

Archaeological Building Recording
at
OLD MOAT FARM HOUSE
STOKE MANDEVILLE

Buckinghamshire



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for
JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

September 2008

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING AT OLD MOAT FARM HOUSE, MARSH LANE, STOKE MANDEVILLE.

Introduction

This report describes the results of building recording carried out at Old Moat Farm House, Stoke Mandeville, a Grade II listed building, during alterations and repairs to the fabric April - July 2008. The recording was carried out in accordance with a brief from Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service and a written scheme of investigation by John Moore Heritage Services, who conducted a watching brief on the below-ground archaeology which is the subject of a separate report (JMHS Sept 2008).

Specific objectives of the building watching brief were to:

- Identify the construction materials
- Identify how the farmhouse has evolved over time
- Identify possible room functions
- Investigate the relationship between the building and its immediate environs and whether there were traces of any earlier related structures

The farmhouse occupies a moated site to the north of Marsh Lane on the west side of Stoke Mandeville at NGR SP 8273 1041 (Fig 1) and the archaeological and historical background is described in the report on the below-ground archaeology (JMHS Sept 2008). Timbers from the oldest part of the house have been dated by tree-ring analysis to c.1499 (Bridge 2007). The phased plan and elevations (Figs 2-4) in this report are based on measured survey drawings by BSA Chesters, Chartered Surveyors and Architects.

Description

Exterior (Figs 3-6)

The house has an L-shaped plan and the principal elevation faces south-west; it consists of a two-storeyed, gabled wing at the south east end which projects slightly from a lower range of 1½ storeys. Both ranges have clay-tiled roofs and there is a large chimney stack at the junction, built of thin old bricks. The wing has an offset

20th century casement window on each floor and was cement-rendered. This was stripped during the course of works to reveal a remnant timber frame infilled with brick. The lower range is built of exposed brick in English bond divided into two main bays by a shallow central pilaster. On the ground floor there are three- and four-light segmental-headed casement windows and adjoining the wing the outline of a blocked doorway which opened into a lobby next to the main stack. There are 20th century three-light gabled dormers in the roof.

The north-west gable wall incorporates a chimney stack and has a small casement window with diamond lattice on the first floor. Butted against the ground floor is a rendered single-storey two-cell porch with a hipped roof. The north-eastern elevation of this range is also brick-built, with a small amount of exposed framing at the southern end over the door. This is surmounted by an infill panel with a vitrified brick lozenge and there is a first-floor window in the adjoining panel. The northern end of the wall is a modern rebuild.

The north-west elevation of the adjoining wing is single-storied and wholly brick-built under a deep catslide roof. This build returns onto the adjoining north-east elevation where it underpins a timber-framed extension to the main cross-wing. This is a two-storied range with a hipped roof which has exposed timber framing infilled with thin bricks at first floor level. Butted onto the underbuilt brick ground floor there is a projecting porch and a chimney stack of 20th century date.

The south-east elevation of the cross wing and its extension was cement-rendered throughout and has a near central door with an irregular pattern of 20th century three-light casement windows.

Building Works – modern rendering was stripped from the south-east elevation to expose timber framing infilled with brick; the poor condition of the underlying wall meant that some patches of render could not be stripped from the brickwork in advance of repair work, although the frame was exposed. The ground floor of the wing was wholly rebuilt in brick but the framing survived at first floor level; this included the mid-rail, five posts forming four bays, the wall plate and one brace. There are two 20th century windows at this level; one has an extant rail forming the

cill, the other has mortices for a missing rail and a separate stud forming the northern jamb which suggests that this is a historic window position. The timbers were generally in poor decayed condition, particularly the south-west corner post which was heavily eroded. The north-east corner post survives to nearly its full height and has the slighter secondary framing to the outshot butted against it. This was probably brick-nogged from the outset as the bricks are thin, often vitrified and mainly laid as stretchers.

