

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN
HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT
OF
PYRTON MANOR,
PYRTON,
OXFORDSHIRE**

*On behalf of
FPD Savills*

JULY 2004

REPORT FOR FPD Savills
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1 Introduction

1.1 Planning Background

Permission has been sought from South Oxfordshire District Council for internal and external alterations at Pyrton Manor, Pyrton, Oxfordshire (NGR: 46500/195500).

The Government, through the Department of Culture Media and Sport is responsible for protecting the historic environment. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest. The Department monitors the effectiveness of the controls.

The Secretary of State has a duty under the Act to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. There are three grades of listing:

- Grade II are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them
- Grade II* are particularly important buildings of more than special interest
- Grade I buildings are those of exceptional interest

Pyrton Manor has been listed as Grade II*

2 Aims of the Investigation

A number of key areas of concern have been identified for the proposed alterations to the listed building (Lawrence, C. June 2004). An analysis of the building has been requested to assess the significance of the fabric to be altered in order to provide sufficient information to allow Planning Services at South Oxfordshire District Council to assess the likely impact of the proposals on the special character of the building.

3 Strategy

- 3.1 A study of all available historic maps and plans, together with a documentary search was undertaken at the Public Records Office in Oxford, supplemented by previous planning documentation obtained at South Oxfordshire District Council.
- 3.2 An on-site investigation was carried out to examine the standing building fabric in order to assess the development of the building over time.



Figure 1: Site Location

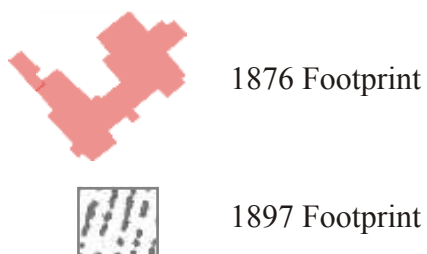


Figure 2: Superimposed Ordnance Survey maps of 1876 and 1897

4 Background and Cartographic Evidence (Figure 2)

- 4.1 The manor at Pyrton was a two-storey building occupying a moated site in the 14th Century. Part of the moat is still visible adjacent to the current building. It is thought that the current building was constructed in the early 17th Century for Edmund Symeon before passing on to the Hampden family. The property is listed in the Hearth Tax returns for 1665 as having 14 hearths (Victoria County History (VCH) Vol 8:140) By the 1780s the buildings were in the hands of the Hamersley family and it was under Hugh Hamersley in 1786 that extensive repairs and alterations were carried out.

The repairs included the re-building of the western side of the southwest wing, clearly visible in header bond utilising the blue tinged bricks that are a result of irregularities in firing. Red brick was used for the contrasting trim around windows and doors and for the stringcourse. The windows are 18th century sash type. Further 18th century modifications will be discussed below.

A further programme of modernisation was undertaken in 1939 involving the removal of the Venetian windows in the first floor of each wing on the southern side of the building (VCH).

The house was subject to further ‘restoration’ and repair in the 1960s including re-wiring and plumbing. Additional changes were made by the current occupants, the MaClaren family, in the 1980s. Details of such changes were given in the Listed Building applications SO/5/283/83/LB and P/85/5126 LB.

- 4.2 The First and Second Edition Ordnance Survey maps show an additional extension to the north elevation of the building at the eastern wing. These extensions no longer exist but traces of their whereabouts and impact on the building fabric are still discernable on the northern fenestration. Changes to the south-western wing also took place between the issue of the first edition in 1876 and the 2nd edition in 1897: with additional construction at the northern end towards the east resulting in a more regular plan. The current workshops appear to have been added sometime after 1897. The stable blocks appear to have remained in a similar configuration over time, with only a protruding arm, extending eastward, reduced in length after 1897.

5 Discussion (Figures 3-5)

It should be noted that the current furnishings and belongings in addition to the quality of the finish and fittings within the building create problems in the assessment of the survival of original features and fabric. It is only with the stripping out of the finish that a true inspection of the construction and character of the building could be made. The results of this analysis must be considered in the light of these limitations.

