

The Town Hall Deddington Oxfordshire



Historic Building Investigation

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March 2013

Client: Deddington Charity Estates

Issue No: 1

OA Job No: 5427

NGR: SP 46693 31665

Client Name: Deddington Charity Estates
Document Title: The Town Hall, Deddington

Document Type: Historic Building Recording and Investigation
Issue Number: 1

Grid Reference: SP46693 31665
Planning reference 10/00570/F

OA Job Number: 5427
Site Code: DETH12
Invoice Code: DETHBS
Location for Archive: Oxfordshire Museums Service
Museum Accession No: OXCMS: 2012.107

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Date: April 2013

Document File Location: \\Server21-db\buildings\Projects Ongoing\Deddington Town Hall\Report\Deddington Town Hall rep.odt

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The Town Hall, Deddington, Oxfordshire

Historic Building Recording and Investigation

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The Town Hall, Deddington, Oxfordshire

Summary

In July 2012 Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook a small programme of building recording at the Town Hall in Deddington, Oxfordshire.

The building is a small structure constructed in 1806 to replace a previous town hall of possible early 17th-century date and evidence shows that parts of the building, particularly the first floor structure, have been reused from a previous building which may have been the earlier town hall itself. The underside of the first floor has clear evidence to show that this was from a building that was fully timber framed, or at least had timber posts at ground floor with arched braces. The former timber framed building is likely to have been of early 17th century date (or earlier) and it could well be from the previous town hall.

Although the building is small it is located in a prominent position in the market place and it significantly adds to the understanding of Deddington as having been a market town. It has the classic appearance of a small market hall with open-side ground floor and enclosed upper floor.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In July 2012 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a small programme of historic building recording works at the Town Hall in Deddington, Oxfordshire. The work was commissioned by the Deddington Charity Estates and was undertaken due to the historic interest of the building as a condition of listed building consent for alterations to the building. The consent was granted by Cherwell District Council in May 2010 (ref 10/00570/F).
- 1.1.2 The proposed works form a refurbishment of the building to be undertaken in several stages and they include replacing windows, replacing the staircase, remodelling the northern part of the ground floor and enclosing the central bay of the ground floor with glazed screens.
- 1.1.3 The building is listed at Grade II and the Cherwell District Council Conservation Officer requested that an English Heritage Level 2 survey be undertaken prior to the work. The scope of the work was further discussed with Claire Sutton-Abbott from Cherwell District Council in July 2012.
- 1.1.4 It is interesting to note that there is a phone box against the north wall of the town hall which is also separately listed at Grade II. Both the town hall and phone box were listed in 1988 (see Appendix B).

1.2 Aims and objectives

- 1.2.1 The overall aim of the project was to investigate and record for posterity the building prior to its alteration. A second aim was to make that record publicly accessible through a report (a public document) and a project archive deposited with a public institution.

1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 The recording was undertaken at Level 2 as defined by English Heritage in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a Guide to Good Recording Practice*.
- 1.3.2 The English Heritage guidance document states that Level 2 is a '*descriptive record, made in circumstances similar to those of Level 1 but when more information is needed. It may be made of a building which is judged not to require any fuller record or it may serve to gather data for a wider project. Both the exterior and interior will be viewed, described and photographed. A plan and sometimes other drawings may be made but the drawn record will normally not be comprehensive*'.
- 1.3.3 The recording comprised an external and internal non-intrusive investigation of the building which included photographic and descriptive analytical recording. The work utilised existing metric survey drawings on which notes were made to explain the structure in terms of its history, alteration, development and use.
- 1.3.4 The photographic recording included both general views of the building as well as specific details. It was taken using black and white print film and with a digital camera.