Rendering was also stripped from the south-west gable wall of the wing. The corner posts were indicated by decayed voids packed with bricks at ground floor level but survived in poor decayed condition at first floor level and had jowled heads. The tie-beam was also very decayed and was partially patched in modern brick. Two extant studs linked the tie-beam to the collar and the position of another was indicated by differential brick infill. There were three further studs in the apex of the roof above the collar. The wall below the tie-beam was rebuilt in brick in English bond with a course of edge-set headers at storey height; some of the brick panels in the gable were of the thinner older type.

Interior (Figs 2, 7-10)

Ground floor – Room names are those shown on the plan (Fig 2). The front door opens into a large hall which occupies the north-eastern half of the wing and adjoining it in the south-western half is the drawing room. There are two main rooms in the north-west range and two rooms, one L-shaped, in the extensions wrapped around the northern side of the hall.

Study (Fig 7) – at the north-west end of the house, 20th century partitions were removed to form a single larger space and a modern staircase relocated. Plaster was stripped to expose brick walls mirroring the exterior, with the exception of the partition wall to the dining room. This was found to be a timber-frame largely rebuilt in brick. The fireplace in the north-west wall was opened up and found to be built of 19th century brick with housings for a cast-iron range and a cast iron bread-oven door built into the back wall. The domed oven chamber occupied half of the projecting porch to the north-west and had no external access. There was a void between the

oven wall and the outer shell and the original roofline was lower. The lobby is a 20th century addition.

Dining room (Figs 7-8) – adjoining the study, a 20th century partition to a passage was removed on the north-east side. There is a chamfered axial ceiling beam lodged at the south-east end on a large fireplace which has a chamfered wooden lintel and brick jambs. Later infill was removed to expose a plain recess 0.9m deep with a wide sooted flue. A filled opening in the south-east corner is probably a previous oven position and there is a small storage alcove in the south-west jamb. The blocked external door in the south-west wall formerly opened into the lobby adjoining the stack.

Drawing room (Fig 8) – this occupies the southern half of the wing and has a high ceiling divided into quadrants by moulded ceiling beams. The external walls have been rebuilt in brick but there is a timber-framed partition (not exposed) to the hall with a four-panelled door of early 19th century type. The fireplace in the north-west wall has brick jambs but a fine-grained stone lintel with a four-centred head and Perpendicular-style roll mouldings. There are inglenook seats internally. No opening up was carried out in this room.

Hall (Fig 8) - this occupies the northern half of the wing and has a high ceiling with a chamfered axial ceiling beam. There is exposed framing in the north-east wall which was originally external, including four posts and a length of cill beam set on a rubble plinth; this is cut by secondary openings into the outshot beyond. The staircase cuts through the framing of the original north-west wall and rises to a half-landing where it divides. It has a closed string with 19th century treads and risers but oak newel posts, a roll-moulded handrail and on one side, vase-shaped splat balusters of late 17th century type (Hall 2005, 115) which survived behind hardboard casing. From the half-landing there is a short upper flight to the first floor of the wing. In the hall north-east of the stairs there is an old framed cupboard which projects beyond the line of the original wing. In the eastern corner there is a secondary studwork partition to a cloakroom where the cill beam also survives.

Utility – in the outshot north-east of the hall; this has a low ceiling and the rubble plinth to the wing was exposed in the south-east corner. At a higher level there were

two steps of a wooden winder stair which originated in the adjoining cloakroom but is now obsolete. The partition to the kitchen is brick-nogged studwork with a narrow door.

