

SPEEN MANOR  
BATH ROAD  
SPEEN  
BERKSHIRE  
(NGR SU 4571 6809)

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING  
OF THE  
GARDEN WALL



By  
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on behalf of  
JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

October 2011

## **SPEEN MANOR GARDEN WALL**

### **Introduction**

Speen Manor is situated on the north side of the A4 Bath Road, Speen (NGR SU 4571 6809). The house itself is listed Grade II, and the listing gives the date of the house as late 18<sup>th</sup> century with later additions (Appendix 1).

Planning permission (10/03132/LBC) was granted by West Berkshire Council for the replacement of the garden wall of Speen Manor as it borders the main A4 Bath Road. This report represents the building recording requested as a condition of this permission.

A site investigation was conducted on September 30 2011 by Imogen Grundon on behalf of John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS).

### **The Garden Wall**

The Manor at Speen is situated on the north side of the A4 Bath Road and consequently the red brick wall that forms the manor's present southern boundary has suffered greatly from salt damage from the passing traffic and salt treatment of this road during periods of freezing. The wall has deteriorated in places beyond repair. Efforts have been made to repair it with a cement-based mortar which has greatly exacerbated the deterioration of the brickwork by directing moisture into the heart of the wall. In places it is worn through to such an extent that it is possible to see right through the formerly mortared joints. As this is all on the lower half of the wall, the structure is being seriously undermined.

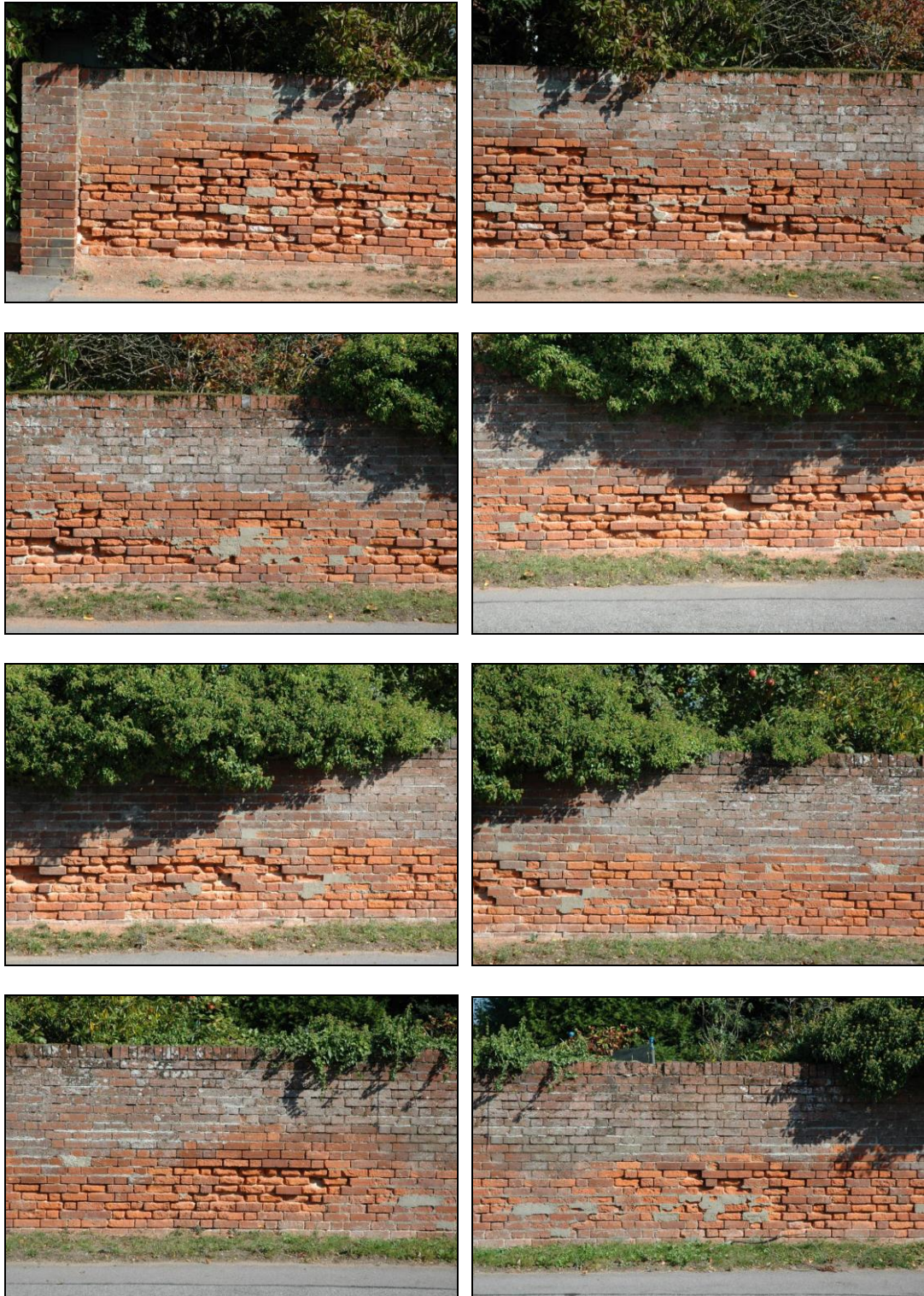
The listing of the house, based typically on a solely external inspection, suggests that Speen Manor is of late 18<sup>th</sup> century date, with mathematical tiles on a probably masonry core. As mathematical tiles are generally used on timber-framed buildings – as seems to be the case here, there is a strong possibility that the house has hidden information and could in fact be older. It is extremely unlikely that this wall dates from any earlier than 19<sup>th</sup> century date, though it was not possible to determine whether the bricks were frogged or unfrogged. In bond it is a cheap version of Flemish, with two and sometimes three stretchers between headers on each course. It is simply capped with header 'soldiers' (headers laid on edge). The wall has been badly repaired in places and supported by later brick buttresses that are themselves beginning to succumb to salt damage.

