

The structural development
of

COPYHOLD FARM

GORING HEATH, OXFORDSHIRE



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Introduction

Copyhold Farm is a grade II listed building in the parish of Goring Heath. This report outlines the structural development of the house and was commissioned to inform a planning application by the owners to alter and extend the building. The drawings used as a basis for the survey (Figs 2-4) are those supplied by the architects, Spratley.

The house is set by the roadside east of the village of Whitchurch Hill and has an L-shaped plan with the outer arms facing west and north. Three main periods of construction are visible; the oldest part, under a steeply pitched roof, is in the angle between the ranges. This has an old south extension with a higher roofline and there are two mid 20th century additions. The south end of the main range is wholly of this period but the east wing occupies the site of an earlier outbuilding, as can be seen from the 1912 edition of the Ordnance Survey map (Fig 1). The history of the house is poorly documented but it was occupied for over 50 years from the late 19th to the mid 20th century by George and Charlotte Weller and a photograph (Fig 1) of the house in the mid 1930s, prior to modernisation appears in a local memoir (Barefield-Hutt 2001; the house is not otherwise described).

Description

Exterior (Figs 4,5)

The house is constructed of brick, mixed with flint rubble on the west elevation, and roofed with old clay peg-tiles. The bricks are laid in Flemish bond with random vitrified headers and several different builds are discernible. The coursing of the modern work has been matched to the older fabric but is set in cement rather than lime mortar. The majority of windows are two or three-light wooden casements under low-arched brick heads and most are modern replacements.

The west elevation has two distinct rooflines, with the older part of the house at the north end under a steeply-pitched hipped roof; this has a large brick chimney stack towards the centre of the ridge line. The bay at the north end is built of flint with brick dressings and an offset plinth and is set forward slightly from the rest of the elevation.

This quoin has a vertical straight joint in the brickwork 0.25m from the corner running only part-way up the wall. There is evidence for a succession of window openings:

- a) There were two original ground floor windows set higher in the wall with brick jambs and arched lintels. The bricks are 50mm thick and match those used for the quoins to this bay. The south jamb of the first floor window is of the same type.
- b) These ground floor windows were infilled with bricks 60mm thick (matching those in the bays to the south) and replaced by a single window with a lower cill level. It was probably four lights wide; the north jamb is indicated by a second straight joint.
- c) This was replaced by the existing ground floor window using bricks 70mm thick.
- d) The area between the ground and first floor windows and one jamb of the latter was rebuilt in a hard red brick.

The central section of the elevation is a single build of bricks laid in Flemish bond which spans the change of roof level. There is an offset course at eaves level but no plinth. The front door, which has glazed side-lights and an open lean-to porch, is modern and was created from a four-light window opening which can be seen in a photograph of the 1930s (Fig 1). The two-light window to the north is wholly modern and the two-light window to the south is in the former front door position; the blocking is visible below the cill. The remaining ground and first floor windows are original to the elevation. The south end wall to this build, including a gable stack, was removed when the range was extended in the 1960s. The extension has copied the older detailing; old bricks have been used and the coursing runs through, but the recent work is distinguished by the use of cement rather than lime mortar. The south gable wall which incorporates a chimney stack is part of this build.

The east elevation repeats this sequence; the oldest part of the house at the north end is wider than the central section but is faced with the same type of bricks. It has two large modern windows, the upper with a sledged dormer, and there is an added lean-to in the angle between the ranges. The only historic features are a partial straight joint in the brickwork of the south-east quoin and a small blocked upper window over the lean-to, adjoining the stack. The old extension to the south retains only one original

window and has modern French doors on the ground floor; the south end is a 20th century addition.

The rear wing has a lower roof line than the main house, with modern gabled dormers lighting the first floor on both elevations. The east end is a mid 20th century rebuild on the site of an older outbuilding (Fig 1) but the bay closest to the main house incorporates older fabric and the junction between the two builds is visible externally as a straight joint, confined to plinth level on the south elevation. On the north elevation the older fabric, including the end wall of the main house, is faced with red brick in Flemish bond (60mm); it incorporates two blocked windows and a door which was converted into a window when the modern porch was added.

Interior (Fig 6)

Ground floor

In general the interior has modern finishes but some historic features are visible. All the ground floor rooms open into each other without a connecting passageway and there are two staircases (one modern). The two rooms at the north end of the main range form the oldest part of the house. They are divided by a large brick chimney stack; the hearth has been opened up on the north side to expose an old wooden lintel but has been given a modern raised hearth and dividing wall. The recess to the east probably gave access to an adjoining winder stair; this space is now a utility room with access from the rear wing. The north room has exposed ceiling joists with a heavy chamfered ceiling beam whose east end is carried on an exposed post with a corbelled head. This post also carries one end of a plain squared beam in the adjoining room to the east; this room is otherwise modern in appearance.

In the dining room to the south of the main stack the fireplace is of modern 'Georgian' type and the exposed ceiling beam with stopped chamfers has one end lodged on the stack. Beyond this room in the old extension is the lobby for the former front door at the foot of a straight flight of stairs. The room to the south was doubled in length in the mid 20th century and all visible features are of this date, with the exception of the panelled shutters to the west window and the two-panelled door of 18th century type; doors of the same pattern are fitted in the other main ground floor rooms. Beneath this room and built to its original length is a brick cellar accessed by

stairs from the dining room; it preserves the base of the former south gable chimney stack.

