

A Report on a Fireplace
at
ARDWICK HOUSE
CHURCH ROAD, WHEATLEY
OXFORDSHIRE



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A REPORT ON A FIREPLACE
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Introduction

Ardwick House, Church Road, Wheatley is a grade II listed building (see appendix) and this short report was commissioned to inform a listed building application for the removal of a brick pier built within one of the fireplaces in the house. The report does not consider the wider history and development of the building, which is said to have been used as a butcher's in the 19th century and was formerly two units (information from owner). There are no overall plans of the house available; the fireplace drawings (Fig 1) were compiled by the author.

Description (Figs 1-2)

The house is one room deep, built of limestone rubble and fronting directly onto the road. The fireplace is situated in a ground floor room at the north-west gable end. There is a two-light casement window with a window seat and two wall cupboards on the north-east side. On the opposite side there is a glazed Crittall-style door to the garden and a 19th century sash window with shutters and a window seat. There are two internal doors, one adjoining the stack, of four-panelled 19th century pattern. The floor is quarry tiled and there is an axial ceiling beam.

The fireplace has an exposed cambered oak lintel with ends c.0.3m square; the jambs below are plastered and proud of the face of the timber which is pecked for plaster; the wall above is painted random rubble. The junction between the two finishes is edged with oak battens and there are oak 'jambs' inset below the lintel. The hearth is c.1m deep at floor level and has an inglenook on the north-east side; the recess is formed in rubble and repaired in brick and has a 20th century wooden seat. The western reveal is also brick and there appears to be a filled opening, either a second inglenook or an oven door.

Butted against the back wall is a brick 'buttress' 1.28m wide, 2m high and c.0.4m deep. It has a sloped face and discontinuities in the coursing at the base indicate the

position of a previous grate. The wall to the rear is also faced with bricks of different dimensions to a height of c.1m. This forms part of a separate build, partly contiguous with the inglenook which runs behind the 'buttress'. The upper back wall and the whole of the flue above lintel level are rubble-built and heavily sooted. There are high level timber ties at intervals which have double-ended hooks on their undersides; these are probably intended for hanging foodstuffs to smoke. The top of the flue is divided and currently open. The floor of the hearth is mainly flat-laid bricks which appear to respect the 'buttress', painted white except for a patch where a gas fire formerly stood. Outside the hearth and offset to the south-west there is a slate hearth slab which appears to have been associated with a reduced 19th century fireplace opening set flush with the face of the wall.

Structural sequence

- 1) In its original form the fireplace had a wide open hearth with at least one inglenook. It was rubble-built throughout apart from the surviving wooden lintel and probably dates to c.1700.
- 2) The back wall of the hearth and the inglenook were repaired in brick, probably due to wear through continuous use later in the 18th century.
- 3) The large open hearth was infilled and replaced by a smaller fireplace offset to the south-west side. This is now only represented by a slate hearth slab. The reduction probably took place in the early-mid 19th century; other features in the room indicate that the interior was modernised at this time.
- 4) The fireplace was reopened for display as a feature. The oak linings date to this time and the brick 'buttress' was constructed to bring the fire position forward and probably to improve the draw. There appears initially to have been an open fire basket, later replaced with a gas fire. The restoration probably took place in the middle of the 20th century; the house has several Crittall-style windows of this period on the garden elevation.

Conclusion

The brick 'buttress' is a secondary feature butted against the back of the hearth at a time when it had already been refaced in brick. The structural sequence suggests that the whole opening was reduced in size in the 19th century and that the 'buttress' was

introduced earlier in the 20th century when the fireplace was reopened to make a feature in the room.

Figures

Fig 1 Fireplace: plan, elevation and section through flue

- Fig 2**
- A** Exterior of stack, north-west gable
 - B** North-east elevation to Church Road, stack to right
 - C** Hearth detail showing offset slate slab for 19th century fireplace
 - D** Interior of flue open at top showing timbers with suspension hooks
 - E** General view of fireplace with brick 'buttress' built in centre
 - F** Eastern side of hearth showing inglenook; 'buttress' to left

Appendix: statutory list

WHEATLEY CHURCH ROAD SP5905 (South side) 7/195 Ardwick House GV II House. Early C18 extended mid/late C18. Limestone rubble with squared quoins and timber lintels; old plain-tile roof and brick gable stacks, 2-unit plan enlarged. 2 storeys. Road front has earlier section to right with former 6-panel door (now partly built up) between casement windows of 3 and 2 lights. 2-light casement at first floor. Later section has irregular fenestration including 3-light casement and tall sash to extreme left, all with stone flat arches. Present entrance in left gable wall. 5-window rear has casement and sash windows, mostly renewed, Single-storey rubble rear range to left. Interior not inspected.