Kitchen/sitting room (Fig 9) – this is an L-shaped room in the north-west corner of the outshot. The external walls are 19th century brick but the right-angled internal wall was stripped to expose the north corner post of the original wing tenoned into a cill beam set on a rubble plinth; it has an extant wattle and daub infill panel. The partition was extended c.1m north-westwards to the present corner in brick and studwork which forms the rear of the hall cupboard. The return wall is light, brick-nogged studwork which had a deep secondary brick and cement quadrant moulding at the base; this was also applied to the external walls. Parallel to this partition at a distance of c.1m and spanning the whole room is a long chamfered beam set on brick piers at either end. This supports a timber-framed first floor wall which was once external; it is nogged with brick set in lime mortar which has squeezed through from the inner face. The south-west wall of this room was also formerly external and has extant timber framing over the door; this is nogged with brick set in lined-out lime mortar.

First floor (Fig 10) – little opening up was carried out at this level and there is no separate plan. The room sequence follows the ground floor, starting in the north-west range where the end room had no features of note. At this level the south-east partition wall has exposed timber framing with a door in a historic position. The adjoining room contains the upper part of the dining room chimney stack which has a small 19th century fireplace. Both flanks of the stack were exposed to reveal a straight joint where the main flue was butted against the back of the earlier chimney to the wing; the bedroom flue is an even later addition. This range has a common rafter roof of waney oak timbers divided by the central framed partition which has wattle and daub infill within the roof space. Over the dining room the rafters are pegged at the apex with a secondary ridge-board and the purlins are lodged against the once external face of the wing, which has been nogged with bricks from the reverse. The roof over the study is more recent with elm rafters and an integral ridge-board.

The wing is divided into two chambers which have exposed timber framing with roofs open to collar level and windbraces below the purlins. The southern room has a

simple fireplace with plastered brick jambs and a central arch-braced truss; the northern room is unheated. No opening up took place here. From the head of the stairs a passage on the north-west side of the wing leads to two rooms in the outshot at the north-east end where the framing of the wing is exposed. The ceiling adjoining the wing was temporarily removed to expose the top of the wall, including the wall plate, the jowled heads of the corner posts and part of the gable; the panels at this level are infilled with limewashed roughcast render over wattle and daub.

Structural development (Figs 2-4)

1 *c.1500* – the oldest part of the house is the wing at the south-east end which has been dated by dendrochronology to 1499 or shortly after. This is a tall two-storeyed timber framed unit divided into two rooms on each floor by an original partition. The frame sits on a rubble plinth wall and retains a little wattle and daub infill. The south-western rooms are heated and the ground floor fireplace has a good quality Perpendicular lintel in a style consistent with the tree-ring date, although the jambs are rebuilt. The fact that the wing is storied and heated suggests that it was built as a chamber block and formed one component of a larger pre-existing house, although there is no direct structural or archaeological evidence for where the rest of the building lay. The most likely position for an earlier hall and services is to the north-west, on the site of the later range. This lies within the moat on a level platform and slight indications of earlier floor surfaces were recorded when the patio was excavated (JMHS Sept 2008, 6). The quality of the building suggests that it formed part of one of the medieval manors of Stoke Mandeville, but the historical evidence is insufficient to indicate which (ibid. 1.3).

2 *17th century* – the north-west range and the extension at the north-east end of the wing are later additions but are not certainly contemporary. Both are timber-framed and have surviving panels of old brick nogging which may be original. The north-west range is divided into two rooms by an original partition and appears to have had an attic storey from the outset with a common rafter roof. The dining room was built with a large brick fireplace backed onto the older chimney serving the wing and a lobby entrance was formed to the south-west. This suggests that the new room became the hall with a probably unheated service room beyond and that the drawing

room in the wing was retained as the best room. None of these features is closely dateable within the 17th century.

The north-eastern extension is associated with the creation of the present staircase which cuts through the north-west wall of the wing to create a new access corridor. This can be dated to the later 17th century by the style of the splat balusters. The new rooms were unheated and probably had a service function, such as a dairy.

3 *19th century* – the timber frame of the north-west range was largely rebuilt in brick and a new chimney added at the north-west end incorporating a projecting bread oven. The decaying frame of the wing was also extensively underbuilt in brick and the later outshot extended north-westwards under a catslide roof. The ground floor framing was removed and the first floor became an internal wall. There were no substantial 20th century alterations to the house.

