

NUNHIDE FARMHOUSE SULHAM BERKSHIRE

An Architectural Investigation



By

IMOGEN GRUNDON

On behalf of

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

September 2011

LIST OF FIGURES

1. The principal (west) elevation	1
2. The brick and flint plinth of the north part of the west elevation with basement windows and light-wells	2
3. Aerial photograph of Nunhide Farmhouse	3
4. The dated drain hopper with the letters IE and the date 1696 or 1698	3
5. The east elevation, south end	4
6. The east elevation, north end	4
7. The south elevation and porch (from west)	5
8. The south elevation and porch (from east)	5
9. The south principal door beneath the later porch	6
10. The north elevation of the main elevation and its junction with the first extension. The west elevation of the first extension can also be clearly seen	6
11. The north elevation showing the chimney stack and the anomaly on its eastern side (lower)	7
12. The north elevation showing the chimney stack and the anomaly on its eastern side (upper)	7
13. The north-west corner of the main house, showing the different elements of the plinth. Also seen here is the present farmhouse entrance in the first extension and some early paving slabs. The rest of this yard appears to have been paved with pebbles, which would have aided drainage and is often found in courtyards in the late 17 th century. Much of this has now overgrown with grass.	8
14. The farmhouse (front face)	9
15. The farmhouse (rear face)	9
16. The west elevation of the second extension	10
17. The corridor and the old part of the house, from the north	11
18. The corridor and the old part of the house, from the south	11
19. The east wall of the north-west reception room	12
20. The north wall of the Reception Room, showing the door blocked to make a window and the fireplace. The door on the right hand wall leads to the main ground-floor corridor	13
21. The internal buttress and relieving arches with window above in the west wall	14
22. Present position of stair to the basement (B1), with evidence on the left hand wall of its original position with the turn in the stair to the vaulted cellars (B" & B3) at the foot	15
23. The east end and brick-paved floor of basement B2	16
24. The west end of basement B3, with covered wood bins	17
25. The east end of basement B3, showing blocked door to the left (north) and the barred side-hung casement window at the east end	17
26. The dairy or larder	18
27. The north side of the floor of the dairy/larder, showing the difference between the tiled floor on the south side and the timber floor on the north and the present cellar stair cut through the latter.	19
28. The stair with turned newels and balusters with dado and pilasters (detail)	20
29. The stair with turned newels and balusters with dado and pilasters (general)	20
30. The south-west reception room with fireplace	21
31. The east side of the panelled reception room G6	22
32. The west side of the panelled reception room G6	22
33. The stair hall G5	23
34. The entrance hall G7	23
35. The arch dividing stair hall G5 and entrance hall G7	23
36. The small parlour: window	24
37. The small parlour: entrance with panelling	25
38. The small parlour: fireplace	25
39. The stair from the first-floor landing	25
40. The late 18 th -century fireplace of the principal reception room F2, with its Adam-style surround	26
41. The sash windows on the west side of the first-floor reception room, with bamboo-style curtain rail and shield c.1870	27

42. The ceiling plaque of the first-floor reception room, c.1870	27
43. The fireplace in the bathroom F5, showing that this once in fact a bedroom	28
44. The earlier door of F5	28
45. Bedroom F3: The north sash window	28
46. Bedroom F3: The fireplace	28
47. The north-east bedroom with its southern bed recess and entrance	29
48. The corner fireplace in bedroom F4. Just at the right edge of the photograph can be seen the recess of the blocked north window	30
49. The front face of the door to room S2	31
50. The rear face of the door to room S2	31
51. The north-west room S3, showing dormer window and the rafters of the roof	32
52. The south-east corner of Room S3, showing the slope of the original roof, with its purlin above and the storm water channel, which runs through the room, cutting across the door	33
53. The roof space of the north part of the house, looking west	33
54. The outer 2-panelled face of the door to Room S4, with an early principal rafter visible	34
55. The inner diagonally-planked face of the door to Room S4, with an early principal rafter visible	34
56. The south-east room of the house with dormer window	34
57. The kitchen range, showing also the herringbone parquet floor and the hand water pump in the corner with tiled floor surround	35
58. The south side of the kitchen G9, showing the entrance to the house on the right, the door the main house in the centre and the entrance to the wooden stair to F6. Also shown are the ceiling beams	36
59. The south-east corner of F6, showing the head of the wooden stair. Where the rail meets the south wall is where the blocked-up window of room F4 is, to the left of the crack along the straight joint. The ceiling beam in the foreground shows the hooks	37
60. The north end of F6, showing the window, chimney stack and small blocked Fireplace	37
61. The south-east corner of G10, showing the eastern window and entrance and the bread oven in the south wall. The open truss ceiling is also visible	38
62. The south-west corner of G10, showing the western door and the kitchen entrance	38
63. The cast iron door of the bread oven in room G10	39
64. The brick interior of the bread oven in room G10	39
Plan 1 Ground floor	42
Plan 2 Cellars	43
Plan 3 First Floor	44
Plan 4 Second floor	45

INTRODUCTION

Nunhide Farmhouse, Sulham, Berkshire (NGR SU 6465 7255), is a Grade II listed building, lying on the north side of Nunhide Lane. The house lies to the south of the hamlet of Sulham and Sulham House, to the estate of which it has long belonged. The farm is situated very close to the south-west edge of Reading, but is still rural in nature as it is separated from the town by a rise in the terrain covered by Boxgrove Wood.

Originally, Sulham and Nunhide were two separate manors and it is thought that Nunhide Manor was represented in Domesday Book by the estate of a goldsmith named Theodoric and before him by an Edward held directly from King Edward II the Confessor (1042-1066), suggesting that it had been in English royal hands not long before the conquest.

The location of Nunhide Manor is probably where the current farmhouse stands. Manor houses were very often quite humble abodes a far cry from the great manors of the time. Essentially, it may always have been a small farmhouse with a small holding.

The following report is the result of an architectural investigation carried out at the request of the owner, Heather Scutt, in May 2011 in preparation for a planning application to restore and alter the current building. The original survey was carried out by Access Architects in June 2008, to which historical details have been added by the author.

A preliminary report on the history of the house, '*The Structural Development of Nunhide Manor, Sulham, Berkshire*' was written by Kirsty A Rodwell in June 2009. Some of her descriptions of the architectural details have been used where appropriate.

Both this report and Rodwell's have been commissioned through John Moore Heritage Services.

NUNHIDE FARMHOUSE, SULHAM, BERKSHIRE AN ARCHITECTURAL INVESTIGATION



Fig 1. The Principal (West) Elevation

DESCRIPTION

Nunhide Farmhouse is of red brick with a red-tiled hipped-roof and double-pile in plan. It is of two storeys with attic and basement – the latter only at the northern end. Two extensions have been added sequentially at the north end and a porch at the south end.

For the sake of clarity, the double pile house is described in the following description as the main house, with its two apparent constituent parts as the north and south halves. This will be dealt with first. The extensions will be dealt with separately, as Extensions 1 and 2 in chronological order.

The Main House

Exterior

The West, Principal Elevation (Fig 1)

This shows that there are in fact two separate builds apparent on the exterior and there has been no attempt to disguise the fact. The brick bond used on both halves is Flemish, though there is a difference in the bricks and mortar used. Two further extensions have been added to the north end of the building and a porch on the south end.

In the northern half of the building, the bricks are smaller and the headers in the Flemish bond have been vitrified for decorative effect. A 3-course string runs round the building at storey level. The windows on the west elevation of this half have

clearly been inserted to replace smaller ones, necessitating some rebuilding of the wall above and below. With one window to each floor on this side, they comprise a single central 12-light triple-sash, flanked by two side panels of 4 lights each. The windows have segmental brick heads. Two basement casement windows below the present ground level are set within semi-circular light wells to increase natural light to the basement rooms. These are cut into a plinth that is a mixture of brick and flint which shows signs earlier alterations (Fig 2).



Fig 2. The brick and flint plinth of the north part of the west elevation with basement windows and light-wells

On the southern half of the west elevation, the brickwork is plain Flemish bond. It has no string course, but has a plain brick plinth and a dentilled eaves course. The two windows per floor at this end are tall 12-light sash windows. They too have segmental arches, but these are more raised than the later examples to the north. There is no basement at this end.

