

OXFORDSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD REPORT OBR.37

Manor Farm Southside Steeple Aston



Figure 1 Manor Farm

Introduction

The Oxfordshire Buildings Record are grateful to the owners, Roy and Edwina Kinch, and to Martin Lipson, architect, for allowing us access to this property for the purposes of compiling this report as a contribution to the better understanding of Oxfordshire's buildings. The OBR team were able to spend about six hours there on 19 May 2006.

The objectives of the survey were to understand the dates and phases of the building.

We made a visual inspection of the exterior and such internal spaces as were accessible. Photographs were taken of significant features. Unless indicated otherwise, text and images were created by members of the recording team. A limited number of historical sources were consulted. A copy of the 2nd edition (1899 survey) Ordnance Survey map at 1:2500 annotated for the 1910 District Valuation was obtained from the Oxfordshire History Centre.

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Please note that this building is private property.

Location (NGR SP 472 258)

Manor Farmhouse sits on a sloping plot on the north of the road called Southside in the village of Steeple Aston. It is set back from the road and was once known as Southfield Farm (plot 204 on the 1910 DV map at Fig.2 below).



Figure 2 Extract from 1910 DV map (Oxfordshire County Council – Oxfordshire History Centre)¹

Description

When we recorded the building, we felt that the façade was early 18th century in date (Fig.3); a degree of symmetry deriving from a pair of elliptical panels (Fig.4) – which we thought had formerly been windows – to each side of the first floor. However, both the list description and the Buildings of England would push the date back into the late 17th century.² However, there are features that point to this being a refronting of an earlier house. The doorway is off-centre to the left, and the fenestration either side is quite different. To the left there are two wide casements with timber lintels through which the floors of the rooms within can be clearly seen. On the right, tall rooms are lit by four cross-windows. The whole is linked by a string-course – in effect a drip-mould with a lip and cyma-recta moulding below – which returns to the right gable (but not to the left).

¹https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/leisureandculture/history/collections/districtvaluation/DV-VIII-151_Oxfordshire_XVI-13.pdf

² Brooks and Sherwood (2017), p. 499.



Figure 3 Manor Farm south elevation, left hand side



Figure 4 Former elliptical window

At either end of the roof are ashlar stacks, one flue to the left, and two at an angle to the right. The roof is of Cotswold stone slates to the front (with some artificial replacements), plain red tiles to the rear. The kneelers to the gable copings appear to have had carved ends (Fig.5).



Figure 5 Coping and kneeler to east

There also appear to be carved fox-like heads to the cast iron rain gutter.

To the east (Fig.6) the structure can be seen to consist of two distinct ranges parallel to the road with a long wing at right angles to the rear. In the re-entrant is a porch, and

at the north end is a two-storey extension, probably erected as a granary with poultry house below. There are openings for pigeons in the north gable (Fig.7).



Figure 6 East elevation

Some of the features of the east elevation are shown in the drawing below (Fig.8). In the street range is a further blocked elliptical window to the first floor, and a rectangular one below to the ground floor. There is also a small window to the basement. The next range has modern windows and a brick stack. In the rear range one of the windows has been blocked in with brick. There is a pump outside the rear porch doorway.



Figure 7 Gable end of granary extension



Figure 8 East elevation (incomplete)

Interior

The complexities of the exterior are also reflected inside. The ground plan at Fig.9 shows the main elements.