The property belonging to the Manor house has been greatly reduced due to redevelopment. Where the original wall extends past the boundary of the present manor house, it has been replaced in modern brick in stretcher bond, which is in no way in keeping with the original structure. Yet even this modern wall to the east of the wall in question is showing signs of salt damage to the mortar if not yet to the bricks themselves.

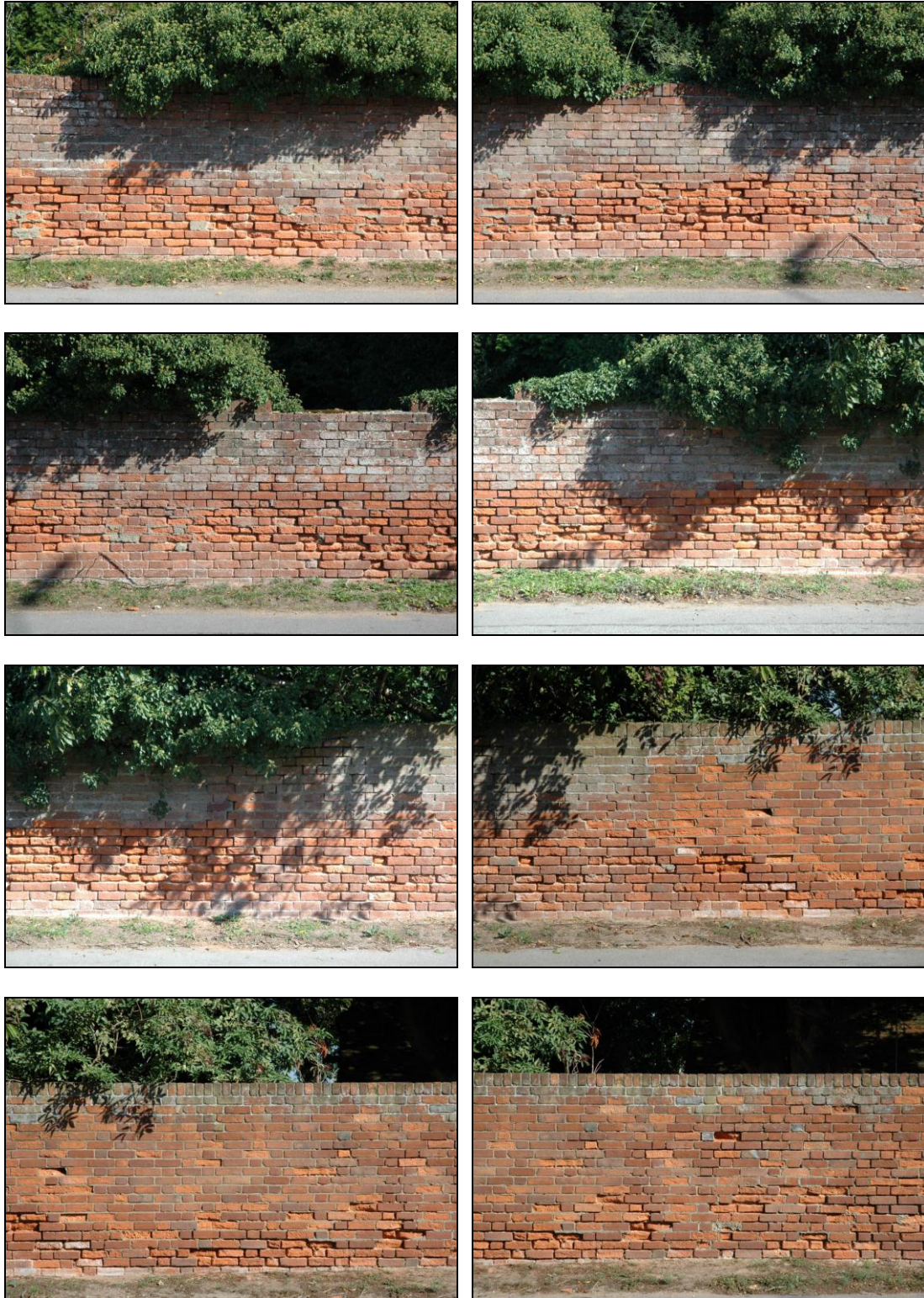
The 2m-high, 0.225m-thick boundary wall stretches some 37m from the south-east corner of the house to the junction with the adjacent property to the south-east. On the reverse of the wall, within the garden area, it was difficult to get a full inspection of the brickwork due to vegetation. But it is clear that the major damage has been caused to the road side of the structure. However, the destruction of the sandy lime