The hipped roof is an attempt to unify the two phases of the main building apparent externally. This gives ample space for an attic floor which is lit on the west side by two dormer windows. An aerial view of the house shows the irregular form of the roof needed to tie these two parts of the structure together (Fig 3). Where there is a valley between the north and south ridges there would normally have been a flat leaded roof in a single-build double-pile house of this date. As will be seen later, this led to some very inconvenient drainage arrangements within the attic storey.



Fig 3. Aerial photograph of Nunhide Farmhouse

Both halves of the building on this and on the east elevation have been properly finished off with closers with no attempt at bonding. The only disguise on this façade is a drain pipe which covers the junction of the two builds. As the two halves have settled differently, there is a discrepancy between the verticality of each half. The drainpipe is of importance because it has a lead hopper draining the eaves guttering embossed with the initials IE beneath the date 1696 or 1698 (Fig 4) - the gutter obscures the last digit. However, this would strongly suggest a date for the building of the southern half of the building.



Fig 4. The dated drain hopper with the letters IE and date 1696 or 1698

The East Elevation (Figs. 5 & 6)

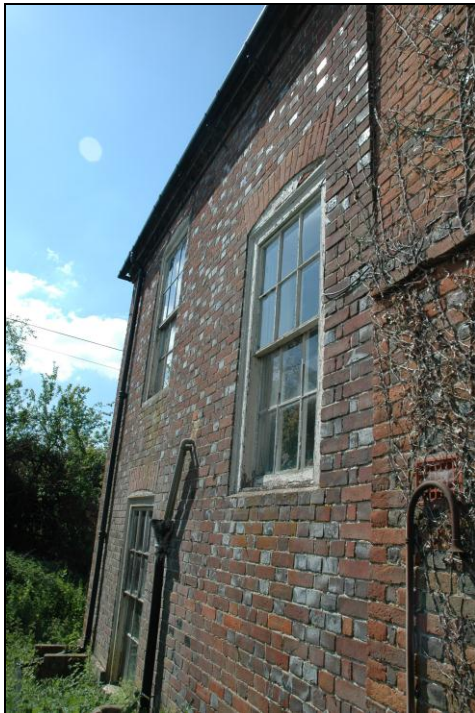
The east side of the building is more irregularly fenestrated and faces hard onto the slope into which the building platform has been cut.

The northern half of the main building retains the string course which circled the entire original building. This has clearly been cut away on south-east corner to accommodate the later southern section of the building. At basement level there is a single window, with two casement windows at ground floor and a 12-pane sash flanked with the 4-light side panels seen on the west elevation.

The southern half has the same tall 12-pane sash windows as the west elevation, one each on ground and first floors with another to light the stairwell landing. This is placed slightly to the south of centre of the main building.

Whereas there is a consistency in the decorative brickwork at the north end of the building, the south end is much rougher, not being intended to be seen. Though many of the bricks are vitrified, they form no decorative pattern as in the earlier part of the building in the northern half. The straight joint between the two halves of the main house is just as pronounced as on the western elevation.

The windows of the northern half are contemporary with the brickwork at ground-floor level and have a more pronounced segmental arch above. The one on the first floor is, like those of similar form on the west elevation, inserted to replace a smaller window and shows renewed brickwork (not Flemish bond) beneath the window. The closers are present at the south side of the window, but not on the north. The basement window is surrounded by a rectangular light-well, which has been added later. This and the height of the plinths of both halves suggest that the ground level has risen on this side of the building, probably as a result of wash-off from the steep slope over time.



Figs 5 & 6. The East Elevation with the south end on the left and north on the right. Distortion from differential settling of the two halves is clearly visible in Fig. 3.



Figs 7 & 8. The South Elevation and porch

The South Elevation (Figs 7 & 8)

The South Elevation is the plainest of all with no fenestration at all. The only opening is an elaborate door, with a 20th century hip-roofed brick porch added. This was clearly the principal entrance to the good end of the house and is approached across the brick-walled garden through the iron gate on Nunhide Lane with no need to pass through the farm. The 6-panelled door is glazed on the top four panels and has an elaborate fanlight of cast-iron scrolled tracery (Fig 9). The lack of fenestration on this elevation is explained by the position of one of the two chimney stacks of the house, this one with two flues (Fig 3).

The brick porch (Figs 7 & 8) is open on the west side only, with casement windows on the south and east sides. There is no evidence that there was a previous porch, though there may once have been a wooden canopy similar to but probably more elaborate than that surviving on the north side. A segmental relieving arch surmounts the doorway and there is evidence that the brickwork beneath it has been altered.



Fig 9. The South Principal Door beneath the later porch.



Fig 10. The north elevation of the main elevation and its junction with the first extension. The west elevation of the first extension can also be clearly seen.

The North Elevation

The north elevation appears once to have been the entrance on the farm side of the house. The elevation is dominated by the broad chimney stack, which stands proud of the north wall as opposed to flush with it as on the south side of the house. An early door lies at the west end of the north elevation. It has 4 panels, the upper two of which are glazed, and a small wooden canopy above. This door, now disused and blocked from the inside, is clearly an insertion.

Above this door, at first-floor level, there is a sash window, which has replaced a slightly wider window. This was matched by a similar window on the east side of the elevation which was blocked when the first extension was built. The plinth and string course continue round this side of the house, embracing also the chimney stack. The brickwork above the string course on the chimney stack has a very haphazard, irregular bond, with none of the glazed headers in the Flemish bond beneath the string course. This would strongly suggest that the upper part of the chimney stack is later than the rest of this part of the house. This and another anomalous brick overhang at first floor level seem to stem from the insertion of a corner fireplace in the north-east room of the house (Figs 11 & 12). There is also evidence that the top courses beneath the dentillated eaves course are a later repair, probably from the same phase of repair as the roof.

Another odd projection fills the space between the stack and the first extension at ground-floor level. This is apparently the rear of a projecting oven that formed an inglenook corner of the main fireplace in the ground floor north-west room. It has been disguised by later brickwork, as in fact has all of the earliest phase in the north part of the main house.



Figs 11 & 12. The north elevation showing the chimney stack and the anomaly on its eastern side.

The plinth on this north side of the building is plain brick and has none of the flint so distinctive on the north end of the west elevation. It diminishes in the number of courses as it is cut into the eastern slope from 12 on the north-west corner to 5 at the junction with the first extension.



Fig 13. The north-west corner of the main house, showing the different elements of the plinth. Also seen here is the present farmhouse entrance in the first extension and some early paving slabs. The rest of this yard appears to have been paved with pebbles, which would have aided drainage and is often found in courtyards of the late 17th century. Much of this has now overgrown with grass.

The Extensions

The First Extension

This brick extension is a single pile 2-storey service wing projecting from the north-east corner of the main house. The brickwork is English Bond in places, but often merely haphazard. The gabled roof has a chimney stack placed centrally at its north end to serve the purpose-built kitchen range. At the south end it is dormered into the roof of the main house. The roof is terracotta-tiled.

This extension now accommodates the principal entrance to the whole farmhouse.

Exterior

The West Elevation

The door (Figs 14 & 15) and window openings on the ground floor are contemporary and have matching segmental arches above. The broad doorway (1m in width) is in a plain pegged frame and the door leaf is of a plain batten construction with a cast iron knocker and latch. The base has clearly rotted in the past and been repaired. The reverse of the door is battened horizontally with diagonal bracing and an upright batten to which the cast-iron knocker is heavily bolted.



Figs 14 & 15. The farmhouse door.

The window on the ground floor has four lights, each of which has twelve leaded quarries (Fig 10). The central two lights are fixed, but the outer two are opposing side-hung casements.

The first floor window has four lights, each with 10 leaded quarries. The two outside lights are opposing side-hung casements with metal frames as opposed to the wooden framing of the rest of the window.

The East Elevation

The ground floor window is a 3-light metal-frame window which has been inserted. Each light has eight panes. The central one has a top hung casement for the top two panes, while the flanking lights are opposing side-hung casements. This window has a shallow tile sill.

The Second Extension

This block is a low single storey gable-ended outbuilding. The roof is tiled with Welsh slate. It has one door and one window on the east and west elevations, but there is no opening in the north elevation.

Exterior

The West Elevation

The brickwork on this elevation is of no specific bond. The plain wooded latched door is batten constructed. The window is another 4-light window with ten leaded quarries each (Fig 16). Of the four 15-quarry lights, only one is a side-hung casement while the other three are fixed.



Fig 16 The west elevation of the second extension.

