

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ADDENDUM TO  
BUILDING RECORDING  
ON  
UPPER PARK FARM,  
BECKLEY, OXFORDSHIRE  
NGR SP 57246 11417**

*On behalf of*

***c/o  
Roderick James Architects LLP***

**MARCH 2016**

## **ADDENDUM: UPPER PARK FARM**

This is an addendum to the report produced on Upper Park Farm, and contains a reworking and clarification of points raised by the Conservation Officer for South Oxfordshire District Council. These alterations concern reworking of parts of section 3 and 4 that concern the development of the 16<sup>th</sup> century structure. Observed features have been noted on the following plans (figures 20-21)

### **3 DESCRIPTION OF UPPER PARK FARM**

#### **3.2 West Elevation**

The front or west elevation contains two main component parts (plate 42). On the south part the house has what initially appears to be a large box timber frame, with a chequered Flemish bond infill. Large box framing is considered to be an indication that the structure is of an early date (Mercer 1975, 115-6). Mercer suggests that these designs were in use before 1450 and continued afterwards. However, it is apparent internally that the original large box timber framing is illusory, which also implies that the areas of brick infill are a secondary reworking of the structure. There are four timber frame bays surviving in this part of the building, of which the central two bays have 20<sup>th</sup> century windows. The size of the outer bays have different dimensions to the inner bays. The bay windows are vertically aligned with first floor windows, two sets of three two paned modern wood casement windows, with a length of lead coping underneath.



Plate 42: South part of west elevation

The majority of brick infill of the wall uses red and blue vitrified bricks measuring 223mm x 103mm x 55mm. In the lower left corner of the timber framed section there is a portion of newer brickwork; there was previously a doorway here, in-filled in the 1990s. The bricks here measure 215mm x 104mm x 51mm, and are thus old bricks reused or new bricks of a similar dimension. In some cases the timbers appear to have shrunk and the joints have been repaired with cement, though not recently. The timber framed section sits on a cement rendered plinth approximately 500mm deep. At the right end of the principal elevation the edge of the building extends beyond the timber frame, by about 500mm.

Here the bricks measure 220mm x 100mm x 53mm. The gable wall to the south has a brick quoined projecting chimney breast; the top of the chimney stack is tiled slightly lower and offset from the main roof. The bricks on the original quoining measure 217mm x 100mm x 55mm. All bricks are of a depth of around 50-55mm that could date from the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

A plain clay tiled roof has been severely fire damaged. The topmost section of roof adjacent to the right end chimney stack has burnt away, with no rafters remaining. Above the second floor window on the right there is a triangular section of roof that remains with the tiles still in place.

### 3.5 South Elevation



Plate 43: South gable end

The south façade contains three visible components. On the left hand side of the structure there is a two storey gable end with projecting chimney stack (plate 43). The wall is constructed in limestone rubble and red brick quoins. The chimney has two shoulders with tiled areas of runoff and a water tablet. The brick chimney stack was probably remodelled in the early to mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, the brickwork is old, in places deteriorated with small patches of concrete infill and the mortar lines are thin. Placed in the chimney stack to the left at ground floor level there is a small modern glimpse window, with a wooden lintel. The south elevation is largely obscured by wisteria.

