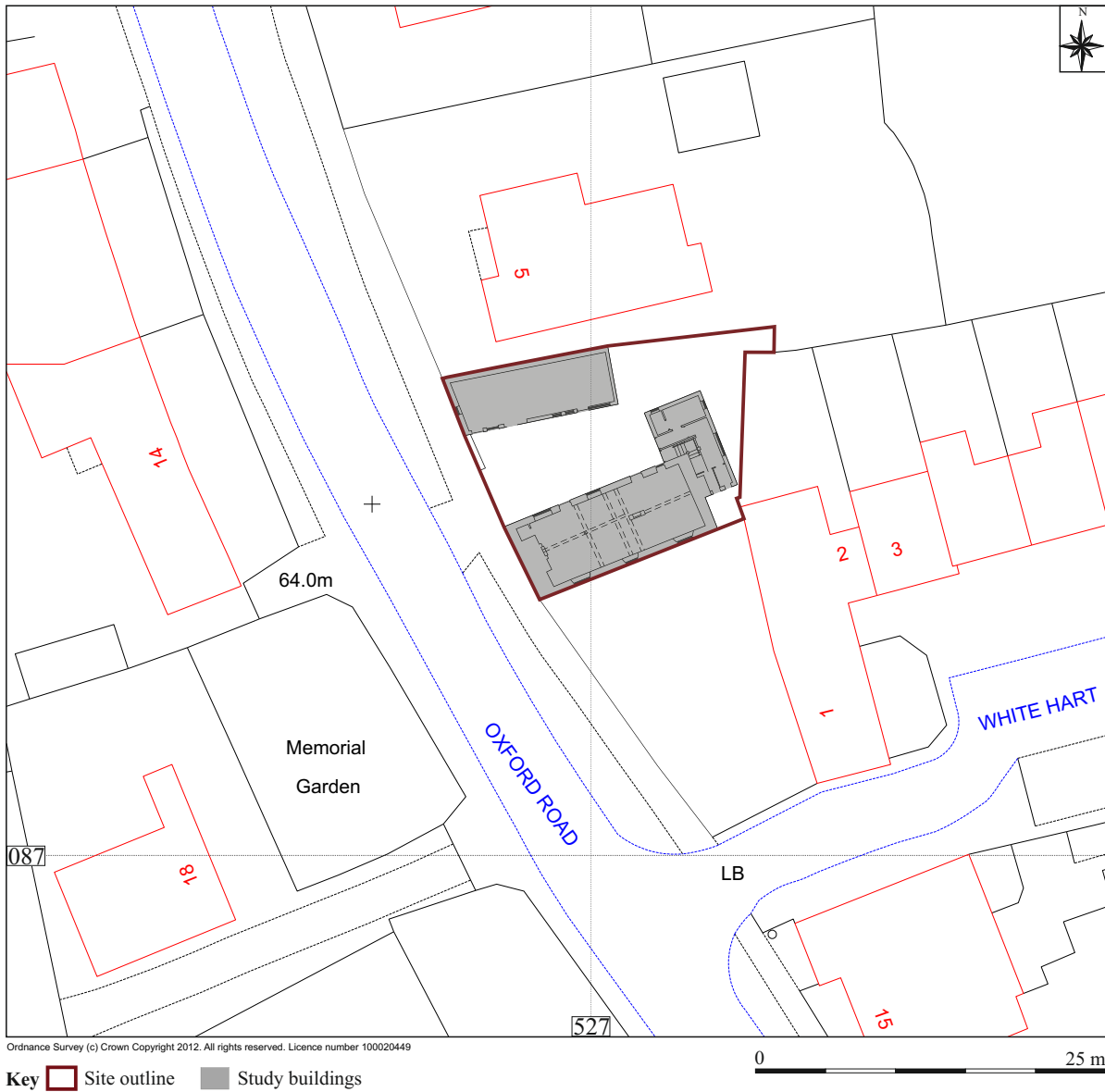
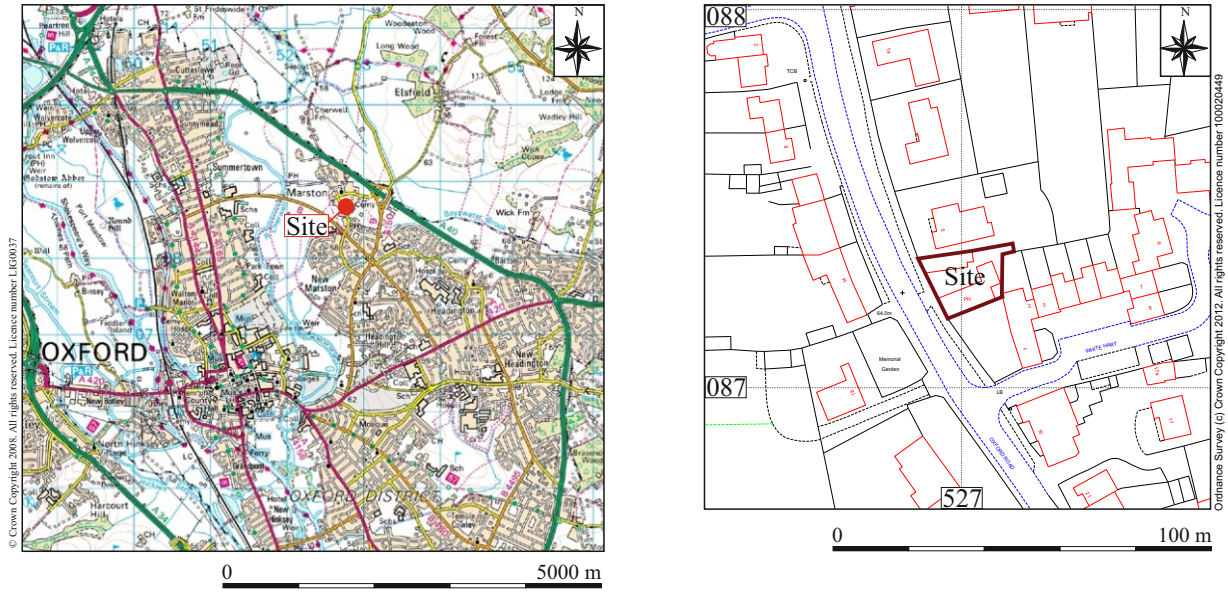