The East Elevation

The door and window on this side are placed opposite those on the west side of the building. The window is a Crittal-type 2-light metal-framed window with three panes in each light. One light is a side-hung casement, while the upper pane of the other is a top-hung casement.

Main House

The Interior

It is the interior that demonstrates best the way the house developed. The development of the house will be dealt with by describing the oldest parts of the house first. This description therefore covers the ground floor of the north part of the house and its access to the basement first, and then goes on to discuss the later developments. The original circulation has been lost, and great changes have been made to adapt an old house to new social and private demands, leading to a very awkward interior arrangement.

The Ground Floor (Plan 1)

The current main entrance leads into the first extension and the kitchen of the house. A narrow corridor leads from a door to the south, and here is found the timber framing of the earliest surviving structure (Figs 17 & 18).

The framing is confined to the west side of the corridor only and a plinth suggests that this was once an outside wall. Resting on a stone sill, there is a principal post at the north and south ends with an intermediate strut. A horizontal beam or head plate is tenoned into the northern principal post below ceiling height, but there are no mortices to indicate an upper floor level on the east side. Another beam projects to the north from the principal post at a higher level indicating a possible doorway. At the south end, the principal post is not quite tall enough to fill the gap between head

plate and sill beam, so the sill has been built up and an extra sill put in on which this post rests. It is not of a high order of craftsmanship and gives the impression of an *ad hoc* solution to the problem. South of this second post, the head plate has been sawn off to accommodate the second doorway to the north-west room.

The north post has two empty mortices with traces of the pegs surviving, which suggest that once the structure continued to the east. At the south end of the corridor, above the door leading into the south half of the main house, another beam stretches east from this early wall, also suggesting a doorway. The post to which it is likely tenoned though is concealed by later construction. This beam continues to the east to the small cloakroom and indicates that here too the building continued eastwards, covering the same east-west width as the current building. This shows that the present cut into the slope was made as a building platform for the timber-framed building originally.



Figs 17 & 18. The corridor and the old part of the house, from the north and south respectively..

North-West Reception Room (G2)

Two doors lead west off the corridor, both into the north-west room of the ground floor. The first, north one, is through the doorway defined by the earlier timber frame. The present door-frame and door are later though. The south door is later, cut through the timber-framing.

The room has a large inglenook fireplace that has been greatly altered, probably in the first half of the 20th century, but was clearly the original kitchen. Only the east wall, backing onto the corridor, has timber framing. The architrave of the south doorway indicates that there was once panelling on this wall to hide the earlier timber-framing. All the other walls have been rebuilt later in brick, so there is no evidence there of the original form of the room. However, the wall plate on the east side of the room preserves the mortices from the floor joists of an earlier room.

It is unusual that the timber framing visible in the east wall of this room is quite different to that seen in the corridor, though they are the same wall. In the room, the struts are spindly and insubstantial. They also seem to respect the current door frames. It is possible therefore that the two sides of this wall represent two separate phases of the timber building, with the east face of the north-west reception room being added to support a wall plate and a second storey. At the north end, above the door, is a scarf joint and there is new wood in the door's lintel, adding to the evidence that at least the north end of the east wall was rebuilt.



Fig. 19. The east wall of the north-west reception room

There are two ceiling beams in this room. The first is an off-centre north-south axial beam, which clasps the second, an even more off-centre transversal beam. Two joists are close up against this transversal beam to take the laths for the plaster that it is clear was once present from the present joists. These two beams and the present joists are clearly contemporary and therefore not contemporaneous with the east wall of the room. The original joist mortices indicate much broader joists than the present ones and more broadly spaced. The present joists seem to be older south of the transversal beam than to the north. The joist mortices in axial beam are re-used, but the later joists are too flat to be original.

This ceiling framing appears to be contemporary with the now gone panelling of the east wall of the room which is probably late 18th century. The west wall of this room is later with a box sash window which it can be seen externally is a later insertion. It is brick and the transversal beam is built into it.

There is no evidence on this floor of where the original N wall was except for the stack which is probably original though altered externally for show and later inside in c1930s. Scale, breadth and depth imply that it is late medieval or early 17th century not late 18th century as the rest of the room became.

On the north wall is a door, which has been blocked, internally only, to become a window. Externally it still presents as a door. There is not enough evidence to say if there was a door here originally, but it is rather unlikely. It is more probable that the original door was on the west side and all the evidence for this has been removed. The fireplace is earlier than the 1930s surround would suggest. It has a probably late 18th-century hearth, respecting timber flooring, visible at the west end of the fireplace beneath the 1930s tile and wood hearth. This is obscured on the east side of the hearth.



Fig 20. The north wall of the Reception Room, showing the door blocked to make a window and the fireplace. The door on the right hand wall leads to the main ground-floor corridor.

The floor levels and external ground level are variable and clearly much altered. The lowest corridor level is the original ground level outside.

The south wall is also of brick and though there is no timber-framing, it should be noted that the roof above does extend to the same wall lines as the brickwork. This strongly suggests that the original timber-framed building of the 17th century was jettied, at least at its west end. This would explain why the brickwork seems to tie in so badly on the west front. If a jetty was first underpinned in brick and then later encased in brick, it would have removed the need for both the external timbering and the jetty's underpinning. Little else could explain how the 17th-century roof still sits on the footprint of a building of clearly later brickwork.

It's quite possible that the whole north-west room is built in the late 18th C, with only the wall and the chimneystack kept. Not even the axial beam is original.

Basement Cellars (Plan 2)

There are three cellar rooms at basement level. The first (B1), entered via a wooden stair from the dairy/larder room on the ground floor is at a higher level than the two barrel-vaulted cellars that are now reached through it. The two barrel-vaulted cellars

(B2 & B3) combined are wider than the first basement room. A comparison between the basement level and the ground floor level above suggests that there is a very thick foundation or revetment wall beneath the brick and tile part of the dairy/larder room (N wall of B1). This, as well as the situation of the timber post in the corridor above, strongly suggests that this was the northern extent of the farmhouse originally, at least at the east end. The presence of a flint and chalk wall in the eastern basement room (B1) also indicates an earlier foundation than the brick of the rest of the cellar. As this lies beneath the timber-framed wall of the corridor above, it seems likely that there was a basement here all along. It is equally clear that the two brick-vaulted cellars are a later addition, probably constructed at the same time as the north part of the main house was largely rebuilt in brick.

There is a doorway in the south-west corner of the southern barrel-vaulted cellar (B3). It has been bricked up, but retains the vaulting above it (perpendicular to the main vault) to allow headroom into the cellar at its highest point (Fig 25). This may have been the door to the vaults during construction, but it is more likely that this was an original outside door at a level comparable with the level of the lawn just outside to the west. This doorway, however, was eventually blocked and built over with the construction of the southern half of the main house, which has no basement.

The Western Basement Room (B1)

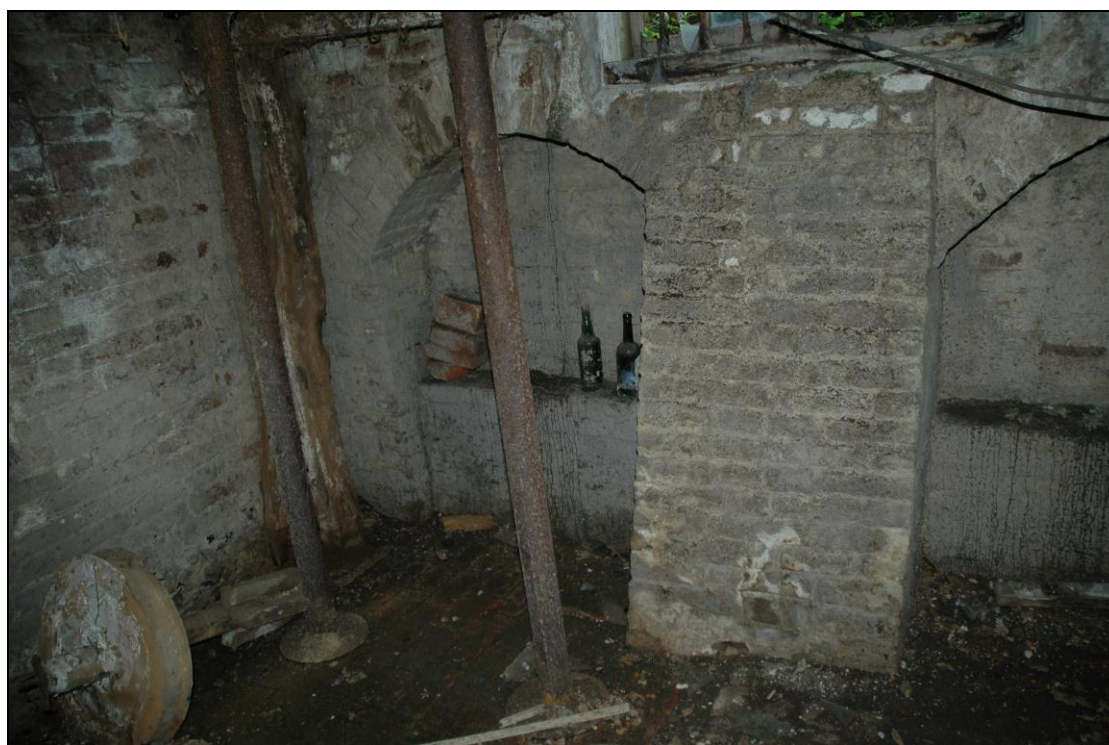


Fig 21. The internal buttress and relieving arches with window above in the west wall.