2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The information below is largely taken from the Victoria County History Vol XI and from the Deddington OnLine website. The website also contains other useful information not repeated here.
- 2.1.2 Deddington is a market town which was of some importance in the medieval period, comparable to the nearby centre of Banbury, but the relative status of which declined in the post-medieval period. Today the focus of the town has shifted somewhat from the market place (which contains the town hall in the current project) to the New Street which passes straight through the western side of the town heading north towards Banbury and it is easy for the modern traveller passing through the town to be unaware of the medieval centre slightly to the east.
- 2.1.3 In 1611 the town acquired a town hall (or Town House) which may have been an older, pre-existing building (VCH). This was constructed by the Local Trinity Guild and it is understood to have been constructed of brick with shops or stalls 'under or adjoining the same' (Deddington OnLine). Rents from these stalls were then passed to charity.
- 2.1.4 The town hall, which is located at the northern end of the market place, was rebuilt in 1806 to replace a previous structure which may have been on the same site and which is known to have pre-dated 1611 (VCH). The new town hall was then repaired in 1832 and the cost of both the 1806 rebuild and 1832 repairs was shared (probably equally) by the parish, the charity feoffees (the modern trustees) and the three manorial lords. The rebuilt town hall is shown on the Tithe plan of Deddington from 1808 (VCH), the earliest plan of the town.
- 2.1.5 The upper room had a number of functions including a court house, vestry meetings, a polling station for county elections and from 1858 as a reading room and library (VCH).
- 2.1.6 The ground floor, which was originally open sided, had three stalls used by butchers on market days but in the mid 19th century it was blocked up and enclosed to form a shelter for the parish fire engine which had previously been kept in the church. An historic photograph probably taken from around the turn of the 20th century survives and this shows the building with the enclosed ground floor (see Fig 3). The photograph is taken from the Deddington OnLine website.
- 2.1.7 The trustees minute book from the 20th-century again show a variety of occasional uses for the building including sporting and social clubs, vestry and school meetings, associations, a library, a labour exchange and the meetings of the trustees meetings themselves. In 1926 the ground floor was being rented by the parish council to house the steam fire engine.
- 2.1.8 During the Second World War the upper floor and coal place were let to the Deddington platoon of the home guard and in 1946 it was officially de-requisitioned by the War Department. It is known that the building was still using coal fires in 1947 and that central heating had not yet been installed (Deddington OnLine).
- 2.1.9 In 1965 the Parish Council took a lease on the whole building from the Deddington Charities Estates.

3 DESCRIPTION

3.1 Introduction and general description

- 3.1.1 Deddington Town Hall is a small, free-standing, two-storey, rectangular-plan building with a gabled, slate covered roof. There is a single chimney stack at the southern end of the ridge. At first floor level the building is rendered to each wall but at ground floor two-thirds of the plan of the building is open sided in the typical form of a market hall. Brick arches form the ground floor openings (three arches to the longer sides and two to the shorter) but the northern bay is enclosed. The underside of the timber upper floor is visible and it is apparent that the ground floor was formerly timber framed (discussed further below).
- 3.1.2 It appears that when the building was first constructed the ground floor was entirely open sided and the partially surviving brick infill strongly appears to be a secondary addition, presumably dating from the mid 19th century.
- 3.1.3 The line and ridge of the roof is very regular suggesting that the roof has either been recovered or reconstructed in the 20th century.
- 3.1.4 The base of the piers are generally of stone and from the high level of wear on some of these it is possible that they were retained and incorporated into the altered building when the timber structure was replaced by the brickwork in 1806. There is also a stone pad at the top of each pier from which the brick arches spring but the stone is soft and these are again well worn. The brickwork in most of the piers has been patched and repaired in a number of phases.
- 3.1.5 The covered ground floor base to the building has brick paving and this was probably at least partially relaid in 1996 when a time capsule was laid and a disabled ramp created.