Figure 1. Site location



Key — Study building

Figure 2. Detail of Tithe Map of 1845 (ORO 263/M)

at right angles to the front of *The White Hart* (q.v.). Interior not inspected. Included for group value.

The designation makes it clear that the structure was included for group value. Hence the setting in which the structure was located was importance and that its protection is one of the many measures that protects the historic core of Old Marston and retains its unique character within the city of Oxford.

A previous historical assessment was carried out by Kate Brimblecombe (2009) in respect to a previous application in which it was suggested that the structure was basically 18th century, but may surround an earlier structure, a private house of the 17th century or a single story forge. There are some problems with this report especially with the description of the interior and the walls of the first floor.

2.2 History of Development

The name Marston was referred to as early as 1050 (though in a late 13th century document) as *Mersce*, with the suffix being added c. 1069 in *Merstune* (Gelling 1953, 181); though the VCH (1957, 214-221) does not accept the early dates placing the earliest reference at 1122. The etymology is *tūn* on marshy ground (Gelling 1953, 181).

The medieval manor was attached to the manor of Headington and the church was an attached chapel to the church of Headington (VCH 1957, 214-221). The manorial history is one of absentee landlords, apart from the Croke family of the 17th century (Brimblecombe 2009). Land in Marston was held as parcels of land by the colleges, chiefly Brasenose, and also as copyhold land by Yeoman farmers.