The current wooden stair to the cellar is reached from the dairy/larder, but the position of the stair has been moved. What is now the central corridor at ground-floor level was once where the stair led down to the basement. The scars survive on the west wall of the eastern cellar (B1) and show that the original stairs were re-orientated by 180 degrees and moved parallel to begin their present descent from the utility room. An additional three steps were bolted on to the base of the re-positioned stair, in part because the utility room is at a higher level than the corridor. Even so, it

is also possible that the base of the stair may have worn or rotted away and had to be patched up (Fig 22).



Fig 22. Present position of stair to the basement (B1), with evidence on the left hand wall of its original position with the turn in the stair to the vaulted cellars (B2 & B3) at the foot.

The stairs originally descended to the point where there is the current turn in the stairway between the two parts of the cellar. These lower three steps of the turning are made of brick, as is the rest of the cellar floor, with wooden tread edging.

This re-orientation of the stair is part of a much later phase of the building. The original stair has in the past been boarded in beneath, and the original posts that supported it were kept to support the new corridor. This has left scars in the brick-paved floor, and a line on the brickwork between the plain inside and the whitewashed outside of the stair cupboard. The posts have been introduced primarily to support the timber-framed wall above and the structure reveals that the cellar was excavated later with the earlier walls being retained and jacked up. Why so much trouble was taken to preserve the wall can only be answered by the likelihood that it supported important elements of the structure that no longer survive.

The Western Basement Rooms (B2 & B3)

The western basement rooms are reached down three brick steps from B1 that were originally at the foot of the first basement access stair. These turn 90 degrees to enter B2. These barrel-vaulted cellars are lit by a window each at their west end. Both are paved with brick.

Cellar B2

The brick floor at the west end of Cellar B2 is paved in such a way to indicate that the room needed drainage and that it was used for some sort of wet process. There are the remains of a wooden shelf on the north side of the room of a depth of 0.60m. This is comparable to those still extant in the dairy/larder on the ground floor. The

room was once closed off by a door opening into the room, but this has been detached and lies against the north wall.



Fig 23. The east end and brick-paved floor of Basement B2

The detached door leaf is of heavy 6-panelled construction, far more sturdy than the door that separates the two vaulted rooms. This and the shelving suggest that this cellar room was once used to store wine or beer – the buttery (a corruption of the French ‘bouteillerie’, where drinks were kept and prepared to serve).

The side-hung 6-light casement window is barred on the inside and opens out into the lightwell where the hillside slopes steeply up, so the light it gives is fairly minimal.

A light fitted door opens into B2, giving access to the other vaulted cellar, B3.

Cellar B3

There are two distinctive features about this cellar. At the east end there is a deep two-part brick wood bin, with a heavy wooden cover that slid across to give access to one or the other (Fig 24). The other feature is the blocked doorway at the west end of the south wall (Fig 25). This was clearly envisioned as part of the original vaulting.

It is unlikely that a wood bin would be given greater internal security and more limited access than the buttery. This implies that when the wood bins were built, at roughly the same time as the vault, the access to this room was achieved directly from the outside. It clearly predates the first extension at the north end of the building. Whether it remained in use after the extension was built is not known, but it would have been considerably less convenient.

There is no pattern or change of gradient in the brick paving akin to that in B2 to suggest that this was ever anything more than a wood store and possibly coal store. It was always meant as a dry room.



Fig 24. The west end of Basement B3, with covered wood bins



Fig 25. The east end of Basement B3, showing blocked door to the left (north) and the barred side-hung casement window at the east end.

The Dairy or Larder (G3)

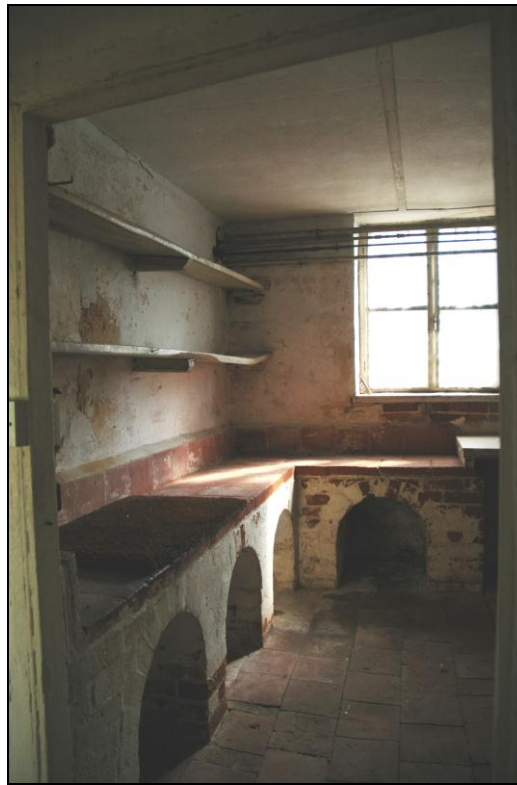


Fig 26. The dairy or larder

This room is curious in that it appears to be two separate entities in the same room. The south side of the room is a dairy or cold larder. The side-hung casement window is barred and covered to exclude flies. On the north side is a series of brick benches with a square-tiled surface and splash course against the wall. The undersides are vaulted (Fig. 26). This substantial work surface spreads round the north side of the room and half-way along the east side. The floor space enclosed by this structure is also square-tiled and suggests that this part was used for some wet function, possibly cheese making as the farm does have a dairy shed to the north-west of the farmhouse. On the south wall are two solid timber shelves – the bottom one of which is a very old plank cut for a flat surface in spite of the natural curves of the tree beneath. There are scars from similar shelving on the north side of the room though the shelves have gone.

The southern side of the room is very different. The floor is of wooden planks through which the present stair down to the basement (B1) has been cut (Fig 27). This appears to have been done fairly recently and the west wall against which it rests has been recently re-plastered. The southern half too is shelved in heavy wood supported on struts projecting from the west and south walls. At the west end, the shelf rests on the modern stair rail.

The surviving planks on the north side are not new and it may well be that there was a partition and a door between the two halves of this room. The other possibility is that the beams below would not hold the tile floor. In the part that survives, there is scaffolding beneath to support it. Perhaps some sort of collapse led to a re-thinking of the circulation between ground floor and basement.

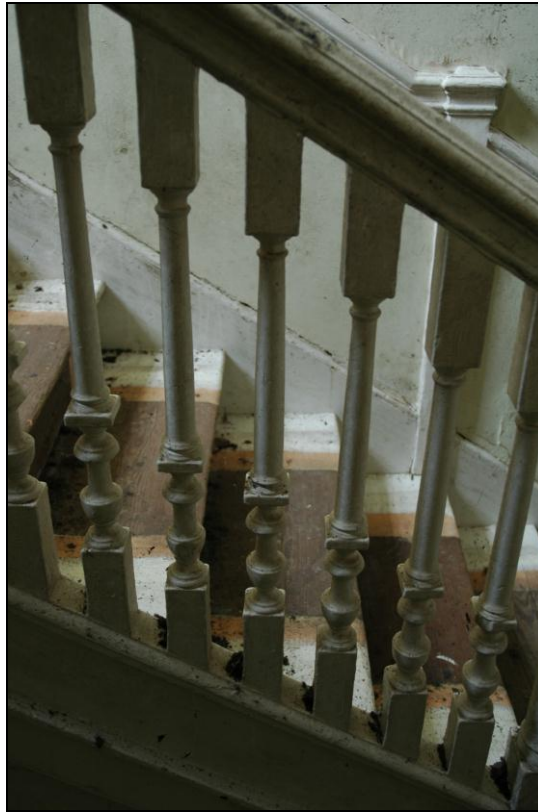


Fig 27. The north side of the floor of the dairy/larder, showing the difference between the tiled floor on the south side and the timber floor on the north and the present cellar stair cut through the latter.