Conclusions

The objectives of the building watching brief were fulfilled as follows:

- The house originated as timber-framed structure infilled with wattle and daub. A second phase was also timber-framed, possibly nogged with brick from the outset. In the 19th century much of the decayed framing was rebuilt in brick.
- The house incorporates a chamber block of c.1500 which probably formed part of one of the manors of Stoke Mandeville. The house was rebuilt in the 17th century as a farmhouse and repaired and extended in the 19th century.
- The best rooms appear to have been situated in the wing at all periods. The north-west range housed the hall/kitchen and the additions to the north-east appear to have been unheated service rooms.

- The associated below-ground investigations have not shed conclusive light on the immediate environs of the house but there is the suggestion of earlier floor levels to the north-west under the patio area.

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Fig 8 Photographs: interiors, dining room, drawing room & hall

Fig 9 Photographs: interiors, kitchen

Fig 10 Photographs: interiors, first floor

References

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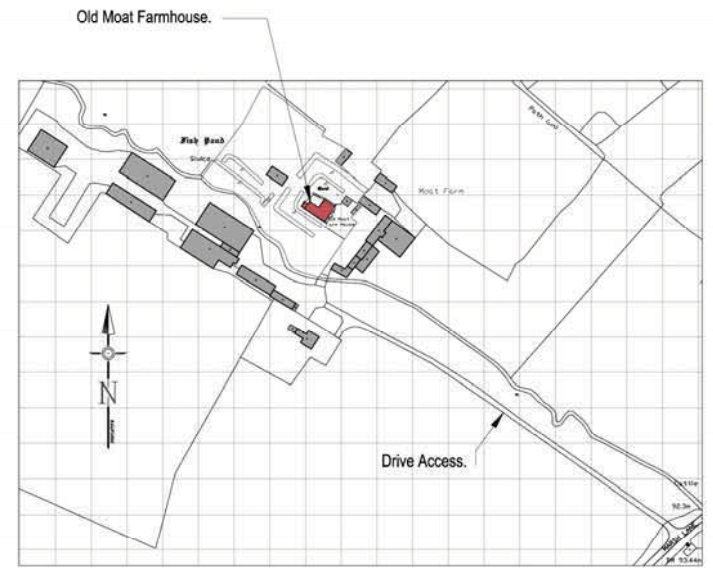
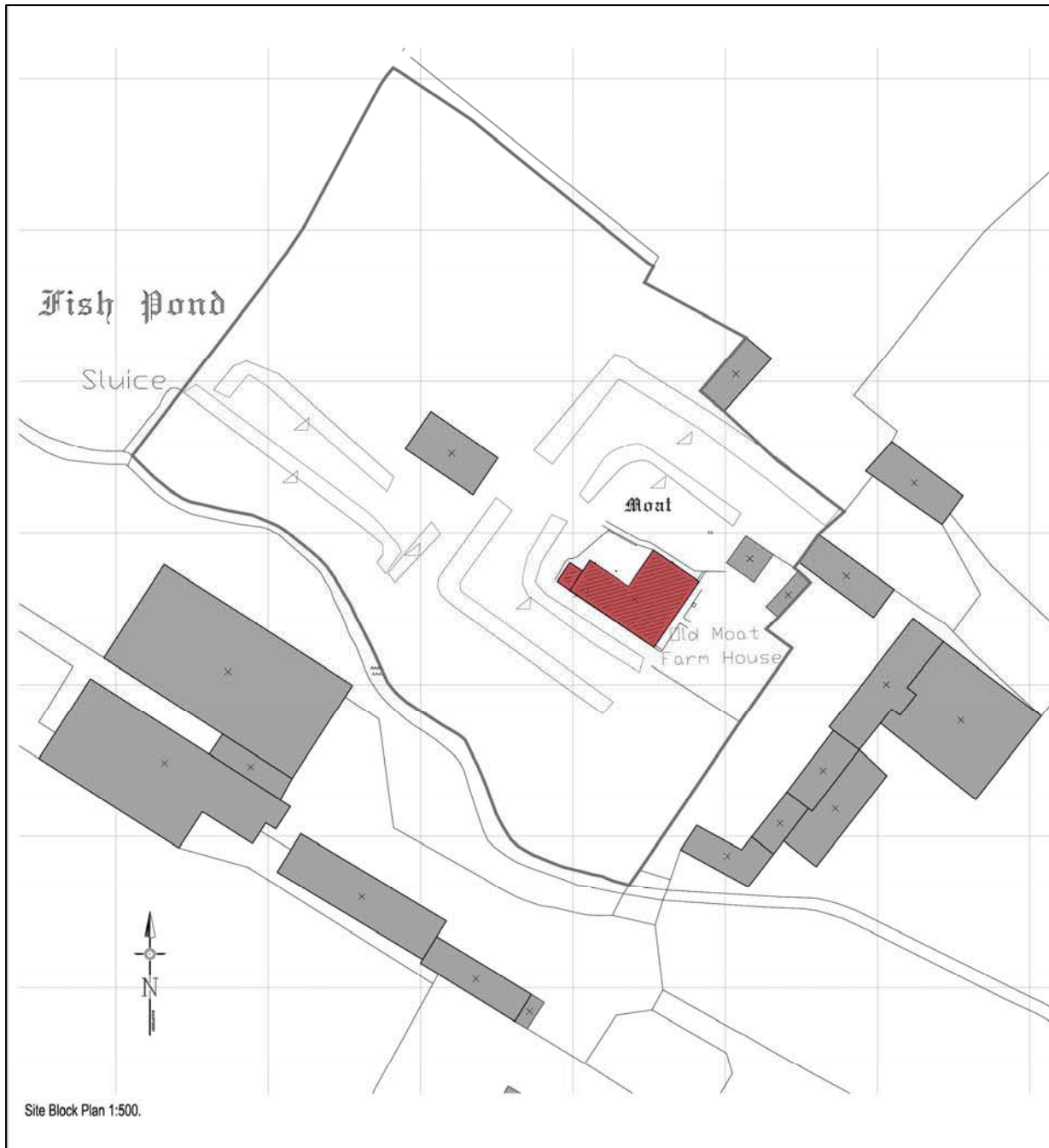