Map evidence for Marston survives back to 1605 at Corpus Christie College (ORO MPC744, MPC745), these maps show the road layout of the village with the church and seven houses. The Three Horseshoes is not one of these buildings, but the neighbouring White Hart is. The White Hart is also marked on the plan of 1769 (ORO MPC751), which is shown as a holding of Corpus Christie, where as the neighbouring land to the north is shown as belonging to Brasenose College. The area in-front of the White Hart is shown as part of the public road. That the Three Horseshoes is not shown on this map does not categorically prove that the building was not there, as it may have been owned by Brasenose College, and hence omitted. The Three Horseshoes and outbuilding are shown on the Tithe Map of 1845 (ORO 263/M), (Fig. 2). The building appears to be located on the land held on past maps by Corpus Christi, but the listings of owner and occupier reveal some interesting associations (fig. 2). The parcel of land on which the buildings are shown is numbered 98 and there is also 98a. The owners here are listed as Brasenose College and John Parker, while John Parker is listed as the occupier of plot 98 and it is listed as a malthouse, while William Mills is listed as the occupier of public house and premises. Plot 102 to the north of the Three Horseshoes is listed as being owned by Brasenose College and Mary Rippington while the occupier of the garden is listed as William *Steele*. This must be the William Steel who is the husband of Hannah Steel the recognised landlady in the license lists for 1856-63, and would imply that William Steel was the landlord in 1845. The indications that there was a malthouse associated with the White Hart may imply why these public houses were so arranged and so closely sited historically.

The Ordnance Survey map information was also produced by Brimblecombe (2009). There were four maps consulted: 1876, 1899, 1921, and 1937. These all show the building arrangements as they are now apart from the modern extension at the east end of the three celled unit.