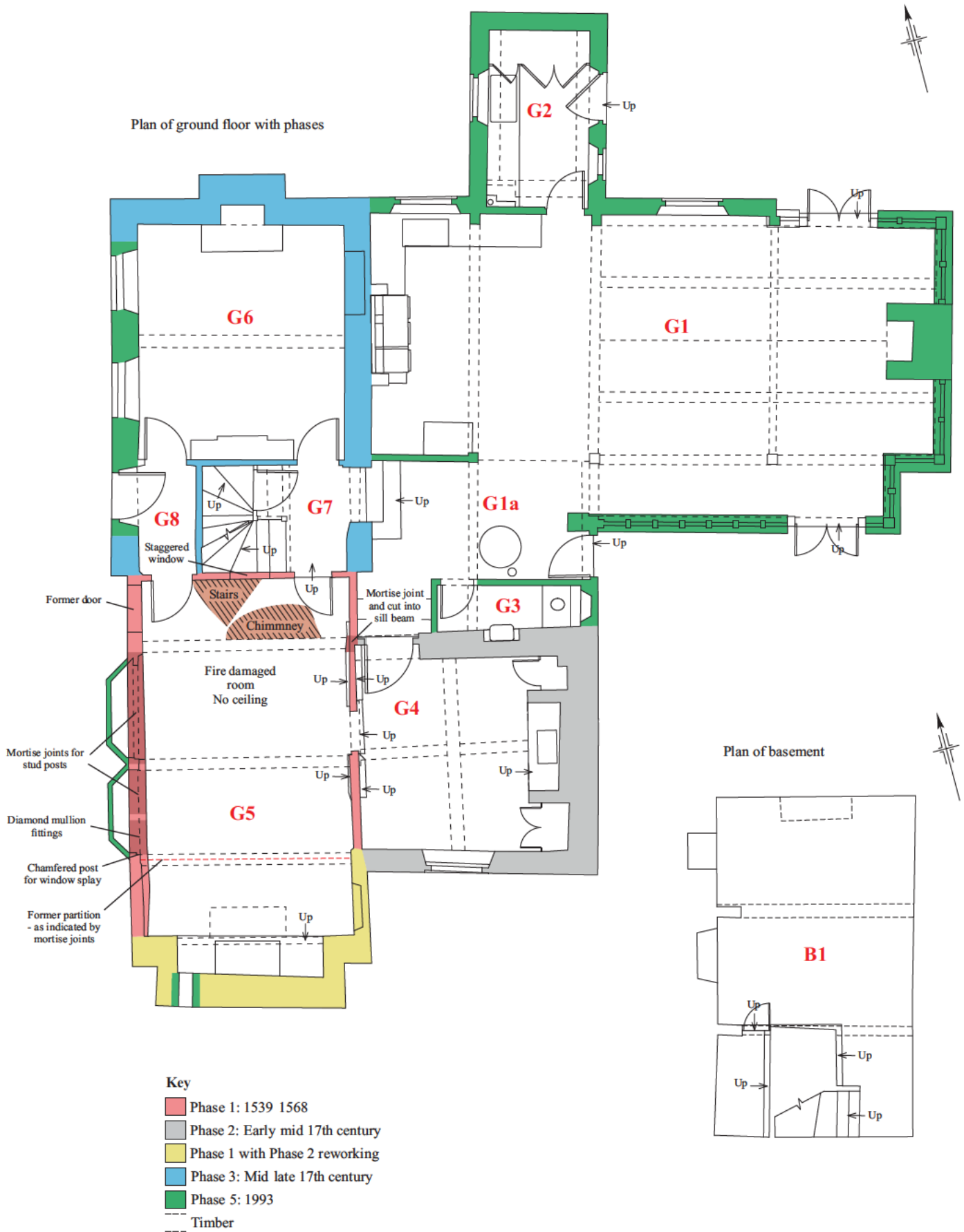
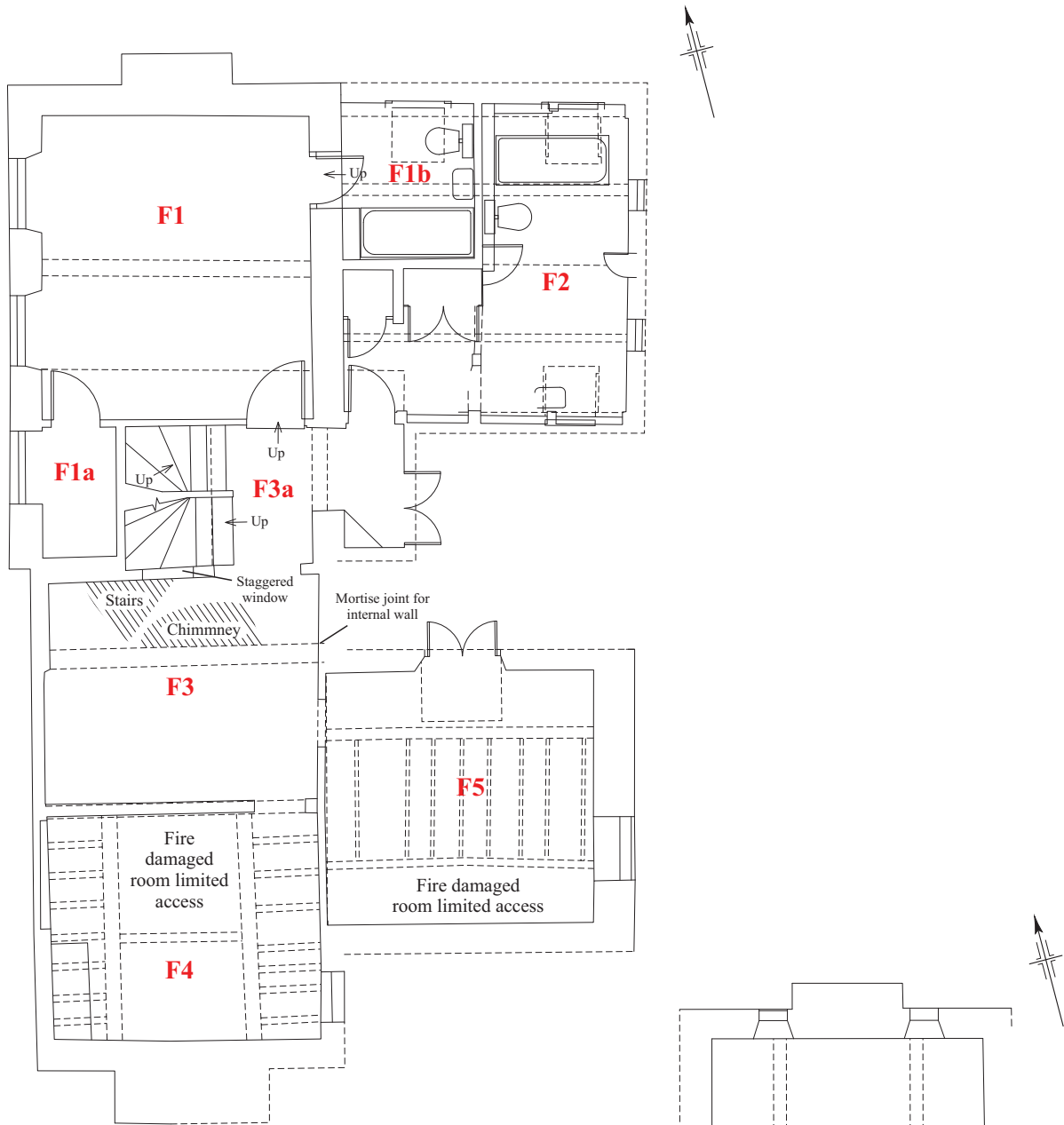
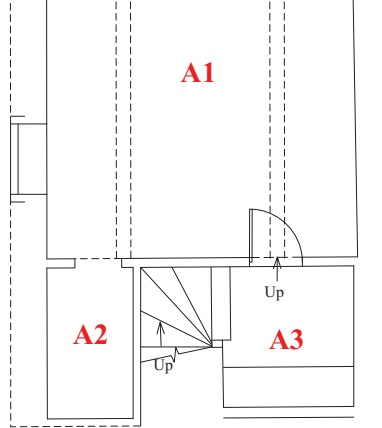