3.2 External description

- 3.2.1 The *east elevation* has two timber windows at first floor, each of which has three columns of four small lights. An historic photograph (see Fig 3) possibly from around the turn of the 20th-century shows the elevation and the windows are shown with a similar arrangement to those today. The windows appear to be of later 19th-century date and they are likely to be the same as those in the photograph. At ground floor there are three segmental brick arches, the two southernmost of which are open and allow access to the covered area. The northernmost arch is partially infilled with brick and incorporates a doorway into the building as well as two large noticeboards. The photograph from the turn of the 20th century appears to show this doorway and northernmost infilled arch but it also shows the other two arches as being enclosed. These arches each appear to have had brick infill and high windows following the line of the arch. These windows appear similar to those surviving in the north elevation. A string course divides the ground floor from the upper storey. At each end of the elevation there are plates from tie-bars that run through the building and help to strengthen the north and south walls. At the southern end of the elevation is a lamp fixed to the wall which is not shown in the historic photograph.
- 3.2.2 The *south elevation* has two first floor windows and between these is a large crest with a coat of arms. Each window has eight lights (two columns of four lights) and although the openings appear the same as those shown on the historic photograph the windows themselves are different. Those shown on the photograph have semicircular heads to the two lights in each window and they appear to have had simple hood mouldings. The two ground floor arches are today open faced but the historic photograph shows that around the turn of the 20th century each of these had double doors for the fire engine that was

then stationed here. The doorways appear to have been formed from vertical boarding and when the photograph was taken the western door was open.

- 3.2.3 The south-east ground floor pier appears to have been largely rebuilt and the primary stone base replaced with brick. The central pier in the south wall has been strengthened or repaired with concrete.
- 3.2.4 The *north elevation* has a window at first floor and a further window above towards the apex. The lower of these windows has 12 lights (three groups of four windows divided by two timber mullions while the window above is similar but with 9 lights (three groups of three divided by two mullions). At ground floor the two arches have been infilled with brickwork and they each retain high windows which appear to be the same as those shown in the historic photograph in the east elevation. At the centre of the elevation is a phone box and as mentioned above this is a Grade II listed building.
- 3.2.5 The *west elevation* is relatively featureless with no windows at all and the northern of the three ground floor arches infilled with brick. This brick infill incorporates a smaller segmental arch immediately below the main arch and although there are no straight joints beneath this there does appear to be a section very carefully rebuilt, which is suggestive of a former window. This would have been a conventional window as opposed to one of the high windows surviving in the north wall.

3.3 Internal description

3.3.1 Covered ground floor area

- 3.3.2 One of the most interesting aspects of the building is the underside of the first floor, visible from within the covered area, and the clear evidence of the former arrangement when the building (or a previous building from which this was reused) was fully timber framed. This floor structure has the form of a 16th or earlier 17th century building and it seems likely that it was from the previous town hall which had been built by 1611. It is uncertain whether the floor was fully dismantled and reconstructed or whether this floor could be a surviving in-situ fragment from a heavily altered building.
- 3.3.3 The current floor comprises intersecting chamfered beams (E-W principal joist [30 cm²] N-S binder and E-W common joists). At the eastern and western ends are wall plates which support the common joists. Mortices in the undersides of the wall plates and the ends of the principal joist confirm that there would have been timber posts instead of the current brick piers and the posts would have had arched braces to the sides and curved brackets inside.
- 3.3.4 The main joists are all tenoned but the tall common joists lie on top of the wall plates. The timber all appears to be elm and there are some scratched carpenters marks.
- 3.3.5 Several iron and/or steel strengthening bars and plates have been added to the timber floor, particularly to brace joints. Some of this is likely to be from the early 19th century reconstruction but some is recent. The underside of the stone hearth on the south side of the building is visible
- 3.3.6 Two permanent iron props have been added within the covered ground floor area to the main side joists to support the floor above. These have the form of temporary acro props but they are concreted in and they may have been contemporary with the work in 1996 to at least partially relay the floor.

3.3.7 Internal ground floor



3.3.8 The northern bay of the ground floor is an enclosed internal space and it comprises a staircase against the north wall, rising from the north-east corner, and two small rooms against the west wall (a WC and store). The timber staircase has a plain square-section newel post, square-section balusters and tongue-and-groove board cladding beneath it. They appear to be of earlier 20th-century date. The walls in this area are of painted (unplastered) brick and there is a simple ceiling. The windows in the WC is a hopper light, hinged along the base.