Figure 3. Phased building plans

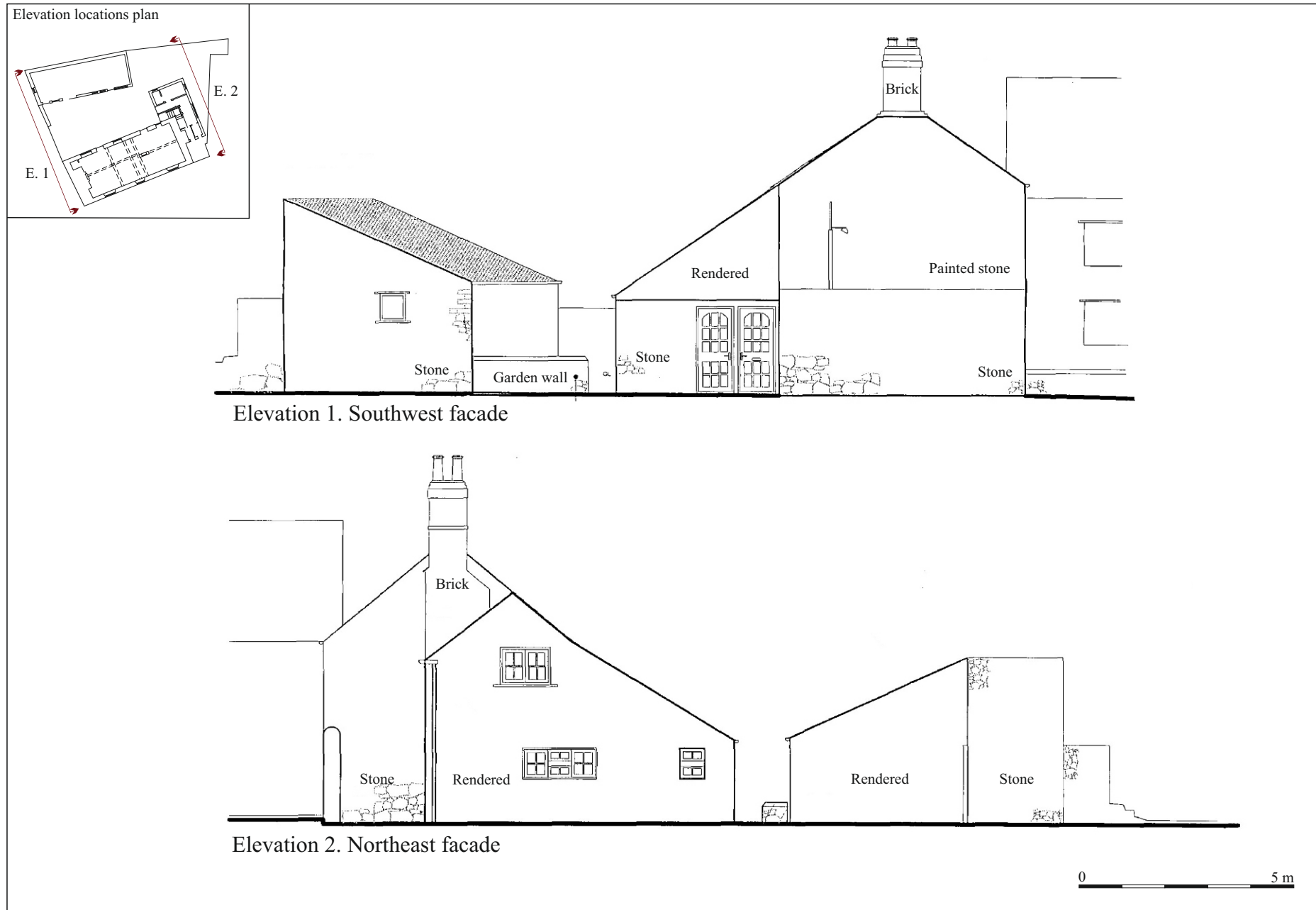


Figure 4. Southwest and northeast elevations

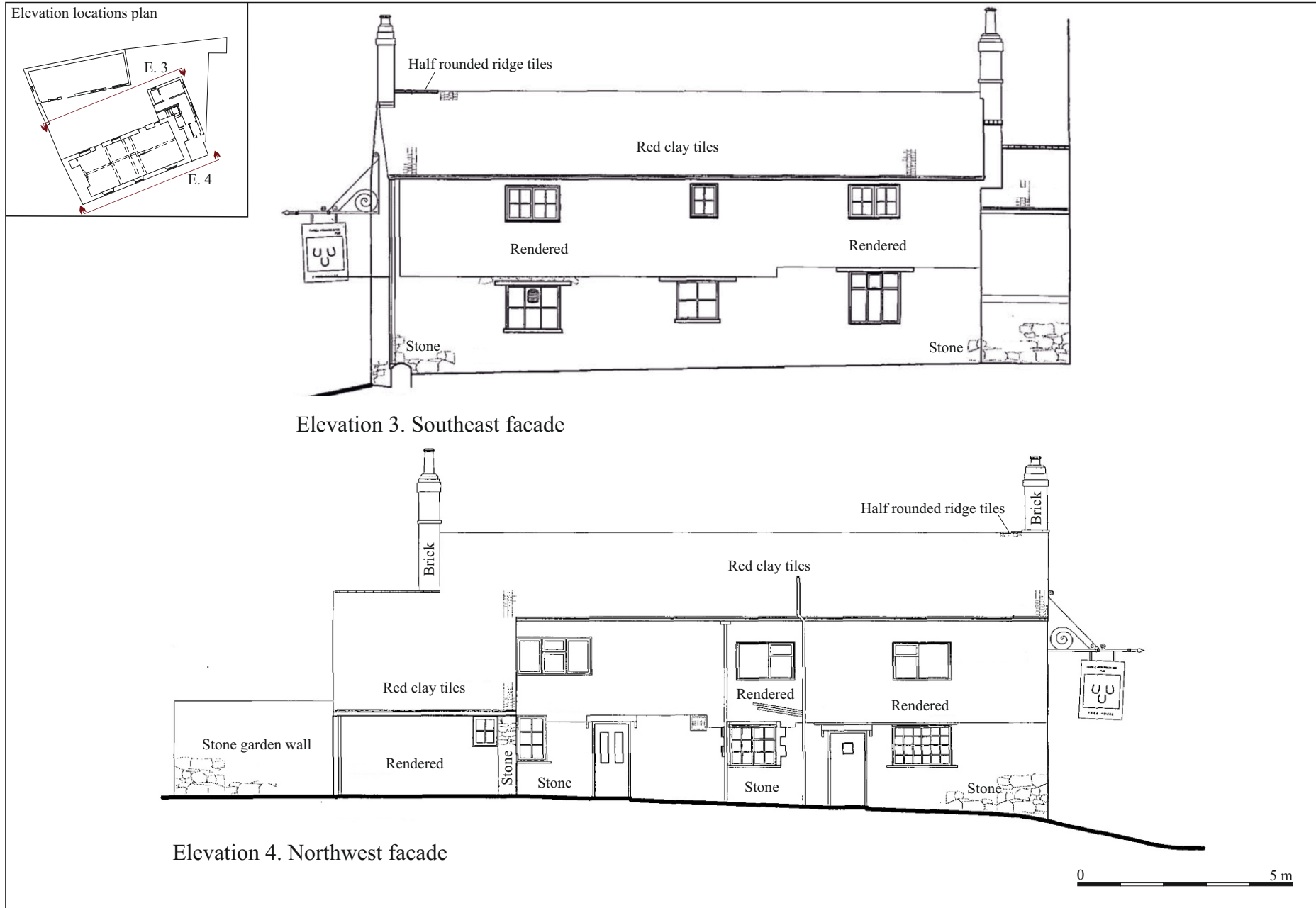


Figure 5. Southeast and northwest elevations

English Inn and Tavern Names have recently recognised as important indicators of historical processes and local events (Cox 1994). The earliest reference to the Horseshoe or Three Horseshoes Public House can be recognised from the early 18th century (Cox 1994, 22). Cox is of the belief that the names are probably derived from heraldic imagery, but in this case possibly of a post-medieval origin. This would provide an alternative suggestion to that of Brimblecombe that the site was that of a blacksmiths. The triple motif links into ideas of the Christian trinity and is noted in other pub signs and names.

The history of the public house is partially preserved in the records of the Quarter sessions or Petty sessions, which date to the 18th and 19th century (Brimblecombe 2009). These indicate that the building has operated as a public house from 1753. This though should not be seen as an indication of initial date, but is the date at which Quarter sessions first recorded public houses and their licensee (excluding the 1845 date).

Dates	Licensees
1753-96	Thomas Smith
1798-1801	-
1802-22	Robert Andrews
1822-44	-
1845	William Steel
1846-55	
1856-63	Hannah Steel (widow of William Steel)
1863	George Judge
1864	John Collingridge
1871	Sarah Collingridge (widow of John)
1876	Thomas Collingridge (son of Sarah)
1877-1883	-
1883	Sarah Collingridge
1887	John Roberts
1891-11	Richard Gurden
1913-24	William Matthews
1924-28	George Richards
1929-38	-
1939	Harry Wills

3: I DESCRIPTION OF THE THREE HORSESHOE PUBLIC HOUSE

3.1 Introduction and General Description

The Three Horseshoe public house consists of two buildings; the larger is the house, while the other is an outbuilding (fig. 3). The old building is essentially a three celled unit, with a modern extension at the east end. The outbuilding is a lean to against some old boundary walls.

3.2 Exterior of the Public House