For the purposes of this report the intended alterations will be discussed on a room by room and floor by floor basis in order to establish the origins of the

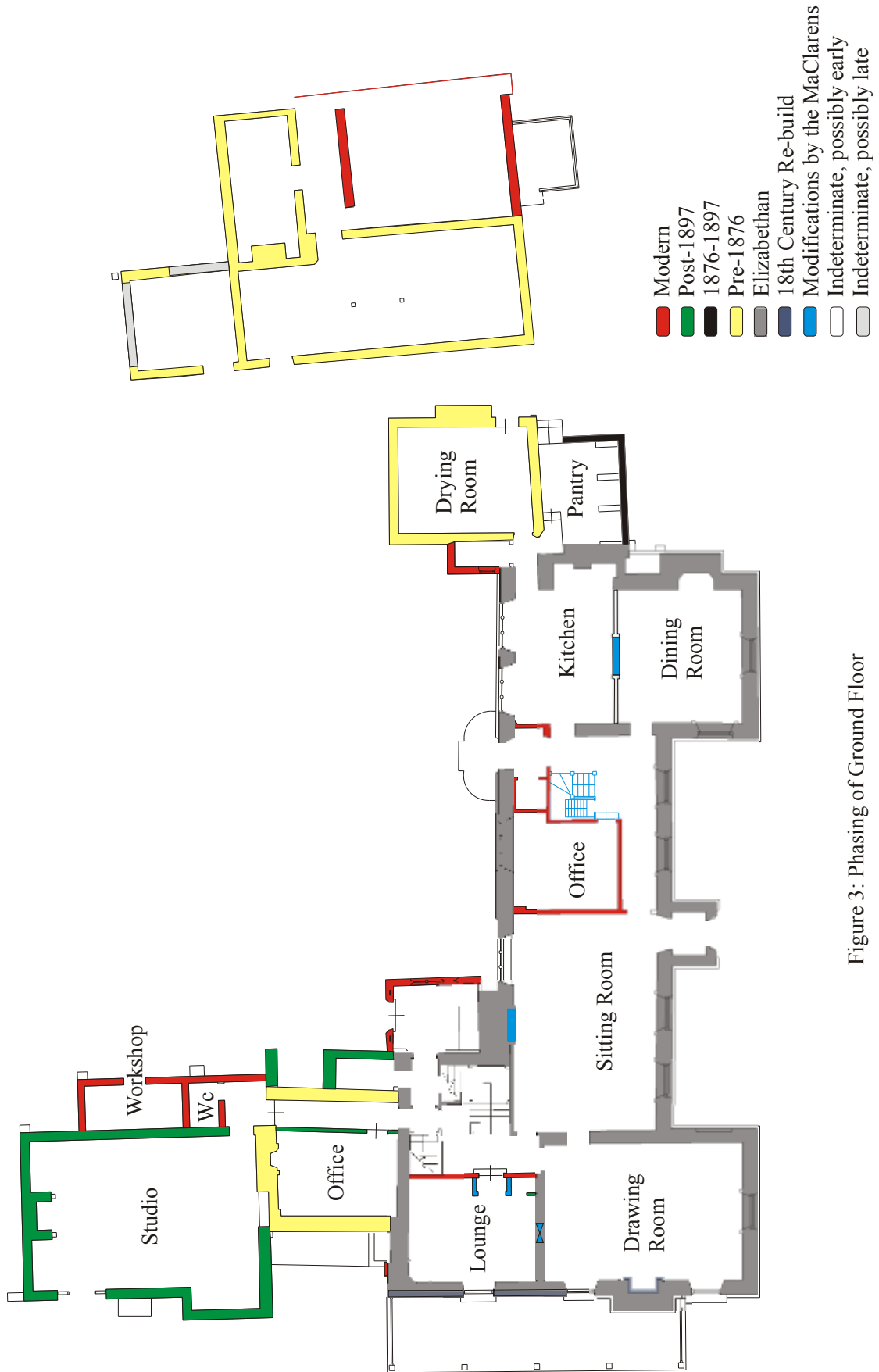


Figure 3: Phasing of Ground Floor

fabric and the impact of the alterations, the stable will be dealt with separately. The current layout is used to identify the rooms.