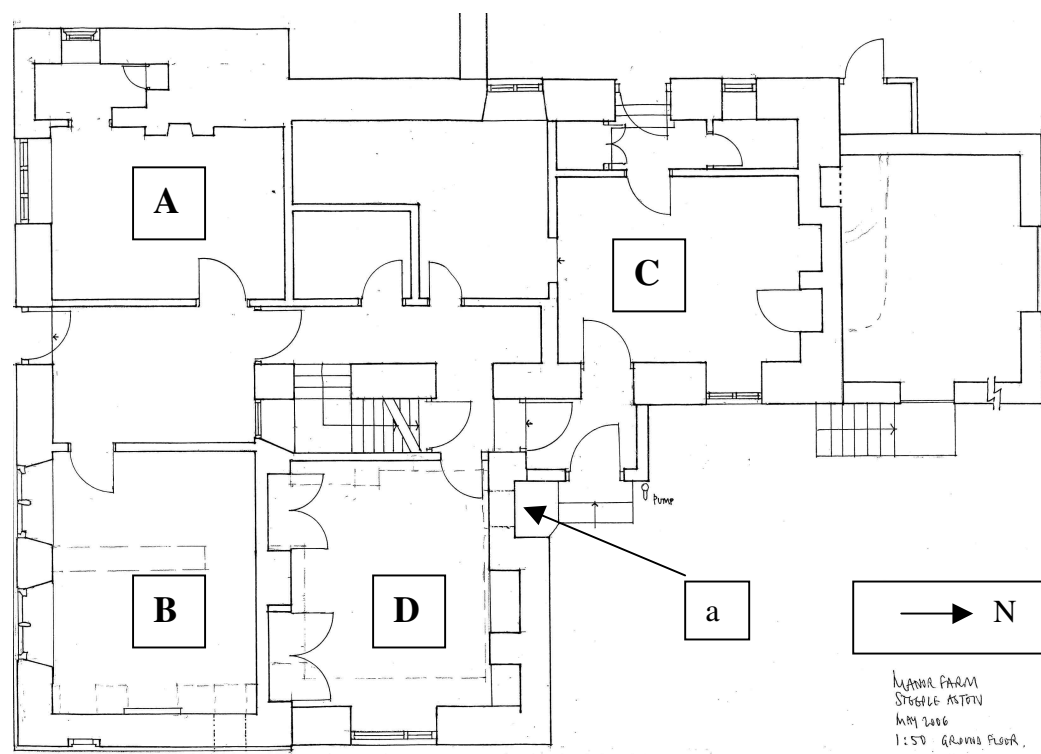


Figure 9 Ground plan

The main features which contribute to the developmental history and dating of the phases are as follows.

- The west wall of A is wrapped around the south end of C, creating a thick wall – with possibly a void inside.
- In the re-entrant at 'a' is a stone mullioned window opening to the cellar.
- There is a straight-joint between B and D.
- The roof structure of C extends into that of A, and can be clearly seen within it. There are indications that a bay at least has been removed.
- The floor levels in A bear no relation to the façade or to those in B
- There is a blocked window in the rear wall of B visible within the roof structure of D

History³

Southfield farm existed prior to enclosure in 1767 and was owned by the Standards and Belcher families. The house had 8 hearths in 1662. Subsequent owners included the Cottrell-Dormers of Rousham – the name Manor Farm is said to be from their purchase. They sold it in 1896 to William Kinch, whose descendants have farmed it since then until the conversion of the farm buildings for housing ca. 2005.

Interpretation

Apart from the porch and the granary building, the most recent structure is the range marked D, as it is butted up against the rear wall of the front range B, and partially obscures the blocked window at first floor level in C (Fig.10). However, the blocked mullion window to the cellar appears to be in situ and suggests that D was built over a pre-existing cellar. As the staircase is within D, there must have been another way up to the first floor before this was built.



Figure 10 Blocked window at join of C and D

Most of D seems to be 19th century in date.

The roof (Fig.11) gives the clue for the front range. Range C dictated the floor levels in A, but in B the ceilings are higher and unconstrained by another building.

³ VCH Oxon Vol. XI pp. 21-44



Figure 11 To the left is the west gable of the front range. In the centre one of the trusses of the rear wing extends into the roof of the front range.

As for putting dates to the phases, the stone mullion window to the cellar has plain chamfers (Fig. 12), and is thus ca.1600. The roof structure of the rear wing (figure 13) has some re-used timbers but the two end trusses have cambered collars and could also be of ca.1600. They are pegged and the purlins are joined at the trusses with free tenons, very much a post-medieval technique. (Figure 14)



Figure 12 Stone mullion window to cellar



Figure 13 Roof of rear range looking north



Figure 14 Free tenon in rear wing roof

Thus the north-south range C and the cellar under D are the earliest elements, then the front A and B, then D.

A conjectural development history is shown in the following sketches (Fig. 15)

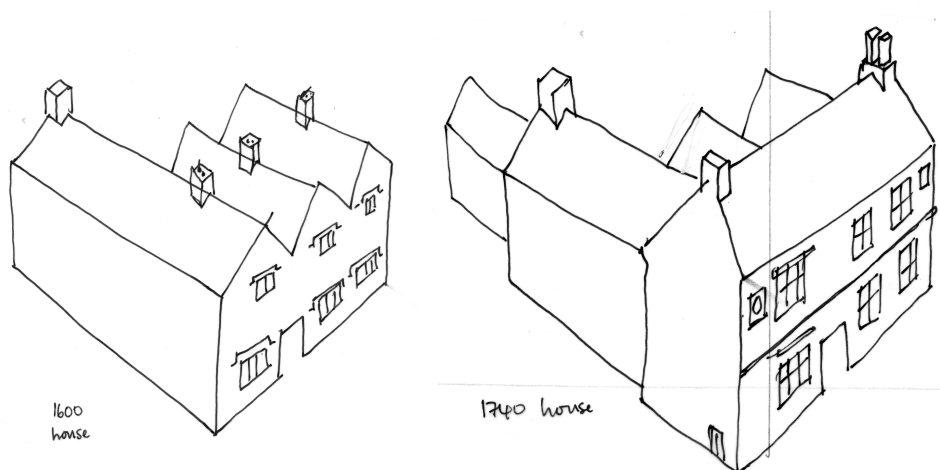


Figure 15 Conjectural development

One puzzle is where the original stairs were to range C. If the diagrams are correct, one of the rear wings could have contained a stair turret, but if these were demolished before D was built the only place for a stair is adjacent to the fireplace in A. Perhaps they remain intact within the wall?⁴

Disclaimer

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Bibliography

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⁴ The owners of a house in Wheatley recently discovered a newel stair in such a position which had been blocked for many years.