The front elevation of the main building is located on the northwest side of the structure (Fig. 5, plate 1). The old part of the façade contains a ground floor with a lower rubble limestone wall. The upper floor is rendered, which may contain timber framing. In the ground floor elevations there are three windows, the most westerly a sash window with 6 x 4 lights. This window may be early but is suspected not to be original. The central window contains 4 x 3

lights, there is a modern brick quoin work thus indicating a recent insertion. The east window is the smallest with 2 x 3 lights. The sill is made of blue engineering bricks and is indicative of a date in the later 19th or early 20th century, although the size may be nearer to the original. Between each of the windows are doors, the locations may be old but the doors are modern. The first floor consists of three bays, each of which contains a modern and probably enlarged window fitting. On the east end there is a modern extension.



Plate 1. Northwest and Southwest Elevations



Plate 2. Southeast Elevation

The northeast elevation contains both old and new components (Fig. 4). The old gable contains a large external chimneybreast with a brick upper stack with upper and lower water tablets and two chimneypots. The modern extension has two windows on the ground and one on the first floor.

The southeast elevation like that of the north elevation contains lower rubble wall and an upper rubble wall (Fig. 5, plate 2). Part of the first floor render may conceal timber framing. The

south elevation contains three bays. The windows are smaller here, especially on the first floor, and some of these may reflect the original smaller windows that would once have existed on the building. All of the casements are probably, potentially of a later date.

The southwest elevation (Fig. 4, plate 1), facing the street, contains the remains of a limestone rubble gable. The upper part of the wall is painted or whitewashed stone rather than render. This is surmounted by a brick chimney with upper water tablet. The chimney would appear to have been rebuilt at some time in the near past. The modern eastern extension also has a southwest elevation, which contain two modern doors, one to the customer's toilet facilities, the other to the public house living quarters.

The roof is covered in red tile and has two gable ends with chimneystacks at either end.