5.1 THE GROUND FLOOR (Figure 3)

5.1.1 THE WESTERN WING

The current proposal for this wing includes the removal of the workshop, as mentioned above; the workshop appears to be housed in an extension of 20th century origin.

A new window opening is proposed for the east wall of the current studio, this area of the building appears to have been constructed post 1897.

A doorway is proposed in the wall between the current studio and office. From the map evidence it is clear that the office building was in place by the issue of the first edition Ordnance Survey map in 1876 but is a later extension to the Elizabethan fabric. The building has been subject to modification over time: there are blocked openings and repairs incorporating modern brick. The drip-mold over the first floor window is of brick rather than stone as can be seen elsewhere on the earlier building fabric.

However, it is conceivable that an entrance existed between the northern buildings (the predecessor to the current studio) and the office in the location considered for the new doorway. The current access between the two buildings is along a corridor into the current workshop, the origin of the corridor and the studio appears to be post 1897 (The Second Edition Ordnance Survey does not show the same configuration and the current studio was probably built after that date). If access were to be had between the buildings shown on the 1897 map it would have been situated to the west of the fireplace, where the current alcove is situated within the studio. The internal partitions within the office, inserted to create the access corridor are of late 19th, early 20th century origin and significantly alter the original proportions of the room.

Alterations proposed for the current lounge involves the removal of clearly modern partitions situated at the eastern side of the room. The proposals include plans to remove the current porch situated at the junction of the western wing and the central range. This porch is of modern origin and may have been inserted as part of the alterations carried out in the 1960s.

The current Drawing room proposal is for the re-instatement of a blocked window. It is clear from the exterior finish of the elevation that the window has been blocked; the surrounding stucco is still *in situ* as are the equivalent windows on the opposite wing including the first floor window that was re-instated by the MaClaren family as part of Listed Building Consent in the 1980s. The windows are shown on a drawing of the building in the Victoria County History (Vol 8) depicting the property as it was c. 1820.



Plate 1: Blocked windows both of which are proposed for re-installment



Plate 2: Re-instated upper window as part of the 1980s alterations

5.1.2 THE CENTRAL RANGE

The current sitting room proposal includes the replacement of the current chimneypiece. The in situ chimneypiece was installed by the MaClarens. Alterations are also proposed for the partition wall between the current sitting room and office and between the office and hall. The partitioning is a later insertion and probably 20th century in origin. That the central range would have been the original hall suggests that any partitioning would have been the result of later modifications.

The replacement of the staircase in the entrance hall with the insertion of a dog-leg staircase in line with the origins of the building is proposed. The current staircase is of Jacobean date and was imported from Wales by the MaClaren family as part of their alterations. The office to the west of the imported staircase has a raised floor and modern partition walls as a result of the re-structuring of the cellar situated directly below. The works in the cellar were carried out as part of the alterations in the 1960s when the heating system was re-located after the demolition of the Victorian extensions.

5.1.3 THE EASTERN WING

Alterations to the kitchen windows are proposed, this involves the insertion of stone mullions. The current windows were extensively repaired in the 1980's programme of works and were probably inserted at a late date after the demolition of the Victorian extensions. The 1980s repairs involved the replacement of wooden lintels with metal and the whole re-rendered in very precise rusticated stucco.

The Kitchen alterations as proposed also involve the removal of the partition between the kitchen and dining room. The origin of the partition wall is unknown, but close examination suggests a Victorian, if not later origin. The partition has been subject to alterations in the 1980s with the insertion of the current large doorway and cornice. The proposals include a plan to remove the inserted lowered ceiling to re-establish the original dimensions of the room. The current ceiling was inserted as part of the works carried out by the MaClarens in the 1980s.