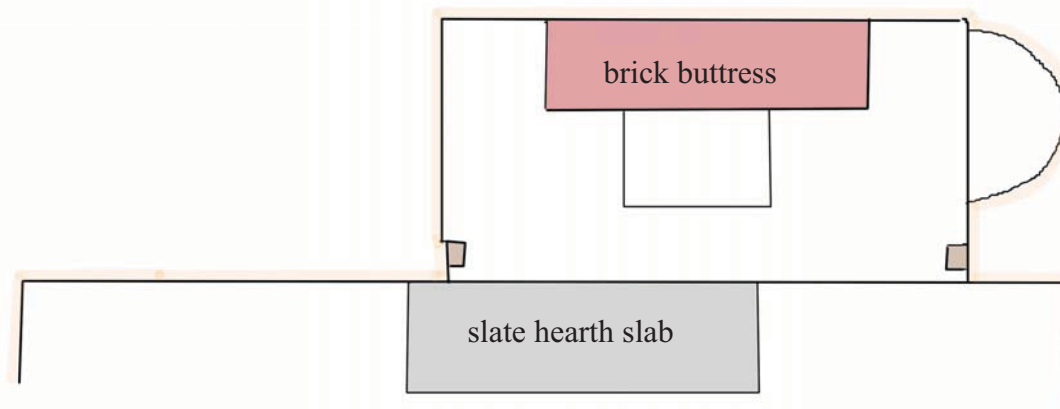
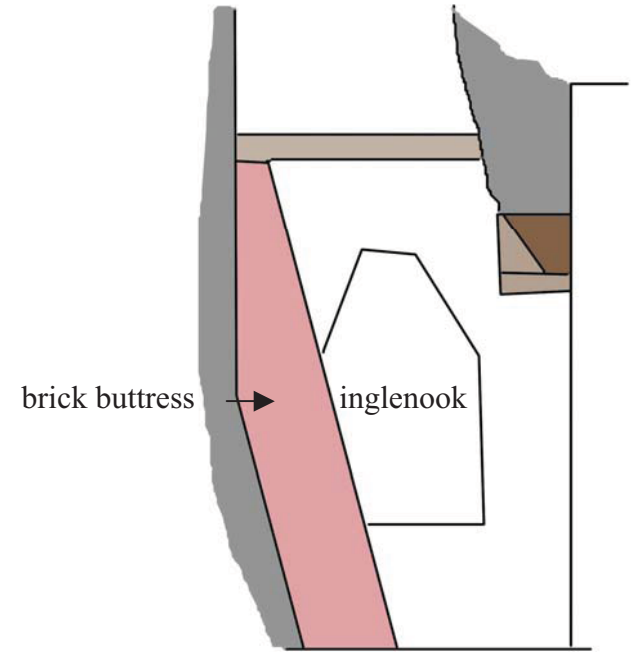
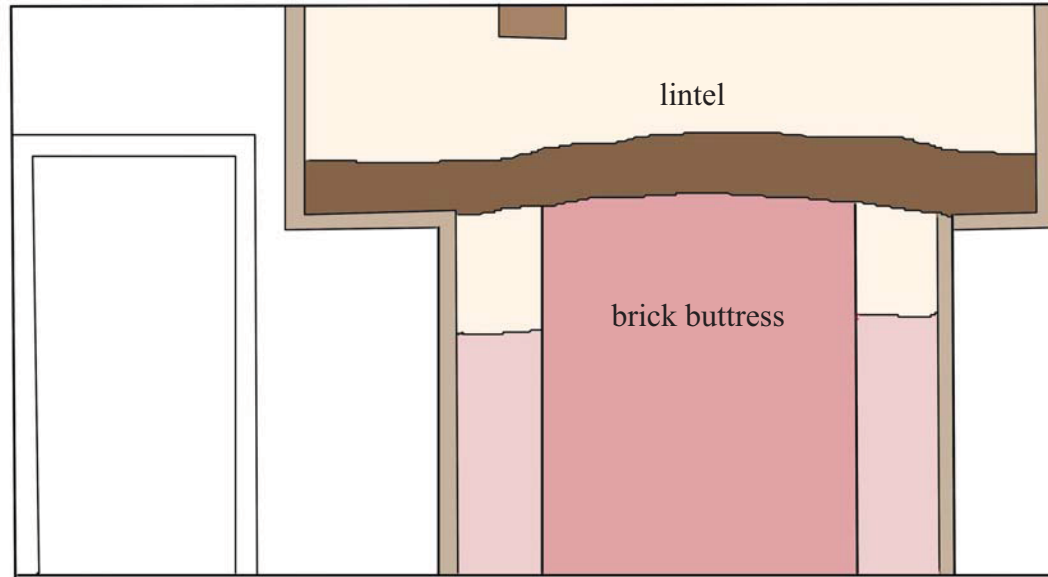


Fig 1

Fireplace

Elevation

Section of flue

Plan

Ardwick House, Church Road, Wheatley, South Oxfordshire



Fig 2

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F

See text for captions