The Cloakroom (G4)

Three steps lead up to this room from the corridor (G1). It is an old wooden stair with a 17th century 8-panelled door leaf that has been re-hung upside down and cut to fit accordingly. The hinges are cockshead and probably belong to the original hanging. The south wall is timber-framed with a dwarf wall at the base with a cill beam. Two posts rise to a header rail, the east one from the dwarf wall, the west one from the cill beam (cf Rodwell 2009). A further post in the south-west corner of the room is full height and forms part of the door frame. A wall plate spans all three posts and is a continuation of that crossing (and dividing) the corridor G1 and stair hall G5, jointed to the post at the south end of G1's timber-framed west wall. This wall is therefore structurally connected to the main timber-framed wall of the corridor G1 and the earliest part of the present building.

The floor in corridor (G1) has been re-floored. This ties in with the relocation of the stair to the cellar from the larder/dairy (G3). The original cellar stair descended from a small landing at the foot of the steps to the cloakroom. This means that the cellar was originally accessed from the southern door in the old kitchen (G2), as was the cloakroom. This greatly affects the circulation of the north part of the main house. There is no evidence that there was an external door at the south end of corridor G1, but that does not mean that there was not one. Given the form of the north half of the house, it is very possible that there was once a through passage here from north to south. This would predate the excavation of the first cellar (B1) and the necessary dismantlement of part of the east end of the structure to accommodate it.



Figs 28 & 29. The Stair with turned newels and balusters with dado and pilasters.

The Stair Hall (G5) and Stair

Entered from the corridor (G1), this stair hall is a typical early 18th century arrangement. It has a bay to itself on the east side of the building, accommodating the dog-leg stair. As is typical with very late 17th-early 18th-century stairs, it is of one

form from ground floor to the attic, showing no hierarchy in the spaces whether they serve the family's reception rooms or the servants' quarters.

It is this space, as well as the form of the roof, that best demonstrates the aspiration to create a double-pile house. It is centrally placed and though it is not grand enough or broad enough to form a focal point, it does visually draw the visitor up from the southern principal entrance and the principal ground-floor room. The first floor reception room was the more important at this date and it was necessary for the staircase to it to do it justice. It is lit at landing level (on the east side) by a fine sash window akin to those on the principal (west) elevation.

The stair has a closed string, with turned balusters and a toad's-back handrail. The newel posts are turned at storey level and plain square on the landings. A matching moulded dado is on the wall side with plain pilasters opposing the newels (Figs 28 & 29). There is a cupboard of the same date and style under the first landing.

The South-West Reception Room (G6)

This room opens off the stair hall. It is a dark panelled room with two false doors (not blocked as marked on the original plans), with a large fireplace at the south end with a decorative surround. The fireplace had a pink-tiled internal surround (Rodwell, 2009, Fig 5b), which has since been removed. This inserted fireplace, described by Rodwell as early 20th century, considerably reduced the size of the grate but has since been removed to reveal the original early 18th century fireplace (Fig 30). The ornate carved wooden surround is early 18th century style in keeping with the bolelection-moulded panelling of the rest of the room.



Fig 30. The South-West Reception Room with fireplace.

The walls are all panelled with bolelection moulded dados. There are two false double doors that would in a real double-pile house have led to the stair hall and a grand parlour reception room (Fig. 31). This was, however, a trick as the false doors lined up with neither. Many houses of the period had false doors to give the impression of

grander rooms beyond where there were none, so this house was following the current trend, but its deceit of hidden grandeur was more of an illusion than in purpose-built double-pile houses of the time.



Figs 31 & 32. The west side of the panelled reception room (G6)

The two large sash windows with window seats are fine, with boxed shutters (Fig. 32). There is no ceiling moulding however, which is unusual in a room otherwise so well appointed.

The stair hall is divided from the north corridor (G1) by a plain doorway with a glazed light above for borrowed light (Fig. 17). On the south it is divided from the entrance hall (G7) by a panelled archway (Fig 35).



Figs 33, 34 & 35. The stair hall (G5) and entrance hall (G7) and arch dividing the two.

The entrance hall (G7) was the principal entrance to the house once the addition of the southern part gave the building the proportions of a double-pile house. The south door, now covered by a 19th century porch, as described externally earlier, is 6-panelled with the upper four panels glazed. The fanlight above is an elegant design in glazed wrought iron.

However, the entrance is to the side of the principal elevation, something that would have been unusual in a purpose-built double-pile house. The clear route from the lane is directly across the garden towards the principal west side of the house, but to have made the principal entrance on the west side would have necessitated too great an internal alteration.

The entrance hall and the stair hall have very simple cornice mouldings, but these have suffered greatly from fungal rot.

The Small Parlour (G8)

This room is the first room reached after entrance from the principal entrance, on the right of the entrance hall (G7). It is panelled with an elegant if simple fireplace mantelpiece with a marble surround. Cupboards have been inserted in the recesses on either side in the early 19th century but without destroying the original panelling behind.

The room has a tall sash window with a window seat facing east to the rear of the building (Fig. 36). The room would probably have been a morning room as it gets the early sun, at least in summer.

The panelling is raised and fielded with skirting and cornice mouldings enclosing a dado, upper panel and frieze. There is none of the bolection moulding apparent in the other panelled room, the reception room G6, except a faint trace of it in the panel above the mantel of the fireplace. This is very much an 18th century room without any of the heavy late-17th century overtones of G6.





Figs 36, 37 & 38. The Small Parlour: window, entrance with panelling and fireplace.

The First Floor

The Stair leads up via a landing to the first floor. The landing is lit by the sash window mentioned earlier. It rises to the first-floor landing (F1), a narrow rectangular space from which four rooms open.



Fig 39. The stair from the first-floor landing



Fig 40. The late 18th-century fireplace of the principal reception room F2, with its Adam-style surround

The principal room is the one which opens directly opposite the stair, F2. This is marked on the plans as a bedroom, which it may well have been in later years. But its position and grandeur make it plain that this was in fact the principal reception room of the house, the one to which the more important guests were brought.

The large room is far more restrained in its decoration, with all the decorative attention focussed on the late-18th century Adam-style fireplace, with a wooden frame carved with swags and urns (Fig. 40). The mantel shelf itself is dentilled while the grey/white marble surround above which it sits is rimmed with a decorative anthemion moulding picked up again in the cornice along with an egg and dart theme. The interior surround and grate of the fireplace are of cast iron with moulded details in keeping with the wood and marble surround.

The room itself is quite plain with only a moulded skirting, dado and cornice. The cornice has egg and dart and an anthemion moulding that echoes the surround of the fireplace, but is nonetheless understated in the later 18th century style. The windows are 12-light sashes with shutters but no window seats (Fig. 41). The heavy bamboo style curtain rail which surmounts them probably dates to the 1870s, a small attempt at Scottish baronial style. This goes also for the ceiling centrepiece which, like the curtain rail, has nothing to do with the 18th-century design of the rest of the room (Fig. 42).



Figs 41 & 42. The sash windows on the west side of the first-floor reception room F2 and the ceiling plaque of c. 1870.

The Bathroom (F5)

Though this was most recently a bathroom, it is clear by the elegant fireplace that this was once a bedroom, albeit a small one. The fireplace, with its marble surround and slight mantel, shows that this was not a very important bedroom (Fig. 43). The dado is unusually high up, at the same height in fact as the top of the mantelpiece. The cornice is more substantial than in other rooms and may perhaps indicate that this room's décor is 19th century in date.

The 12-light sash window has plain shutters, a feature again suggestive of a bedroom. The door leaf has two panels and is older than the décor of the room to which it gives access (Fig. 44). The plain form and the size of the two panels suggest that this is of late 17th-early 18th century date. Nothing else in this room of this early a date.