3.3 Interior (Figure 3)

The ground floor now forms one single room. In the southwest wall is a modern fireplace, probably located in an earlier one now concealed, either side of this are two recesses, one with a small door. One of these presumably would have contained the remains of an earlier staircase, which is now no longer extant. The wall between this unit and the central unit has now gone, replaced with a timber support. There is a single axial beam in the west unit with chamfer and stops, which is at least of an 18th century date, but could be older (plate 3). The central unit contains a number of axial joists between the two transverse beam settings (plate 4). Some of these contain old saw marks, others none, probably axe worked, all or most have chamfers. The windows in the north and south wall of this unit are probably not original. These are early if not original. The area where the central unit becomes the eastern unit, has a new limestone wall inserted, short running east to west. There are two beams running transversely between this and the north wall. These are not necessarily old but they do perhaps mark an earlier timber framed arrangement where there was perhaps a chimney with a passage between two of the units into which an earlier door may have entered. In the north wall there is a modern door and probable Victorian window, while there is a further window in the south wall. The ceiling is also of a more recent origin, although this may conceal older components. The old fireplace is probably concealed in the east wall.



Plate 3. Stop on chamfered beam west unit ground floor

A number of observations were made during the internal stripping of the structure on the ground floor. A large fireplace with timber lintel was uncovered in the east wall of the stone structure (plate 6). The chamfered timber lintel was exposed which had previously been clad in

wood. This was an axial beam (similar to that in the western part of the building. In the central part of the ground floor a timber beam running transversely was uncovered between the west and central unit. The timber was decaying but still retained the bored holes for the hazel uprights of the wattle and daub.



Plate 4. Timbers in central unit ground floor



Plate 5. Roof timbers

The upstairs was entered through the stairwell to the new kitchen and then through the east gable. The first room contains a window in the southeast wall and one in the northwest. The northwest and southeast walls are thick and must be constructed of stone. The fireplace has been in-filled and covered in the southeast wall. In the southwest wall a door leads through into a central passage, this wall may be the only original one surviving on the first floor. The walls to the northwest and southeast of the passage are plasterboard walls of a modern date, as is the wall dividing the central unit from that of the southwest unit. Of most interest in respect to the central and southwest unit is that the north and south walls (external walls) are thin, these represent the remains of timber framed walls (plate 8). If so this may be the evidence that the structure contains older components. In the southwest unit the fireplace has been covered over, and there are two cupboards either side

with plank doors. The walling between the two cupboards and the room are timber framed. The fireplace was uncovered during renovation (plate 7).



Plate 6. Uncovered fireplace east unit ground floor



Plate 7. Uncovered fireplace and chimney breast, west unit first floor

Observations were also made on the first floor that confirmed that part of the southeast and northwest walls were a thin timber framed structure.

The roof space is unconventional with partially formed trusses. The purlins are supported on struts, but with no collar beam, while in other places collar beams create A-frames to tie the roof structure together (plate 5).

3.4 Outbuilding

The outbuilding is a lean-to structure built against a garden boundary wall (Fig. 4). The large garden wall is on the north and is constructed of limestone. There is evidence of a building previously constructed against this. The west wall is also on the boundary of the property and is constructed of rubble stone, with later brick quoins and a window inserted. The east wall is blank and rendered. The south wall is of brick and from west to east contains the following features; a

plank door alongside which is a window, to the east of this is a double door, then two windows, a further door and another window.

The roof is covered in red tile.



Plate 8. External timber framing seen below framing for dry walling



Plate 9. Outbuilding

3.5 Internal

Internally the building is divided into three units. The internal walls seem to be of breeze blocks and the roof timbers are sawn and late.