5.2 THE FIRST FLOOR (Figure 4)

5.2.1 WESTERN WING

Bedroom 4 is housed in the small extension abutting the northern gable end of the main western wing. It is proposed to retain the current staircase. Internal partitions are earmarked for removal. The current staircase was inserted in this location by the MaClarens, as was the partition that currently bisects the lights in the window. The partitions within this room alter the original proportions of the room.

The proposals for bedroom 3 involve the re-instatement of a currently blocked fireplace. It is also proposed to block the access from the stairway to bedroom 3 and to construct an alternative point of access in the partition wall between B3 and the current bathroom. The doorway proposed for blocking has 17th century detail in line with the staircase and other doorways in this location. The new access is to be through a wall that may have been inserted as part of the 18th century repairs and modifications. Proposals to remove the panelled partition in the corridor and the partition between the bathroom and master bedroom would impact upon 18th century detail, although it is unclear whether the panelling is *in situ* originals or installed as period features at a later date. The extent to which the corridor panelling forming the eastern wall of the bathroom is an *in situ* original is in doubt. The moulding on the rail below the door handles is different on either side and fixed at conflicting heights.

The proposal to place a staircase in the current bathroom will impact upon the riven oak lath and plaster ceiling. Limited investigations from the attic showed many alterations to the ceiling and roof structures which will be discussed below.

The chimneypiece within the master bedroom is also earmarked for replacement. This is clearly of modern origin and is an insertion by the MaClaren family during their programme of works. The Victoria County History lists a 'moulded stone fireplace', which is clearly no longer *in situ*.

The plans for the unblocking of the window in the eastern elevation is the equivalent to the one unblocked in the opposite wing in the 1980s, as mentioned above, this window was *in situ* in 1820 (VCH).