Figs 43 & 44. The fireplace in the bathroom F5, showing that this was once in fact a bedroom, and the earlier door

North-west Bedroom F3

This room has been greatly altered over time. As part of the older half of the house, there is much that has been lost as to its original form. When the north half of the building was first rebuilt in brick, there was a narrower window on the west side of the room than the triple sash window there now.



Figs 45 & 46. Bedroom F3: The north sash window and fireplace

The external brickwork shows at the sides and bottom of the window that the present one is a later alteration and the form of the window suggests that it was done in the 19th century. The second window, in the north wall, is an ordinary sash window which is conversely narrower than the original. Again, the external brickwork shows that the original opening, as defined by the brick closers, has been made narrower on the eastern edge. The form of this window matches that of the west window indicating that both alterations were done at the same time. The logical conclusion is that both windows were prefabricated and the sizes non-negotiable.

There is a very small fireplace on the north wall, adjacent to the window. It has a small cast-iron grate clearly designed for coal rather than wood. The grate is flanked by decorative tiling which is matched in the tiled equivalent of a hearth stone. The fireplace is very slight and is clearly a late 19th-century insertion into the pre-existing stack. There is no chimney breast to speak of and the surround and mantel barely project into the room at all.

North-east Bedroom F4 (Fig 47)

This room appears to be the principal bedroom. It is entered from an extension to the southern end of the room. This creates a recess which has been flanked with pilasters and topped with a segmental arch. The projecting key of the arch has been integrated with the cornice of the main body of the room, a self-contained cornice being used within the recess. A deep dado runs round the room except for a gap in the recess, presumably for the bedhead for a single bed. Given the size and grandeur of the room, it is probable that the original intention was for a double bed. The skirting is very plain and patchy and appears to be a later replacement. It is possible that the boarding above and below the dado are later.



Fig 47. The north-east bedroom with its southern bed recess and entrance

The window is a triple-light sash window facing east. It is of the same form as that in the north-west room but without the boxed shutters. The view to the east from this level is very different from that on the ground floor. The room looks out over the rear

garden, which though still facing the rising ridge side, has a brighter, more open prospect.

Cutting across the north-west corner of the room is the fireplace (Fig. 48). This has a pulvinated frieze, with moulded mantel and a panel above defined by bolection moulding. This design is very typical of the late 17th-early 18th century and is in this case probably early 18th century in date. Brown tiling surrounds a small art deco grate of the 20s or 30s.

A clumsy ceiling arrangement had to be created on the ground floor beneath to support it, but it is part of the original brick phase of the building rather than a later insertion. It is one of the compromises needed to retain the earlier parts of the building at this north end of the house. It shares the chimney stack serving the north-west rooms and corbelled bridging brickwork was constructed externally to join the two (Fig 12).

The placing of the chimney stack in the corner, however inconvenient it was to achieve structurally, allowed a fireplace to be built at first-floor level when there neither could be nor needed to be one on the ground floor beneath, owing to the presence of the dairy/larder (G3). It also allowed the placing of a window in the north wall overlooking the farm and the valley beyond it towards the village of Sulham. This window was blocked up when the first extension was built. The blocking left a recess in the north wall, showing that the window was comparable in size to the north sash window in the north-west room (F3), though more centrally placed due to the lack of a chimney stack.



Fig 48. The corner fireplace in Bedroom F4. Just at the right edge of the photograph can be seen the recess of the blocked north window.

The Second Floor

The second floor is within the roof line and therefore the rooms are very much smaller in size and plainer in form. More than likely they were used as accommodation for servants.

The stair emerges onto a small landing (S1). There are three doorways leading off this landing. The first doorway has no door-leaf and originally led directly into to the south-west room S2. A very recent tongue-and-groove partition has since been inserted to create a very small lobby. Before the lobby was built, the north-west room S3 could only be reached from S2. The lobby allows separate entrances to each room from the stair landing. The eastern rooms each have their own entrances

There are no fireplaces at this level in any of the rooms.

The South-West Bedroom S2

This is the largest room on the second floor. The low ceiling is diminished further by the angle of the rafters of the hipped roof. It is lit by a single dormer sash window on the west side. No beams are visible at this south end of the house, having all been ceiled in.

The single most interesting feature of this room is the door. Now attached to the tongue-and-groove partition of the lobby which sits within the north-east corner of the room, it clearly used to be hung on the doorway from the landing. The door leaf incorporates 17th-century joinery, which may be original to the door, but could have been made from salvaged panelling (Rodwick 2009). This possibility in itself is interesting as it suggests that the panelling may have come from the timber-framed building that superseded the brick north end. The farmhouse was too remote for it to have come far.



Figs 49 & 50. Both faces of the door of Room S2

The door, leading now through the miniature lobby, still gives access to the second largest room on this level, the north-western bedroom S3.

The North-West Bedroom S3

This room is part of the older north part of the house and this is immediately visible in the timbers of the principal rafters. These are in keeping with the timber-framed phase of the house pre-dating the brick-encased phase. The timbers are crude and heavy and are probably of 17th century date. They do however show that the original building with its east-west axis had a hipped roof at both gable ends.



Fig 51. The north-west room S3, showing dormer window and the rafters of the roof

The dormer window, like that in room S2, is a very plain sash window with just six lights. This looks out on the west side of the building. It is clearly a later insertion, dating to the time when the two halves of the building were united under the hipped roof.

Also dating to this phase, is a very peculiar feature to find inside a building. When the hipped roof was built, it left a hollow in the centre rather than give it flat top. This was necessitated by the difference in dimensions between the earlier roof to the north and that to the south (Fig 3). This created a problem of drainage from the hollow. The inelegant solution was an open wooden storm water channel lined with lead (Fig 52) which descends from the hollow of the hipped roof down through the interior of the room to be drained through the down water pipe (with the hopper dated 1696 or 8 beneath the eaves) between the two phases of construction on the west side of the building.

The damp and draft that such an arrangement would engender was perhaps considered acceptable for servants' quarters, even if it had been boxed in. The necessity was to drain the water onto the downhill side of the property, away from the cellars. There may also have been some buried drain at ground level to achieve this.

There is no evidence to suggest that the entrance to this room was ever in any other position than its current one.



Fig 52. The south-east corner of Room S3, showing the slope of the original roof, with its purlin above and the storm water channel, which runs through the room, cutting across the door.

Another inconvenient feature of this room is the axial beam which projects 2-3cm above the level of the floor planks. This substantial timber is not visible in the ceiling of the room below (F3). A similar axial beam is also visible above floor level on the same alignment in the north-east bedroom S4)

The North-East Bedroom S4 and Roof Space

This forms the east end of the original building and again shows the timbers of the earlier hipped roof frame (before it was a double-pile house). The dormer sash window is a much later insertion beneath the end purlin. The room is otherwise plain. It does however give access through a trap in the ceiling to the roof space. Unfortunately, only the principal rafters and purlins visible at second-floor level are original, the others are recent, as is the roof ridge.



Fig 53. The roof space of the north part of the house, looking west

The door is of some interest and is probably early 18th century. Its north face is diagonally planked, while the south one has two fielded panels.



Figs 54 & 55. Both faces of the door to Room S4, with an early rafter visible to the right in both pictures.

The South-East Room S5

This, the smallest room in the attic now holds the water tanks. It is lit by a small sash dormer window such as those on the west side. It too was probably once a bedroom and the simple vertical planked door is likely to be original.



Fig 56. The south-east room of the house with dormer window

The First Extension

This block is of two stories with a single though spacious room at each level. It now forms the principal entrance to the building, the door opening directly into the newer kitchen (G9), which had superseded the old kitchen (G2). The door frame and leaf have been described already (see p9, figs 14 & 15). The kitchen is mostly parquet-floored in a herringbone pattern, except for a patch of square terracotta tiles by the hand water pump in the north-west corner.



Fig 57. The kitchen range, showing also the herringbone parquet floor and the hand water pump in the corner with tile floor surround.

The room has been stripped of most of its furnishings, but the early 20th-century cast-iron range survives at the north end. It is set into a projecting chimney breast, but projecting even further to the east of it is the curved wall that forms the rear of the bread oven in room G10 in the second extension (see below).

The room is lit by two windows, the larger 4-light one on the west side, overlooking the front yard and the walnut tree, and a smaller but still generous (3-light) eastern one which looks onto a narrow pathway hard against the hillside into which the building is cut.