mortar and the extensive damage to the road-side bricks has permeated also to this side of the wall. The mortar has in places reduced back to sand.

The grit-tempered brick itself (average size 22.5 x 6.5 x 10cm) is largely of poor quality and has undergone more damage than was ever conceived of at its building. Modern traffic conditions have created a level and manner of damage that could never have been foreseen at the time of construction.



*Figs 1-8. Sppeen Manor Garden Wall on the A4 Bath Road, from west to east*



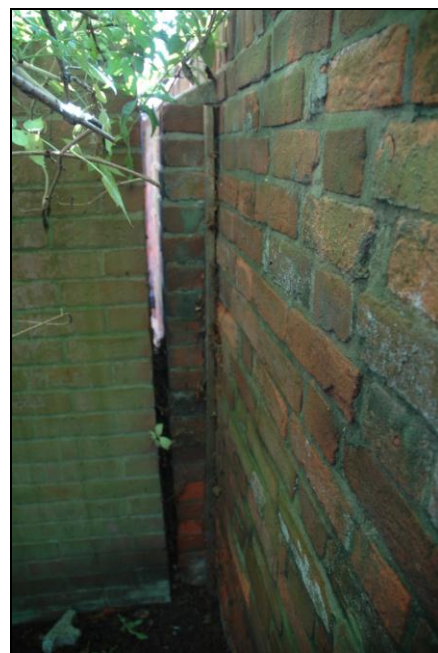
*Figs 9-16. Garden wall continuing from west to east.*

The final image (Fig 17) shows the boundary wall of Speen Manor up to an original garden gate opening, which now forms the limit of the property. Beyond this there is marked difference between the original wall and a modern replacement in stretcher bond where the manor's original land was sold off for redevelopment. As can be seen, the mortar of this modern wall is already succumbing to a similar fate.



*Fig 17. The junction at an original gateway between the Speen Manor garden wall and the recent replacement of a section of it where the land has been sold off.*

The reverse of the wall is supported by buttresses every 4 metres (Fig 18). It is largely obscured by shrubbery. Particularly at the west end, where the damage is noticeably worse, the damage has permeated the entire thickness of the wall, with holes appearing through the wall in several places.



*Figs 18 & 19. The reverse of the wall, showing a buttress and the south-east corner of the manor land.*

At the east end, the property is bounded by a modern brick wall in stretcher bond. This does not quite abut the old wall. This is in part because of the angle at which the old wall leans away towards the road (Fig.19).

### **Methodology**

A detailed photographic record was made of the southern face of the wall in question, which could, if further required, be digitised into a scaled AutoCad drawing of this face of the wall. It was decided that as much information could be gathered through a digital colour photographic record than from a brick-by-brick hand-drawn record of the structure. There is only a single building phase in the structure and no evidence of blocked or inserted openings. The repairs are not in themselves considered worth recording further.

### **Conclusions**

The garden wall as it now stands is unviable as a structure. Any re-use of the bricks would merely put off the inevitable happening again. The visual aspect of the wall has already been compromised, as much by the shoddy cement repairs over the years as by the irreversible salt damage.

10/03132

Speen Manor

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COUNCIL  
21 DEC 2010  
PLANNING AND  
COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

WEST BERKSHIRE  
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