Fig 1 Site Plan
Old Moat Farm House, Stoke
Mandeville

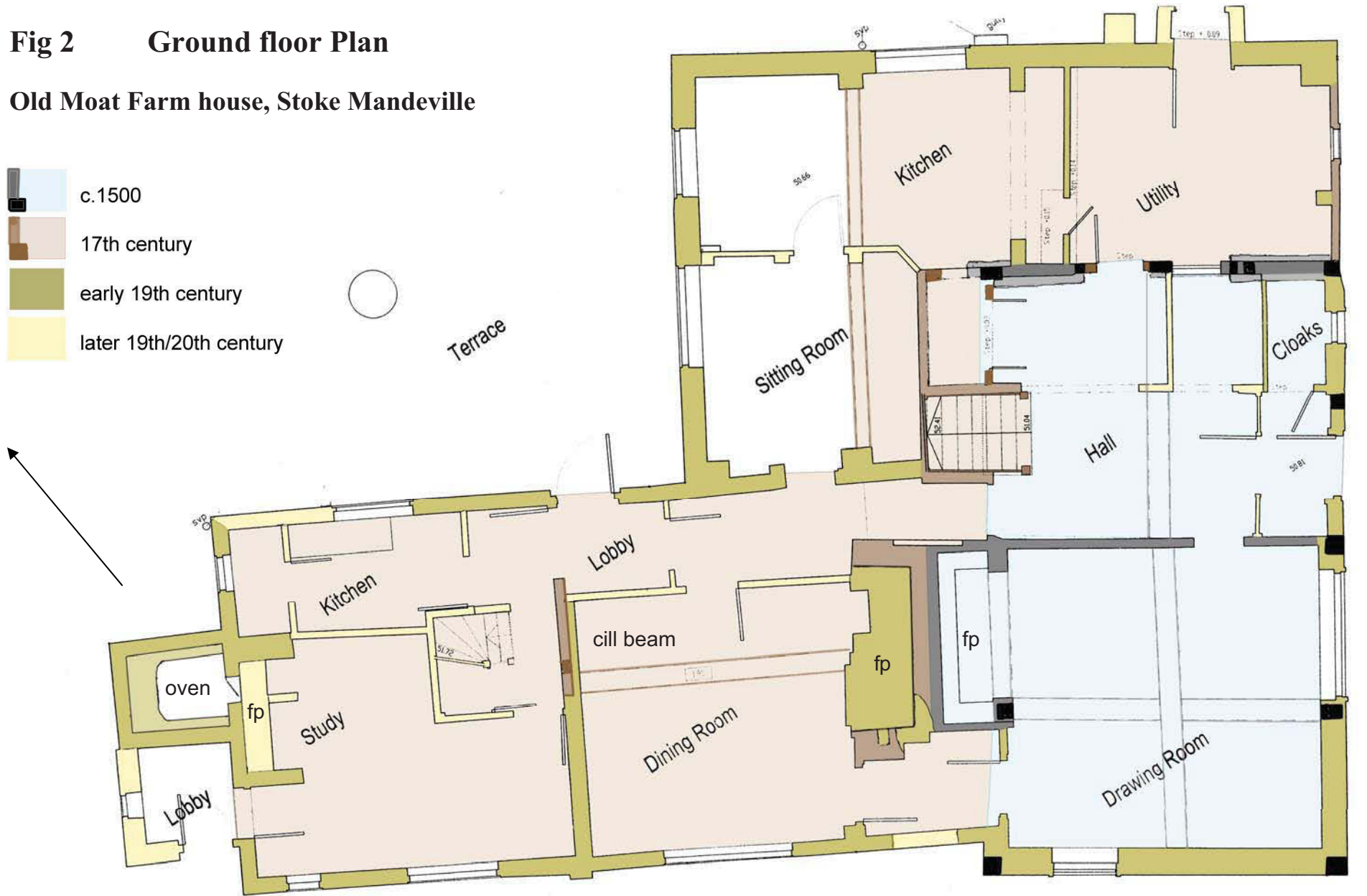
Location of house in moated site

(plan: BSA Chesters, Chartered
 Building Surveyors)