3.3.9 *First floor*

3.3.10 The first floor is largely a single open space with a panelled enclosure at the north-west corner housing the head of the staircase. The room is open to the slope of the roof but the rafters are hidden by dark stained tongue-and-groove boarding which is secondary (possibly earlier 20th century). There are two trusses with tie-beam supported by corbels at each end, principal rafters and a high collar but the nature of these members is largely obscured by boxing/cladding which is probably contemporary with the tongue-and-groove ceiling boards. There is a moulded cornice around the edge of the room which is also dark and appears to be secondary.

3.3.11 At the southern end of the room there is a simple stone fireplace with plain timber mantelpiece which is likely to be primary (with some alterations) and built-in cupboards to either side with sliding doors. Above and within this panelling there are two windows which are of metal framed, crittal type and likely to be from the inter-war period. Each one has two 4-light casements and a timber sill. It is interesting to note that to either side of the window the panelling incorporates tall narrow arches which are similar to the arches in the window formerly at this location and shown in the Edwardian (?) photograph (Fig 3). Presumably the panelling was contemporary with the former window and formed part of the same design.

3.3.12 The 12-light timber windows in the east wall (3 'piers' of four lights divided by two simple ovolo moulded mullions) are of probable later 19th-century date and are very likely to be the same windows as those shown in the historic photograph from the turn of the century. The central four lights are a casement.

3.3.13 The lower window in the north wall is likely to be of mid 20th-century date (or later) with 12 lights and simple curves to the glazing bar intersections. The upper window at this end is too high for a close examination but it also appears to be relatively modern with 9 lights and two simple timber mullions.

3.3.14 The head of the stairs are enclosed within panelling of probable later 19th-century date.

3.3.15 The room has been refurbished relatively recently and has modern carpet and painted walls. but this is secondary (possibly earlier 20th century) and there is contemporary boxing around the tie-beams,

4 CONCLUSION

4.1.1 Deddington Town Hall is a prominent and distinctive structure located with the town's market place. It is a modest building, described by Pevsner as 'humble' and by the Victoria County History as 'unpretentious' but it is attractive and it is an important reminder of Deddington's history as a market town. It has the classic appearance of a smaller market hall with open-sided ground floor for stalls on market day and enclosed first floor.

4.1.2 The building remains essentially in its primary use and the current refurbishment will help to extend that long into the future.



- 4.1.3 The work has allowed a record to be made of the building in its current form and it can be added to older historic photographs, particularly from around the turn of the 20th century, as well as other documentary evidence which provide an archive of this building. Evidence identified in the recording supports the supposition that the current building, which was constructed in 1806, may incorporate significant elements from the previous town hall which was probably constructed in the very early 17th century. In particular evidence in the underside of the first floor confirms that this structure was from a fully timber framed building much earlier than 1806 with posts at ground floor instead of the current brick arcading. It may well be that this floor formed part of the 17th century town hall and it is even possible that it is an in-situ fragment from the heavily rebuilt earlier building.
- 4.1.4 However, information contained in the Deddington OnLine website suggesting that the previous town hall was a brick building would argue against the possibility that this floor, which was clearly from a timber framed building, survives in-situ. It may have been from an entirely different building although it may also be that the reference to the previous building being of brick is misleading.

Jonathan Gill

April 2013



APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published Sources

Pevsner N & Sherwood J *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* 1974

VCH The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Oxfordshire vol IX

English Heritage Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice 2006

Other sources

<http://www.deddington.org.uk/>



APPENDIX B. LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

SP4631 DEDDINGTON MARKET PLACE 8/184 Town Hall GV II

Date listed 5 May 1988

Grade II

List entry No: 1300780

Town hall. Rebuilt 1806, probably incorporating part of the former early-C17 structure. Brick with marlstone dressings, and rendered timber-framing; Welsh-slate roof with brick gable stack. Rectangular plan of 3 by 2 bays on an island site. 2 storeys. Ground floor has an arcade of segmental arches on square brick piers with stone bases and impost blocks; the bay at the northern end is built up but the rest is open. Rendered upper floor rising from a rendered band has renewed casements: a pair of 2-light windows in the south gable wall, a 3-light window to north with a similar window in the gable, and two 3-light casements in the east wall. Steep-pitched roof. Interior: intersecting chamfered beams and lateral beams morticed for braces relate to an earlier wholly timber-framed structure and appear to be in situ; first-floor walls and roof have no visible work earlier than C19. Early-C19 joinery and benches in council chamber. (Buildings of England: Oxfordshire: p571; VCH: Oxfordshire: Vol XI, p87)