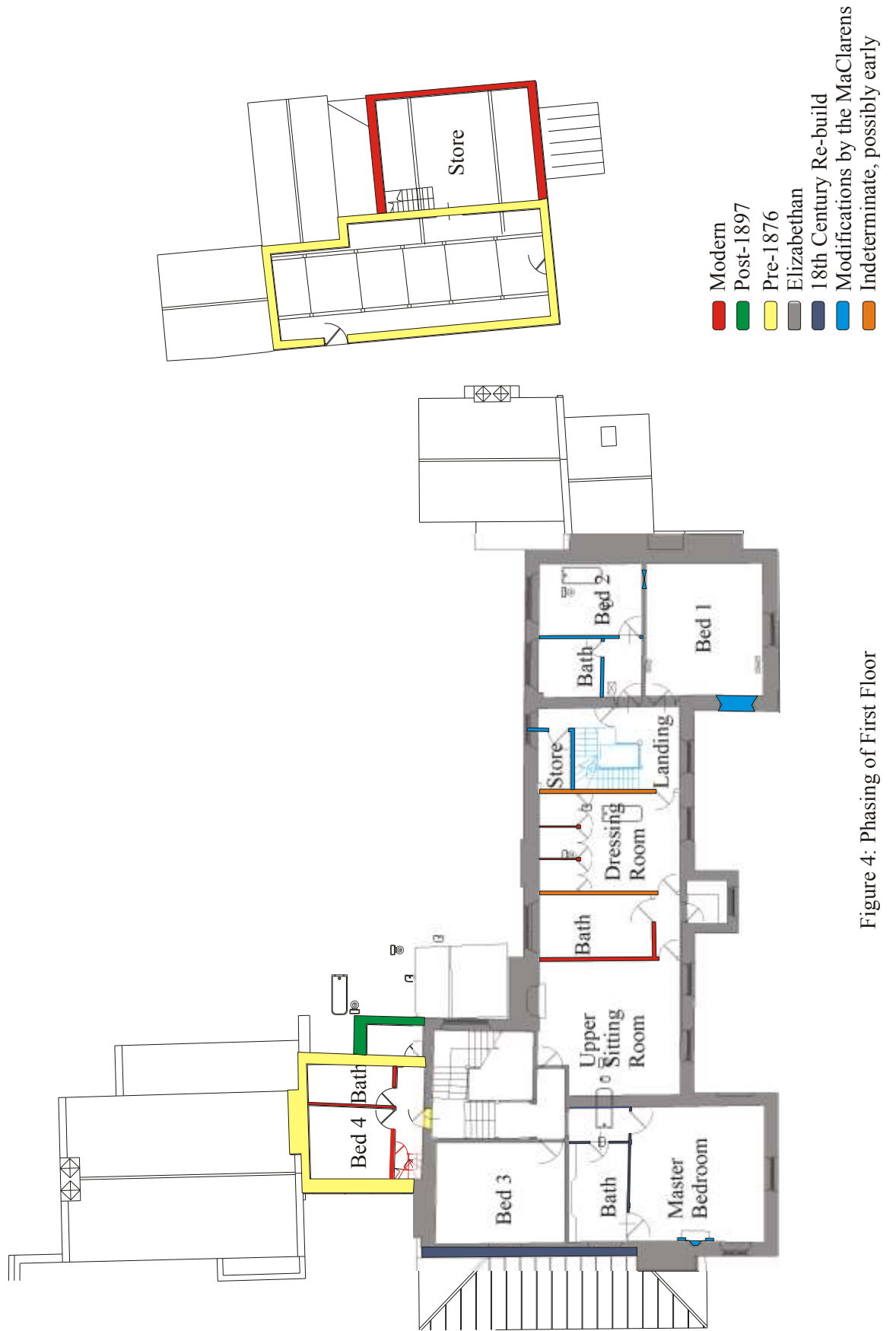


Figure 4: Phasing of First Floor

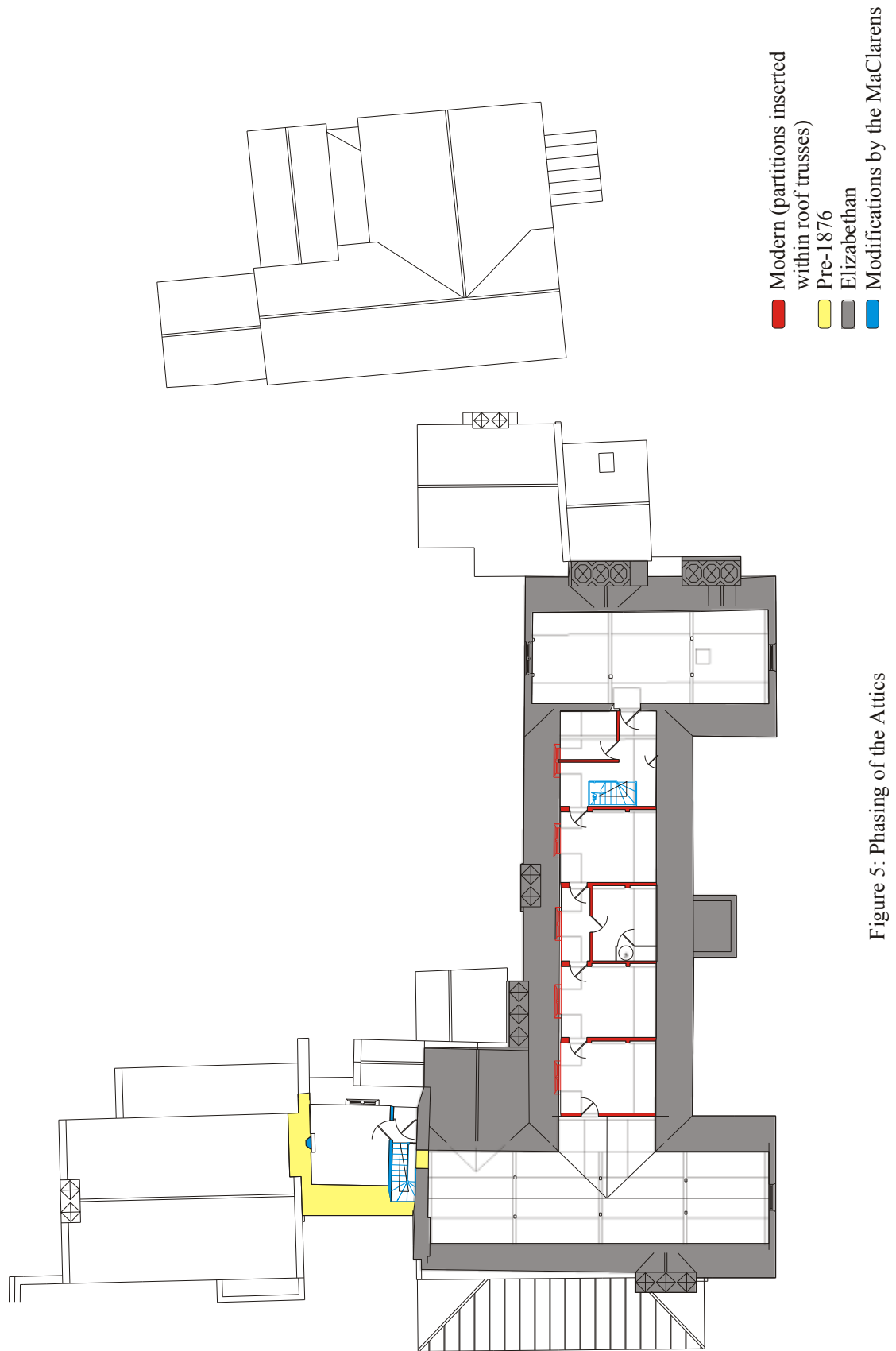


Figure 5: Phasing of the Attics

5.2.2 CENTRAL RANGE

Proposals to construct a corridor parallel to the northern fenestration will involve the removal of a very limited area of the partition walls between the current upper sitting room and bathroom and between the dressing room and store.

The structure of the partitions on either side of the dressing room was clearly visible through the wall finishes. Ghosts of the timber construction were outlined and Mrs MaClaren provided information regarding the structure prior to the decoration carried out under her direction. The partition walls in this location include plaster with horsehair and are clearly earlier in origin than the partition between the bathroom and sitting room, and may be part of the 18th century programme of works. The origin of the partition between the sitting room and bathroom is unknown and no hints were visible in the finish of the wall. In comparison with the clear structural indications visible in the dressing room walls, the smooth clean finish of the bathroom partition suggests a late insertion, probably as part of the alterations carried out in the 1960s.



Plate 3: Ghosts of timber construction visible through Wall finish.

The siting of a new doorway in the later bathroom/sitting room partition will have no impact on the earlier fabric.

The staircase, inserted by the MaClaren family as part of the Listed Building Consent granted in the 1980s, is intended for replacement as part of the proposals. It is proposed that the current imported structure is replaced with a dog-leg staircase.

5.2.3 EASTERN WING

The current proposal is for the insertion of a doorway between what are presently bedrooms 1 and 2. Inspection of the current fabric identified a previously blocked doorway, confirmed by Mrs MaClaren. This doorway was situated at the eastern end of the partition wall and cracked plaster providing

an outline can clearly be seen from the interior of bedroom 2. It is also intended to unblock the fireplaces in bedrooms 1 and 2. This will not affect early building fabric, as the blocking is the result of modern alterations.

5.3 THE ATTICS (Figure 5)

5.3.1 WESTERN WING

The staircase proposed from bedroom 4 in the first floor to bedroom 6 in the second floor within the northern extension abutting the south-western wing could impact upon original floor structure should any survive. This area was not investigated during site assessment but the current staircase, again an insertion by the MaClarens in the 1980s, allowed inspection of the floor structure during the works. Mrs MaClaren has stated that the majority of the floors throughout the house, the exception being the *in situ* 17th century staircase, had no original floor boarding. The survival of joists and beams is unknown.