On the south side of the room is a boarded-in wooden stair leading to the first-floor room (F6). This is constructed of tongue-and-groove planking and sits directly against what was the outside brick wall of the north part of the house. It is still possible to see the brickwork inside the stair box, and the plinth is visible in the kitchen itself.

Beneath this is a doored pantry with a small window at its east end, which has gauze over the window to protect the food in it from flies.



Fig 58. The south side of the kitchen G9, showing the entrance to the house on the right, the door to the main house in the centre and the entrance to the wooden stair to F6. Also shown are the ceiling beams.

Two ceiling beams cross at the centre of the space. The principal beam runs east-west and is chamfered with no stops. The secondary beam is stopped and chamfered, but at the south end is partially concealed by the boxed stair.

The door into the old part of the main house has no door, but it does have a pintle at the foot on the west side. This indicates that this once had a substantial heavy door, which would have been the main entrance to the first house and a rear entrance to the double-pile house before the building of the first extension.

The dog-leg stair leading to the upper room (F6) is a simple wood construction with a hand-rail at the upper level. There is only a single window on the west side. The room is whitewashed and the narrow ceiling beam protruding from a low plaster and lath ceiling, has hooks that suggest that maybe meats or other produce were hung here for storage along with other dried goods for the kitchen below (Fig 59).

There is a fireplace at the north end (Fig. 60), which does not tie in with this as a storage space for dried meats, but maybe for dried goods and perhaps even a farm office.



Fig 59. The south-east corner of F6, showing the head of the wooden stair. Where the rail meets the south wall is where the blocked up window of room F4 is, to the left of the crack along the straight joint. The ceiling beam in the foreground shows the hooks.



Fig 60. The north end of F6, showing the window, chimney stack and small blocked fireplace.

The Second Extension

This single-storey structure is built onto the north end of the first extension and is reached internally from the kitchen (Fig 61). However, there are two external entrances on the west and east sides (Fig 62).



Fig 61. The south-east corner of G10, showing the eastern window and entrance and the bread oven in the south wall. The open truss ceiling is also visible.



Fig 62. The south-west corner of G10, showing the western door and the kitchen entrance.

In the south-east corner of the room is the bread oven, the rear of which was noted in the kitchen G9. The door to the oven is cast iron with an iron rim to the shelf and soffit. The interior is all brick.



Figs 63 & 64. The cast-iron door and brick interior of the bread oven in room G10.

Conclusions

Nunhide Farmhouse is at its core a 17th-century timber-framed structure. As well as the surviving walls on the ground floor, the roof is also original to this building. This presented a dilemma as to how such features could have survived intact while so much alteration was made around them.

The key is the roof and the area it covers, as this without doubt defines the original building. It also comfortably covers the existing external brickwork. There is only one way in which the timber walls could be removed from beneath the roof and replaced in brick without the whole lot falling down, and that is if the brickwork was built around the timber frame first. The footprint of the building must therefore have been smaller to allow for this, in other words it was a jettied building.

The reinforced basement shows that major revetment work was necessary to hold up the structure. It is not possible to know for certain however whether there was a pre-existing basement or not. The likelihood is that there was not, and the plinth in the ground-floor corridor suggests this was the lowest level. The present basement has been partly excavated and the ground then built up around it. This creates what appears to be a raised 'building platform' as well as a slope down which water could be drained away from the house and its new basements.

The result is a building that has since the late 17th-early 18th century been made to look like something which at its core it is not. The brick casing of the northern half of the main house was the first step to disguise a jettied timber-framed farmhouse. The original was aligned perpendicular to the line of the ridge behind, necessitating less of a cut into the hillside. It was two storeys in height with a possible attic. Nothing survives to show what it looked like or how it was fenestrated. Internally, there is a possibility that it was once a single cell building that was extended in the 17th century eastwards, but the evidence is too slight now to be certain.

The brickwork was a major undertaking to transform the appearance and thereby the standing of the house into a more modern brick farmhouse with decorative brickwork and a brick chimney stack. Internally, heating was introduced to the two first floor rooms, although this led to a curious structural compromise to use the single chimney stack.

Only the principal rafters and purlins of the 17th-century roof have survived, so there is no evidence left to show whether there was any fenestration at this level, though it is quite likely that there was. This evidence, and the evidence for any fenestration of this level once the brick casing was added, has been lost. The construction of the southern half and the formation of the double-pile hipped roof have wiped out all traces and more recent roof repairs have completed the job.

It was not long before this house was considered inadequate and in the early 18th century, the house was extended to the south to create the central form it has today. But this tendency to do as little as possible to give an 'appearance' of greater grandeur, led to such inconveniences as the hollow in the roof and the necessity for an internal storm channel.

The grand entrance of such a double-pile house is almost invariably on the principal elevation – in this case the west. This was impossible to achieve with the junction of the two buildings and the drainage of the roof, so it was moved to the east where there is no natural approach from which to show off the grand doorway.

The plainer brickwork of the southern half makes no attempt to harmonise with that of the northern half, though there is no evidence that the double-pile house was ever plastered to hide the incongruities. It is better appointed internally, with its stair hall and heating in all the principal rooms.

The 18th-century staircase also begs the question of what the northern part had as a stair before the southern half of the house was built. Nothing of it remains as none of the original joists survive *in situ*. Where there was a substantial chimney stack, it was common for the stair to be built against one side of it. But the position of the chimney stack suggests that it was a later addition. This could imply that the original single-cell building in what is now the north-west corner of the house was earlier than the 17th century and may date to the earliest record we have a farm here in the 16th century.

The dating of the house as it stands now is that the timber-framed parts of the building are the earliest at 16th and 17th century in date. The brick encasing of the northern half dates to the late 17th century. The dated drain hopper of 1698 may have been originally on the northern part of the house, but could be misleading and refer to a major event in the family's life, for instance a marriage. It was certainly not necessary until the south half of the building had been constructed in the early part of the 18th century.

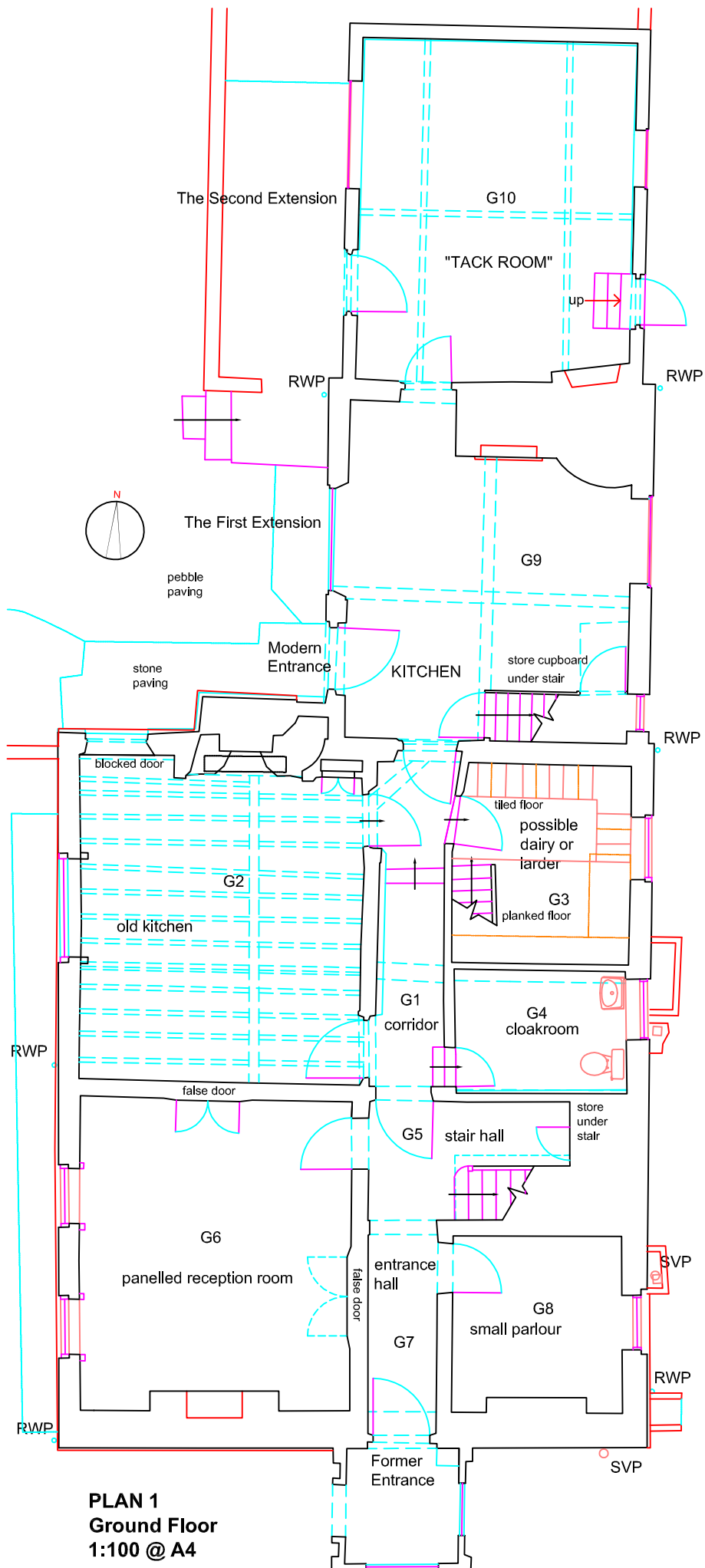
The house was enlarged again in c.1800 by the addition of the first north extension to provide a more spacious kitchen with a storage room above. The final addition was that of the second north extension in the later 19th century.