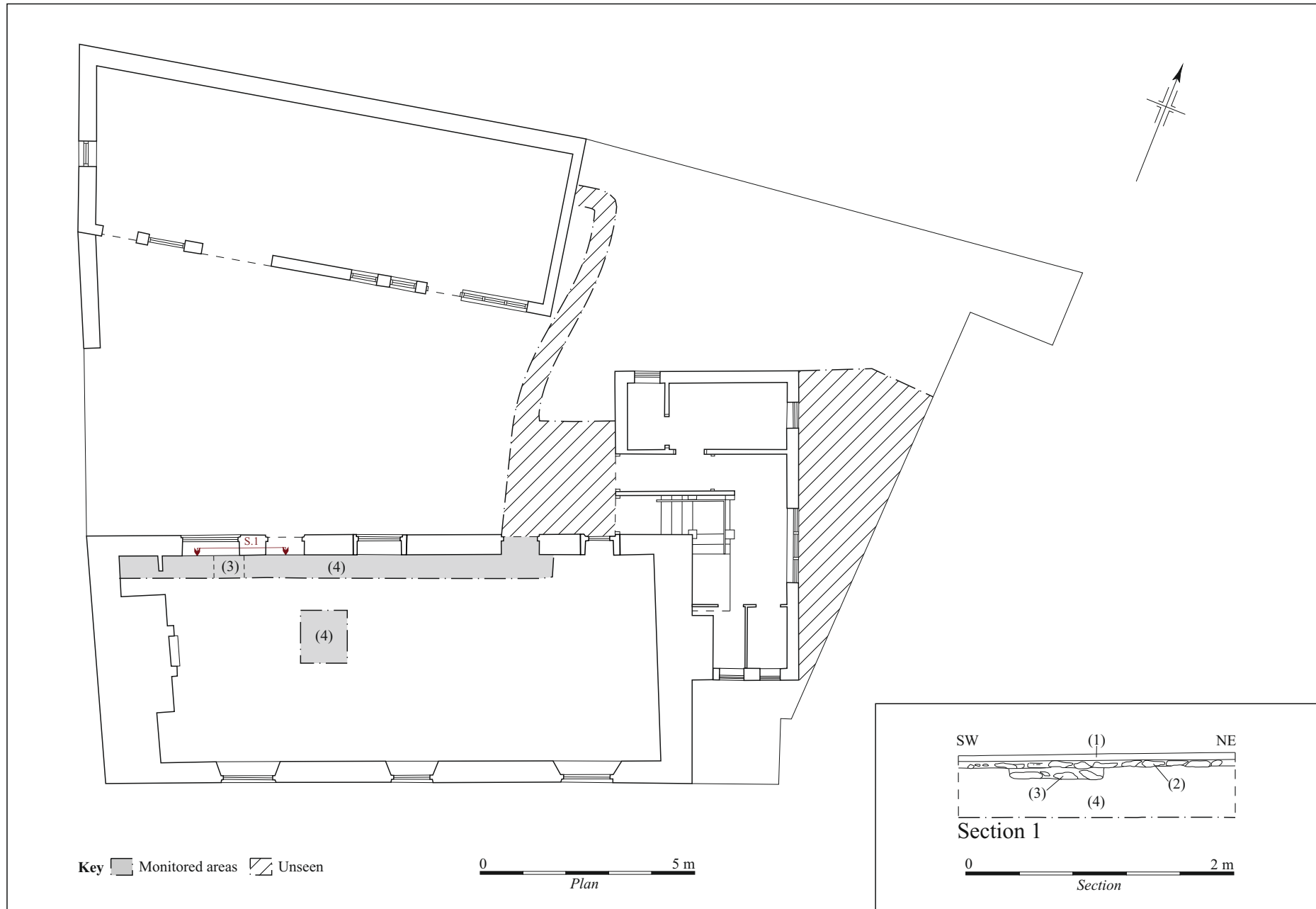


Figure 6. Plan and section of excavated areas

3: II WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

Not all of the areas uncovered were observed (which are marked in Fig. 6). The natural ground (4) was a highly compact yellow blue/green clay. The foundation cut of the Three Horseshoes Public House was 0.15m deep. The rubble stone wall was set into this. Lying in or on layer (4) was deposit (3) a grey blue clay with stone inclusions. This context though noted separately could have been a separate series of laid rubble stones as part of a wall, or could also have been the lower part of layer (2) a mortar skim rammed with stones, which could either be part of an earlier floor surface or could have been part of a rough bedding layer. Too little of context (3) was observed. Sealing deposit (2) was a concrete skim 0.05m deep.

The watching brief observations cannot be described totally as negative, but context (3) was ambiguous.

4 ASSESSMENT

4.1 Phases

The listing assessment and that of Brimblecombe (2009) indicate that the house originated as a three cell structure. Brimblecombe (2009) suggested that the 18th century structure may conceal or be part of a rebuild that replaced an earlier structure and it is highly likely that this is indeed the case. Three celled units in various forms are apparent in house design from the latter part of the 16th century and continued to be constructed into the 17th and presumably 18th centuries (Mercer 1975, 61-65). The general design is, therefore, of a house considered to be somewhat older.