Fig 2 **Ground floor Plan**

Old Moat Farm house, Stoke Mandeville

-  c.1500
-  17th century
-  early 19th century
-  later 19th/20th century









North East Elevation

Fig 3 Elevations

North-east

South-west

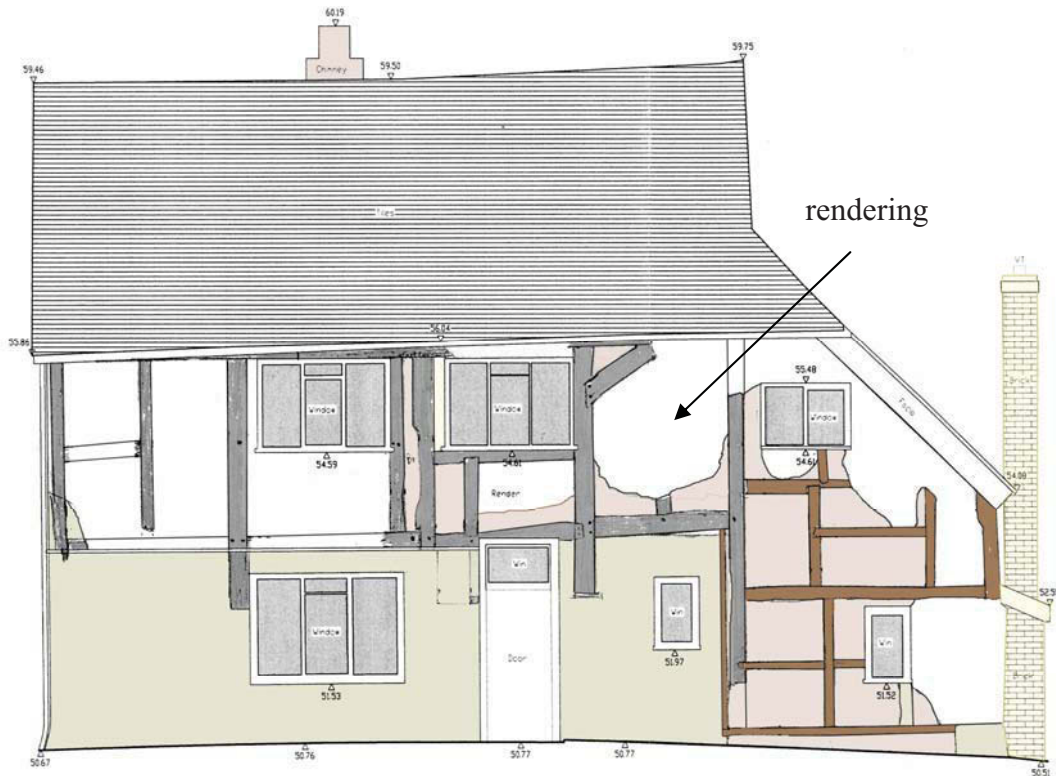
-  c.1500
-  17th century
-  early 19th century
-  later 19th/20th century



South West Elevation



Old Moat Farm House, Stoke Mandeville







South East Elevation

Fig 4 Elevations

South-east

North-west

-  c.1500
-  17th century
-  early 19th century
-  later 19th/20th century



North West Elevation





Fig 5 Exteriors
(clockwise from above)

- South-west elevation with rendering partially stripped from wing
- North-east elevation
- View from the north
- North-east elevation to wing
- South-west elevation, wing detail; jowled NW corner post & tie beam
- South-west elevation, wing detail; NW corner post void
- South-west elevation with rendering stripped from wing





Fig 6 South-east Elevation

(clockwise from top left)

- Before removal of rendering
- Decayed SW corner post
- Framing detail over door
- Framing detail between first floor windows
- Framing on first floor exposed
- Framing at north-east end





Fig 7 Ground floor
(clockwise from top left)

- Fireplace in study before opening up
- Back wall of study fireplace with door to oven
- Fireplace in dining room before opening up
- Fireplace in dining room after opening up
- Flue to dining room fireplace
- Oven detail, study fireplace





Fig 8 Ground floor
(clockwise from above)

- Hall looking north-west
- Dining room/study partition; first floor
- Dining room/study partition; ground floor, fragmentary cill beam & post
- Drawing room fireplace; lintel of c.1500
- Hall, north-east wall of wing, formerly external with cill beam on rubble plinth
- Staircase with exposed splat balusters, cut through original external wall of wing





Fig 9 **Ground floor**
(clockwise from top right)

- North-west corner of wing; corner post & cill beam on plinth
- Kitchen ceiling removed to expose formerly external NW wall, timber-framed and nogged with brick
- Framing detail NW wall
- Framing detail corner of NW wall
- Kitchen looking SW; framing supported on beam
- Kitchen looking NE





Fig 10 First floor
(clockwise from top left)

- Chamber over drawing room
- Room over utility; ceiling removed to expose external NE gable of wing
- Room over utility before removal of ceiling
- Room over dining room; upper part of chimney stack with blocked 19th century fireplace
- Looking along side of dining room stack to former external wall of wing
- 19th century flue added to dining room stack