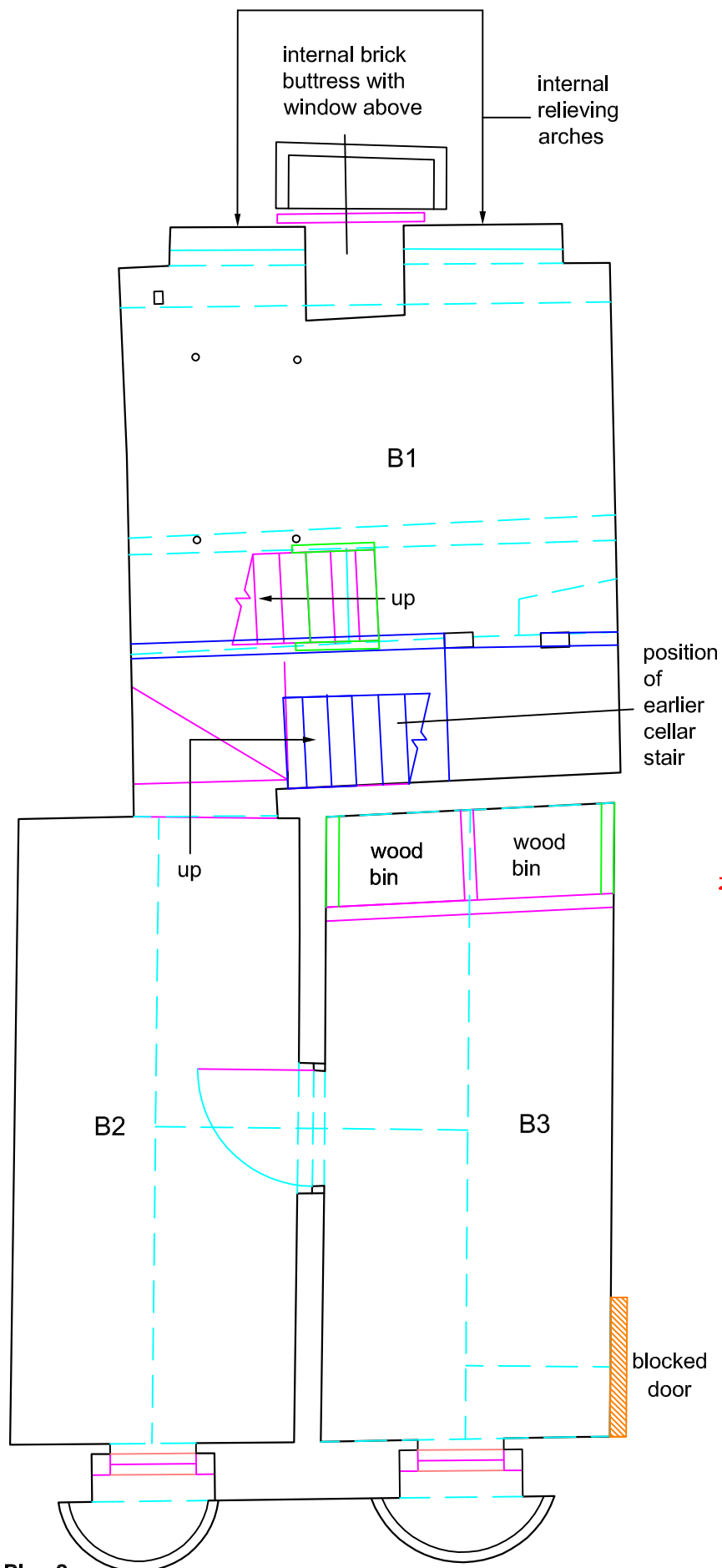
The tendency to make the best of what already existed has made untangling the historical development of this building very complex. Further evidence during the refurbishment and any possible external ground works may throw up new evidence that could elucidate this development in form and function.

Bibliography

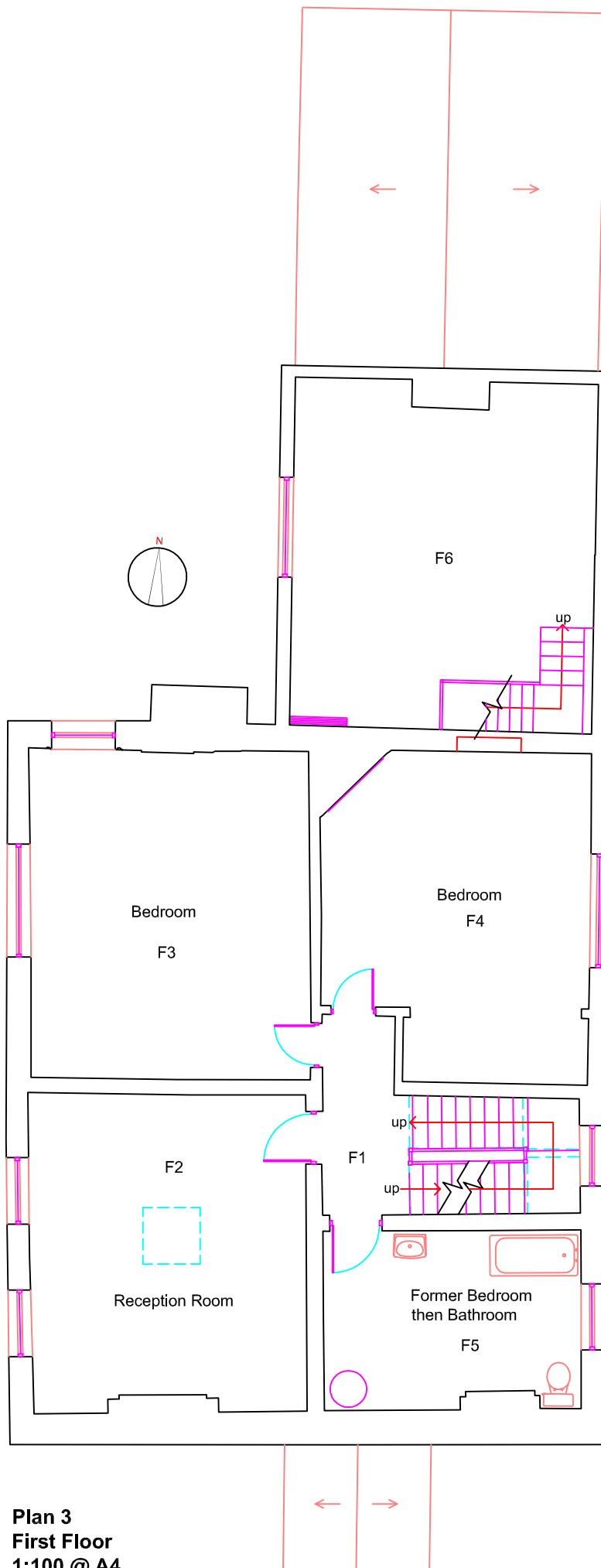
Brunskill, RW 1997. *Brick Building in Britain*

Rodwell, K, A 2009 *The structural development of Nunhide Manor, Sulham, Berkshire*. Unpublished client report. John Moore Heritage Services





Plan 2
Basement
1:50 @ A4



Plan 3
First Floor
1:100 @ A4