Figure 20: Basement and ground floor plans

0 5 m



Plan of first floor



Plan of second floor

Key --- Timber

Figure 21: Plan of first and second floors

0 5 m

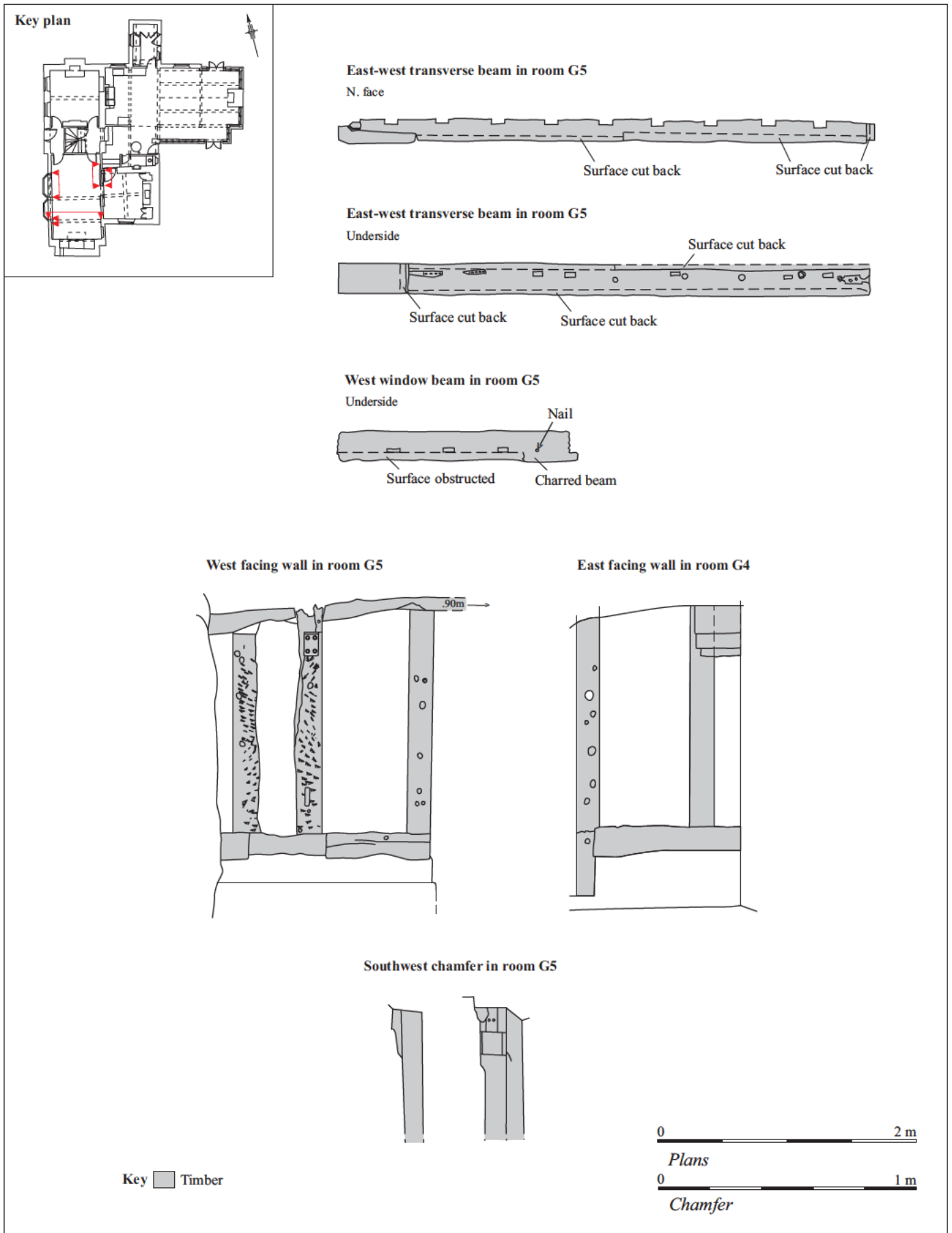


Figure 22: Timber details from rooms G4 and G5

### 3.6 Ground Floor



Plate 44: Timbers in east wall of G5



Plate 45: Mortise joint in post

Internally the ground floor room that requires to be re-discussed is room G5. The east wall of room G5 (internal) contains several exposed timbers consisting of four common studs, and a sill beam (Figure 22, plates 44-45). The sill beam has an area cut out towards its northern end as though it was designed to fit around an earlier feature. Two of the stud posts align on the inside of this niche. The south stud here has a mortise joint indicative of

timbers extending into the room at this point. It is presumed that this feature is designed to fit around the end of a stone wall, probably one that may have originally contained a chimneybreast. Also in the east wall is the connecting doorway between rooms G4 and G5, which is located within the centre of the wall. Plaster was removed from the panel between the doorway and the cut in the sill beam. The lower sill beam appears to have a fixture for a stud post. There is a small length of sill beam remaining on the south side of the doorway leading to the dining room (G4) in the south section of the lounge. At the south end of the east wall there is a recessed fixed two light window with transoms. Though much of the ground floor appears to have survived the timber of the upper part of this wall are structurally compromised (DSA 2015).