A further point of interest is the narrow walls of the first floor; these are possibly the result of a timber framed wall. In the late 17th and 18th century timber framing was largely replaced by brick or stone (Mercer 1975, 125), however, it continued into the later 18th century and very early 19th century with much stylised use. If this is a timber framed wall it could date to the 17th century. The other timberwork that could point to part of the building having a 17th century origin is that of beam in the ground floor ceiling in the west unit. The stop is identical to one that is to be found at The Gables, Honeybourne, Worcestershire, which has been dated to the second half of the 17th century (Mercer 1975, plate 112). These two features would tend to support Brimblecombe's hypothesis that there was an earlier structure and it is possible that some of the timbers, and if there is timber framing, survive from the 17th century.

Phase 2 is probably represented by a replacement of the timber framing on the ground floor and on the gables, and on the northeast unit on the first floor. There are stylistic features that may be of this date such as the sash window on the ground floor on the southwest unit northwest wall. Some of the windows indicate that this process of refurbishment and replacement of a timber frame and replacement of windows continued into the 19th century. Some of the timbers in the central unit on the ground floor may be 17th century in origin, but some show saw marks and are replacements of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The modern extension is phase 3, late 20th century.

The outbuilding consists of two old walls, which have probably been in existence from at least the 18th century (Phase 2), though without precise dating details it is difficult to know to what extent it has had later rebuilds. The brick walls and internal breeze block walls are of a late 19th and 20th century date, although some of the brickwork looks as if it has been rebuilt.

4.2 Listed Status

The building is listed and in a conservation area.

4.3 Historic and Architectural Assessment

The remains are that of a three cell unit that are generally considered to have their origins in the later part of the 16th century and 17th century. Here there is recognisable replacement of the

fabric.

5 THE CURRENT PROPOSAL

The alterations included the following.

The modern extension on the northeast end of the building was extended on the ground floor to the modern property boundaries. Internal walls on the extension are to be removed and altered and roof lights inserted. This will have no impact on the historical standing structure.

There was a small extension on the southwest side of the modern extension; the doorways here were re-arranged so that they unite the old and modern components of the public house. This involved the conversion of a window in the old building into a door. The external development will have no impact on the historic fabric; the insertion of the door had a minimal impact with the removal of part of a limestone rubble wall.

Internally on the ground floor the main beams were to be retained. Minor roof beams were lost.

One window on the ground floor was replaced, the window casement was not original and a 19th or early 20th century date is likely.

The two downstairs fireplaces were uncovered; and modern fittings removed.

On the first floor the internal walls in the old three cell unit were re-arranged. One of the walls is potentially of lathe and plaster, which was to be retained but with an additional doorway inserted. The other wall alterations are to modern plasterboard walls.

The windows on the northwest side were replaced, these are all modern at present, and appear from the plans to be more in keeping with the older style of the building.

The central window on the southeast side first floor is to have its width reduced. These windows are amongst the smallest in the old building; though the size may be original the casements are later.

Three conservation roof-lighting were added to the southeast side of the old roof, which will require the cutting of old roof timbers for their insertion.

The external walls of the outbuilding were retained on the north, east and west, but the southern façade was completely revamped. It is probable that this represents an original 19th century construction that has seen rebuilding in the 20th century. This externally had the largest visual impact, however, it is the three celled structure that is listed and not the outbuilding of which the architectural merits are poor. A photographic record of this part of the building should suffice as mitigation.

Two conservation roof-lighting panels were inserted in the roof of the outbuilding. This will mean the cutting of timbers here, but these are later possibly 19th century in date.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The main building is a listed building of a three cell unit, it is possible that some of the timber features may be of the later 17th century. The building was modified and largely rebuilt in the 18th century around this earlier structure. A number of the windows have been replaced at a

later date.

Modifications on the building may affect the features primarily the survival of timber joists in the central unit of the public house. Upstairs a part of a lathe and plaster wall may be removed, while insertion of window lights will remove part of some roof timbers.

On the outbuilding the two old boundary walls are to survive intact, but major alterations will occur internally with the removal of recent brick and breezeblock walls.

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