First floor

On the first floor a corridor has been created along the east wall and the bedrooms have plain four-panelled doors of 19th century type. There are no features of note in the extensions at the south end of the house where the floor level is higher. In the older house there are deep cupboards alongside the stack (no fireplaces are exposed) and the north room has a floor of old elm boards. Some timbers are also exposed in this room, including part of a partition fronting the stack, a beam forming part of the hipped roof and a jointed wall plate; the tie beam to one of the roof trusses is cased. Part of a second cased truss can be seen on the landing and there is a windbrace to the hip in a cupboard at the north end of the passage. The adjoining rooms in the east wing have exposed purlins and a door has been cut through the former end wall to the modern bedrooms and staircase landing beyond.

Roof

The roof space over the main range has three distinct compartments;

1 The old extension at the south end has a softwood roof of strutted king post type with modern fabric beyond.

2 The central section, south of the main stack has a common rafter roof with a single tier of purlins and was plastered-out as a habitable attic; some plaster remains, elsewhere the rafters have nail holes for laths. There is a floor of old elm boards and a partition screening the stack. The space was lit by an extant small window in the south gable wall and probably by a dormer in the east roof slope close to the stack; the rafters have been renewed here.

3 This roof continues north of the stack but the space was not plastered out. The hipped slope at the north end is part of an older roof structure as the timbers are soot-blackened (Fig 6), including both the rafters and the rail at the top of the hip. Restricted access and service pipes precluded close inspection.

Structural development (Figs 2, 3)

1 **Medieval** - There are indications that the present house originated in the medieval period as a timber-framed building. This is most apparent in the roof space where the timbers which form the north roof slope are heavily smoke-blackened. Limited access meant that it was not possible to inspect these closely and they may be reused in their present positions. Alternatively they could be the ridge-piece and upper rafters from one side of an earlier east-west roof, retained and adapted when the house was rebuilt. In this case the exposed purlin and windbrace on the floor below would be part of the same structure. The sooting and the low ridge height indicate a single storey range open to the rafters and heated by an open hearth. Externally partial straight joints in the brickwork of some quoins (Fig 4) suggest that corner posts to a timber frame have been progressively replaced in brick as they decayed.

2 **Later 17th century** - The house was rebuilt to a two-roomed, two-storeyed plan heated by a large central brick stack. Externally the flint rubble with brick dressings at the north end of the west elevation dates to this period and originally had a different window pattern. Other elevations were refaced at later periods and at this date may still have been partly timber-framed. Later rebuilding has removed the front door which would have opened into the lobby west of the stack. Internally the room to the south of the stack was probably the parlour and the room to the north which has a large fireplace opening, the kitchen; the exposed beams in this room date to this phase. A winder stair to the east of the stack lit by a small upper window (now blocked) gave access to the bedrooms on the first floor, which were probably heated, and an attic room south of the stack. The main part of the roof dates to this period. To the east of the kitchen was an unheated one-bay service room with an attic above; it retains its contemporary roof.

This phase dates to the later 17th century when flint with brick dressings became common as a building medium in the area; several other farms in the parish date to this period and use the same materials (eg. Coombe End Farmhouse, Charity Farmhouse: *Images of England*). The lobby-entrance plan was in widespread use through the course of the 17th century; a house of the same materials and similar plan at Mapledurham is dated 1691 (Mercer 1975, 194).

3 *Late 18th century* – The house was extended southwards with a new wing one room deep. This incorporated a cellar and a south gable chimney stack. It was built in brick with a higher roof line and the walls of the adjoining older range were refaced at the same time. The front door was moved to a new position opening into a stair lobby between the old and the new builds. At the north end of the older house the window patterns were altered and the north wall rebuilt with a kitchen door and windows. The interior was refitted with panelled window shutters in the new room and two-panelled doors to the principal rooms.

4 *Mid 20th century* – a photograph of the 1930s (Fig 1) shows the house essentially unaltered from its phase 3 form with a rustic porch to the front door and three or four-light wooden casement windows of 19th century type. In the mid 20th century the house was extended southwards and eastwards. The latter, now the kitchen appears to occupy the site of a pre-existing, probably single storeyed outbuilding such as a dairy. The position of the front door was moved, a French door added and windows altered, enlarged or replaced so that the majority of frames are now mid 20th century. The interiors were also modernised.

References

Barefield-Hutt, W, 2001 *First Memories: an account of life in Whitchurch Hill in the early years of the 20th century*

Images of England www.imagesofengland.org.uk

Mercer, E, 1975 *English Vernacular Houses*, RCHME

Appendix

Statutory list

GORING HEATH SU67NW 8/80 Copyhold Farmhouse GV II Farmhouse. C17 with C18 addition to right and C20 alterations. Red brick; flint with brick dressings to left; plain tile roof; brick stacks. 2 storeys; 4-window range; 2-panel door with side lights under lean-to open porch to left of centre. Fenestration of 3-light casements except 2-light casements to left and right of door. Blind panels to ground and first floor right. Ridge stack to left of centre. End stack to right. Interior: Noted as having original fireplace to ground floor left.