The south wall contains a large inglenook fireplace approximately 0.75m deep and 1.5m in height with heavy bressumer beam, a cast iron chimney hood over fire grate and a modern glimpse window on right side.

There are exposed beams within the west wall consisting of posts and sill beams which appear to be original. The wall contains five arcade posts forming four bays, only four posts are clearly visible. The southern one is obscured. The distances between the arcade posts produce two different width bays, with the two larger bays around the central arcade post. The central arcade post has the broader bays either side; and it is these two bays that contain the bay windows of a 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

The south window has suffered the least fire damage. The arcade post on the south side has a vertical cut on the top of the north edge measuring approximately 1m in length (figure 22, plates 46-47). This is the remains of a splay for part of a window, for which further evidence is exposed in the horizontal beam above the window.



Plate 46: South bay window with cut

The horizontal beam has mortise joints cuts into the underside (plate 48-49). Three of these are the location for diamond shaped mullions, which are a primitive feature of Tudor architecture. One of these has evidence of a dowel hole. There is a brief period of time



from 1539 to 1567 when these features were used and the windows were essentially unglazed (McCann 2010). Examples have been recognised at Vale Farmhouse, Frostenden and Rose Brook Cottage, Little Warley. On the north side of these there is evidence of a previous larger stud post, and two smaller stud fittings in the form of mortise joints.



Plate 47: Chamfered post on side of original window



Plate 48: Diamond mullion and mortise joint for stud beam



Plate 49: Mortise joints for stud posts

The timber post between the two windows, has a corbel to support its transverse beam. There is a linear cut with semi-circular profile cut into the face of the timber of unknown origin.



Plate 50: Mortise joints in underside of horizontal beam above north bay window

The north bay window frame and sill has areas of severe burning. The horizontal joist above the window shows signs of mortise joints for stud posts. That mortise joints occur

above both bay windows, would imply that the brick infill is not original and that the large box frame originally had smaller stud posts filling the internal wall space.

The post on the north side of the north bay has severe signs of burning. The lower portion of the corbel retains some of its form.

In the west wall at the north end a doorway has been removed and infilled with brick. This was done during the building works in 1993, and a new doorway was built in its current position in room G8.

The north wall contains posts at both ends and a transverse beam. The east and west posts appear to have no fire damage at ground floor level (though they do above). The transverse beam would appear to be part of the original timber framed section. At each end of the wall there is a door frame, the west door leads into the front entrance hall G8, and the east into the stairwell hall (G7). The wall between the doors has been plastered over, therefore it was not possible to observe if there were any existing timbers. The northern wall would have been the external wall of the timber framed structure.



Plate 51: South transverse beam in G5

The ceiling would have contained three transverse beams that would be attached to the arcade posts. Between the south transverse beam and the south wall there are two joists near to the hearth that are probably original. The remaining joists appear to be newer, because they are slimmer, and have traces of machine saw cuts (plate 51).

The southern transverse beam is chamfered with one stop on the south side. The western post has a corbel, supporting the transverse beam (figure 22, plate 51). There is a historic wrought iron L-tie (no date), three iron pins are inserted to the underside of the transverse beam connecting into the corbel, probably to stop the beam failing and provide extra support. There are a number of mortise cuts into the beam that appear to indicate an earlier wall or screen inserted under this beam. At the eastern end of the transverse beam there are historic repairs to the beam using two scarf joints, a newer section extends from the wall providing support where the beam has rotted. A stone wall supports the east end.

The central transverse beam is chamfered and supported by corbels. Fire damage has affected both posts and corbels. This transverse beam is bowed in the centre and there is a historic vertical crack approximately 500mm from east end. This is pinned together with a fishplate, secured with three square headed bolts (still galvanised). There are two, one in the east and one in the west, wrought iron L-ties (no date) inserted into the posts and undersides of the transverse beam. The beam apart from the damage at the post junction in the west end has incurred little visible damage to the underside. There appears to be an upper transverse bearer, which has sustained some fire damage, on the west end along the top and some area in the first floor of the doorway at the east end.

The northern transverse beam in this room has been consumed by fire.



Plate 52: Newel post and turned balusters, with timber frame window behind

There are fixed width floorboards throughout the lounge. There is a 1m<sup>2</sup> test pit in the south east corner of the room which was made by the engineer.