The opening between bedroom 6 and the attic over the western wing will be blocked. This opening is at present only sufficient for maintenance purposes.

Where the staircase is proposed to enter the attic from the current bathroom in the first floor, the lath and plaster ceiling will be impacted upon. From the inspection within the attic, the north-south orientated beam in the proposed staircase location has been replaced and does not sit well within the east-west binder. The origin of such alterations and repairs is unknown, but may be the results of modern, 20th century maintenance.

The casement windows in both attics are proposed for replacement with sash windows to match the other windows in the southern fenestration. That the southern elevation of the building is later and more altered than the northern fenestration is clear. However, the casements are the earlier of the two window types, the wooden mullions are ovolo in form and probably 18th century in origin, the internal wooden frame is a modern replacement. The glazing bars are early but the glass is a single pane with lead strips rather than individual leaded lights.

5.3.2 CENTRAL RANGE

Proposals for this area are minimal and involve the removal of late inserted partitions within the trusses, leaving the truss members in situ and intact. The dormer windows lighting this range were in situ by 1964 (VCH) and were probably inserted at the time of the conversion.

The continuation of the proposed replacement staircase from the first floor will enter the attic in a slightly different location. The origin of the floor structure/first floor ceiling members is unknown at present, although as mentioned above, Mrs MaClaren has stated that no original floorboards existed in the building at the time of her alterations in the 1980s.

5.3.3 EASTERN WING

The proposals for this wing involve the insertion of partitions within the trusses to break up the internal space. The alterations carried out in the 1980s included the removal of inserted partitions within these trusses; it is the intention of the client to replace these.

5.4 THE STABLE BLOCK

As far as could be determined during a brief inspection, the stable side of the block is untouched: the stalls and flooring including drainage are in situ originals. The origin of the stable block is possibly 18th or early 19th century.

The structure abutting the stable block on its eastern side is currently the garage. The garage doors are a modern insertion and take up the whole of the eastern wall of the building. Re-building within the garage is evident in the form of modern breezeblocks.

The current kitchen is within an area of the building modified after 1897: this area was part of a considerably longer block in the late 19th century.

6 Summary and Conclusions

The Elizabethan E-plan manor has seen much alterations and extensions over time reflecting the adaptations made to changes in fashion and lifestyle over 400 years. The 18th century rebuild under the direction of Hugh Hamersley resulted in a contrasting fenestration in the style of the period on the western wing.

Further modifications occurred to the southern fenestration in the early 20th century when two Venetian windows at first floor level were removed and replaced by the current 12-pane sash windows.

The 1960s saw the removal of extensions that had abutted the northern fenestration of the building. Heating systems that had been housed outside in the extensions were now brought indoors and re-sited in the cellar then altered in height to accommodate them.

The period between 1939 and 1964 saw the insertion of the Dormer windows in the northern roofline, to light the attic conversion in the central range. The works carried out in the 1980s saw the removal of partitioning in the attic of the eastern wing to create an open plan living space. The attic in the western range appears not to have been utilised although there has been a matching casement window at that level from at least 1820 (VCH), which would suggest the intention to make use of the space.

Further 20th century modifications occurred in the form of partition walls altering the internal arrangements. The partitioning of the three main blocks of

the Elizabethan building had been altered in the 18th century, in the Victorian era and on a number of occasions in the 20th century.

The current proposals are for the removal of much of the 20th century additions to create rooms closer to the original layout and proportions of the building. For the most part, the proposed alterations are of limited impact to the building: the internal arrangements may affect some of the 18th century changes, but the integrity of the Elizabethan fabric will remain largely unchanged.

For the stable block, a level 3 survey could be undertaken to record the current structure prior to any alterations taking place (RCAHM 1996).

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