The hall at the base of the stairwell (G7) has a door in the south wall leading into the lounge (G5). On the west side there is the main stairwell that contains a dogleg staircase rising two floors and ending in the attic space (plate 52). Timber framing is evident in the wall on the south side of the stairs, and the remains of a window staggered out of line with the floors is evident.

### 3.8 First Floor (Figure 21)

The landing (F3a) on the first floor is a roughly rectangular space. Parts of the south wall are burned out; some of the timber frame sections still remain, but are heavily scorched and burned on revealed faces abutting (plate 53). Part of a jowl arcade post is evident on the east side.



Plate 53: East side of south wall of landing

Of room F3 very little survives with the floor and roof burned out. The timber frame at this level has been severely burned (DSA 2015). In the north wall some evidence of the surviving box frame remains (plate 54). The jowled post and brace as well as struts and tiebeam are all badly charred, the outer layer of plaster and lath is almost completely burned away apart from the bottom half of the mid-section. There is a dropped tiebeam, with curved braces and with a cut through the width of the tiebeam; this is part of the early timber framed building. In this wall there is probably the former location of a window, positioned out of alignment with the floor levels.

The east wall contains evidence of timber framing. There is a door in this wall into room F5. The arcade post of the division of the bays also has a mortise joint in it to indicate that there was an internal wall division in the northeast corner, presumably associated with a chimney.



Plate 54: North wall of room F3



Plate 55: East wall of room F3

The south wall contained a door at its east end with a series of studs and an arched brace at its west end (plate 56). There are two thick studs and six slimmer studs within the wall. On closer inspection it can be observed that the two studs are in fact chamfered door jambs, with a simple chamfered and curved overhead door arch sandwiched between. The door arch is of a Tudor style and can be compared to a similar arch seen in Flintshire dated 1577 (Alcock and Hall 1994, 20). The doorway has been closed off and a minor stud placed floor to ceiling in the doorway. Above the tie beam there is a collar and queen strut truss.



Plate 56: South wall of F3

The west wall was constructed of a large box frame and contains a mullioned window. The windows are completely burned, only the charcoaled frame remains. They were probably replaced as part of the modernisation that occurred in 1993. There is a slim mortar line which is present around the bottom edge and one side of the window, and a single course of brickwork along the top of the window between the wall plate and rafters. Beneath the window is a mid-rail between the studs and a brick infilled panel (plate 57). To the right are two other brick infilled panels.



Plate 57: F3 west wall

Within room F4 it is possible to see that the ceiling opened up into the roof space. The north wall is the one with studs and an arched brace and evidence of earlier Tudor door. The north wall of F4 has some remaining lath and plaster in the lower section of a central panel and to the west in the lower corner of the room.

The east wall contains a tie beam and indications of timber framing. At the south end there

are the remains of a window. The whole of the south wall still has the plaster in place and some of the west wall beneath the window the plaster still remains. The west wall has a modern window in its north timber frame bay. On the other walls of F4, however there remain lots of examples of pre-1930 split oak lath and plaster work.

Plaster remains on the ceiling, backed with modern purlins. These can be viewed on the ceiling in the east and also in the upper portion of the ceiling in the west. The purlins are machine cut and of a bright yellow/brown colour where they are not burned. This could also mean that some of the rafters were modern replacements, however the roof and rafters are so badly burned it is not easy to see any detail that would help to distinguish age.

The floors has wide timbers floorboards, which are dark in colour in the room. It is possible that these date from before the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The attic area of the room above room G5 had a stone south wall, and timber framing in the north wall. The central truss looks like a queen post truss with collar beam and tie-beam (plate 58). There are two smaller struts internally to the queen posts. In the south part of the structure there is a truss simply with a collar beam and tie-beam. There are no indications that survive of there being an earlier hipped roof.



Plate 58: Central truss

## 4 ASSESSMENT

### 4.1 Phases

The earliest part of the structure is generally referred to as area A, which covers the south part of the Front Range. The timber frame here is probably originally associated with a phase of the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. The diamond shaped cuts on the underside of the beam in the west wall of G5 are the most significant indicators of a date. They were common features in domestic buildings from 1539 to 1568, and relate to a post-Dissolution world when the window glass industry that had been maintained by the Church authorities collapsed. In more remote areas such as Glamorgan it has been suggested that their use carried on to c. 1590 (RCHMW 1988, 86). It is apparent that in the joist beams of the



timber framing there are the remains of mortise slots that would indicate that the large panel timber framing originally had stud posts instead of brick infill. Between the two upstairs rooms there is a Tudor style door head similar to an example that is recognised from Flintshire and dated to 1577. It is thus apparent that the origins of the timber framed structure that forms the basis of part A was constructed in the years either side of 1550. The grant to Princess Elizabeth in 1550 would appear to coincide with this development and it is often the case that the enhancing of property was associated with a new owner and a new lease of life.

A number of questions were raised by the South Oxfordshire Conservation Officer, which included the reuse of the timbers and a hipped roof. It is apparent that the timbers are original and that there is no evidence of hipped roof. The plan of the building has been further elucidated from a number of observations. The following plan would make sense. The cut into the sill beam in the east wall appears to be placed around a feature that may be earlier. It is suggested here that this would be in line with a stone wall that contained a chimney and fireplace. In favour of this is that this cut into the sill beam lines up with a wall for the initial rear extension. It would also be the case that there would be a spiral staircase located around the rear of the fireplace. This would explain the location of the window staggered in the area to the rear of the proposed fireplace. There is a further tradition that is observable in the development of historic houses, that new stairwells are located alongside existing stairwells so that the plan of the building has to have little further redevelopment.

The mortise joints on the underside of the south beam would indicate that there was a wall or partition in this location. This would mean that the downstairs floor would have been divided into two rooms, a larger room with a fireplace and stairwell, and a narrower room. The first floor would also be divided into two rooms but the narrower room would be on the north side with the fireplace and the larger room on the south side. It is apparent with the north and central frame of the structure that the post arrangement has inward facing jowls. One can thus suspect that the frame at the south end of the building would also have major posts that contained a jowl. It is impossible to see if this is the case at present, as only one of the posts of the remaining south frame survives and this is embedded into a wall. Any potential jowl is not visible, and would only be evident if the top of this post is uncovered. It is thus not possible to determine if this structure extended to further bays to the south, but it could have done.

The plan of this earliest building can be interpreted as a structure that had two rooms on the ground floor and two on the first floor. The central wall of these rooms is staggered, thus creating different sized rooms, and it is not possible to determine if the building extended to the south, though the identification of a jowl on the surviving south post may be indicative that that was the end of the building.

## **4.2 Listed Status**

The building is a listed structure, and is thus considered to be a structure of national importance.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The latest assessment has been carried out to sort out certain questions that were raised about the development of the building at Upper Park Farm by the South Oxfordshire Conservation Officer. There is evidence that the timber framing is original to this building, and that the design of the structure can be more accurately refined. The date for the structure is in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century (as defined by the diamond mullion fittings).

There is evidence of mortise joints for stud posts on the underside of the horizontal beams of both bay windows, which is indicative of the brick work being a secondary development presumably in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

A cut into the sill beam along with two mortise joints in the upright is indicative of the original fireplace and north chimney being located in the northern end of room G5, fitting into the northeast corner. The surviving window staggered to the existing floor lines is indicative of the original stairwell running up around the back of the fireplace.

There is no apparent evidence that the structure was ever hipped. This was considered possible by the Conservation Officer as a means of explaining the different widths in the timber frame (arcade) bays.

At present it is difficult to see if the structure further extended to the south as it is not possible to see if the remaining post of the present southern post has a jowl. If it does, then it is feasible that it could be, if not then the building could have extended to another timber framed bay. The post may or may not also contain mortise joints along its southern side, which could answer the question of a further southern extension.

The plan that is evident is unusual in that the size of the rooms apparent appear to be staggered, with different wall lines on the ground floor to the first floor.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

DSA (David Symonds Associates) 2015 *Upper Park Farm, Beckley, Oxford OX3 9TA: A Report on a Structural Appraisal following fire damage*, Unpublished David Symonds Associates Report

McCann, J 2010 *The First Glazed Windows in Vernacular Houses, in Eavesdropper No.42*, Suffolk: Suffolk Historic Buildings Group

Mercer, E 1975 *English Vernacular Houses*, London: HMSO