National Grid Reference: SP 46692 31658

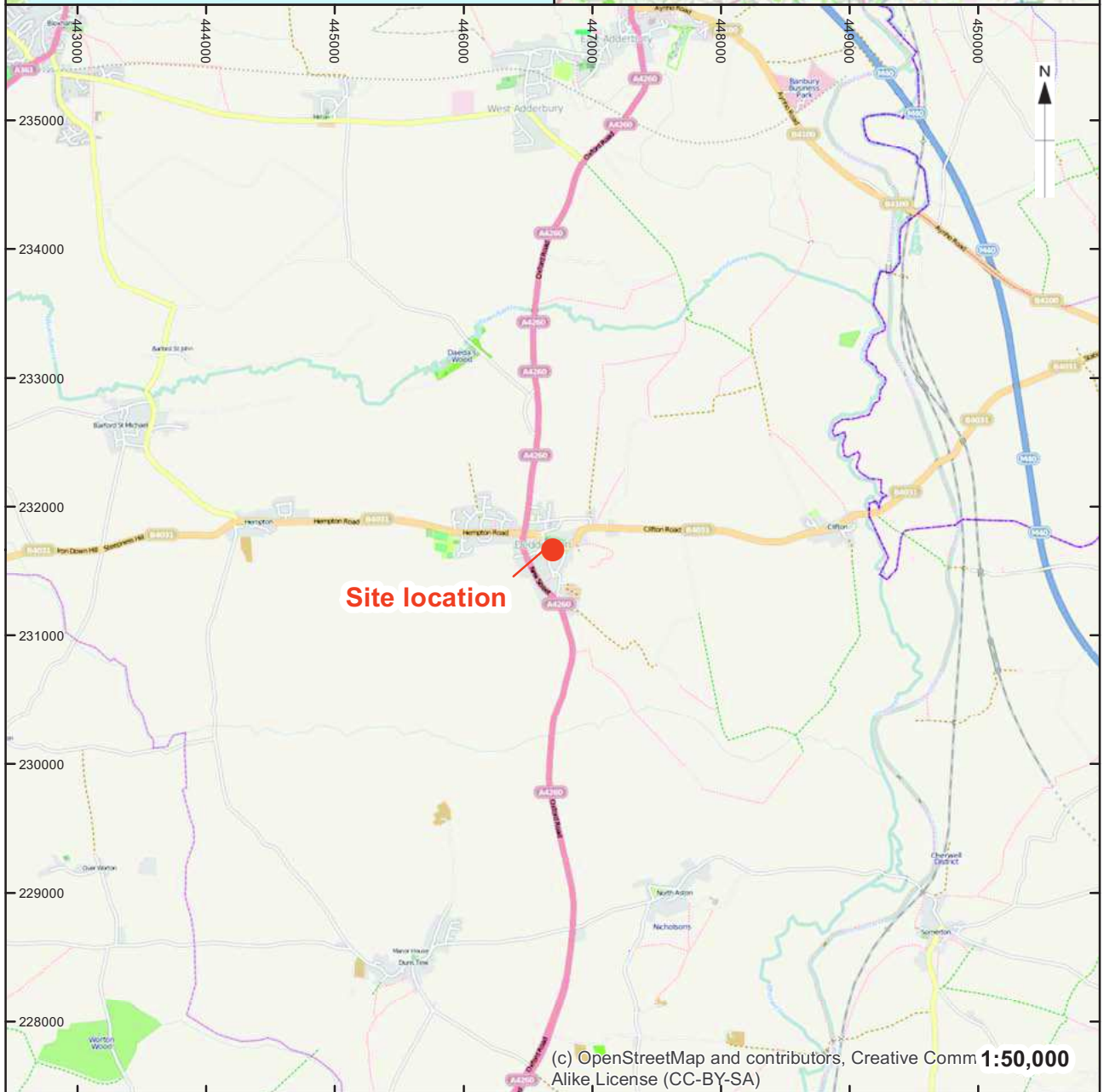
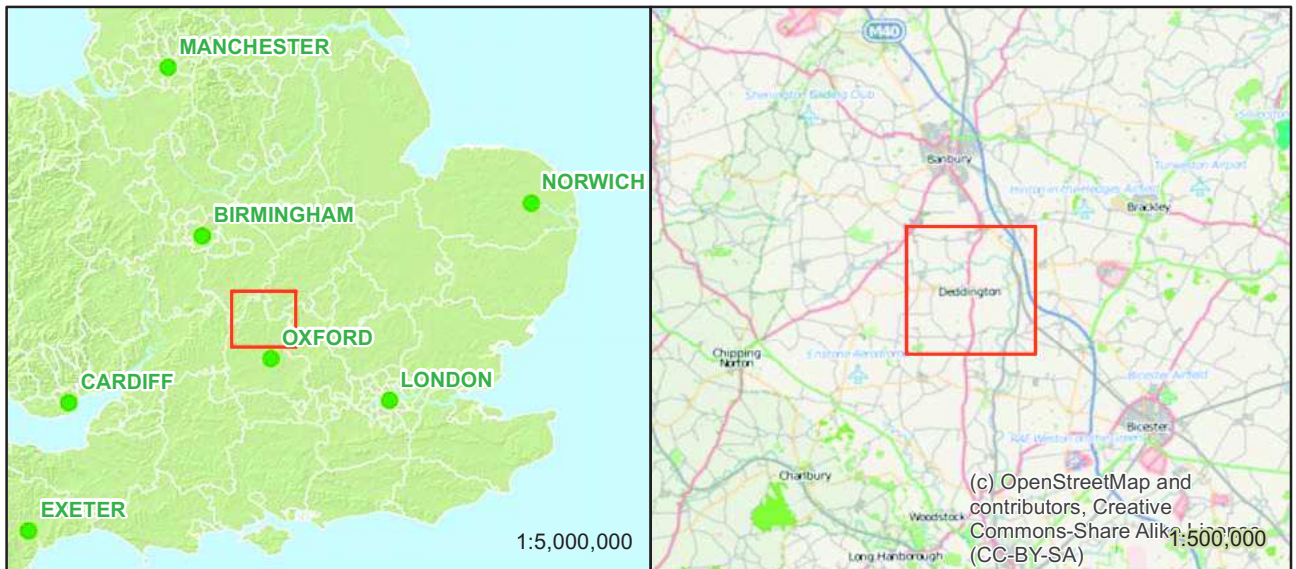
SP4631 DEDDINGTON MARKET PLACE (North side) 8/283 K6 Telephone Kiosk

Date listed: 22/02/88

Grade II

Telephone Kiosk. Type K6. Designed 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Made by various contractors. Cast iron. Square kiosk with domed roof. Unperforated crowns to top panels and margin glazing to windows and door.

National Grid Reference: SP 46692 31665

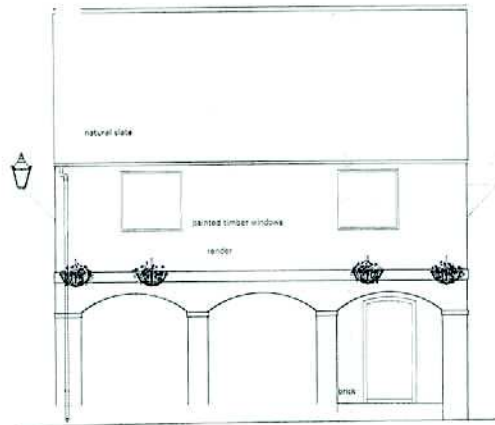


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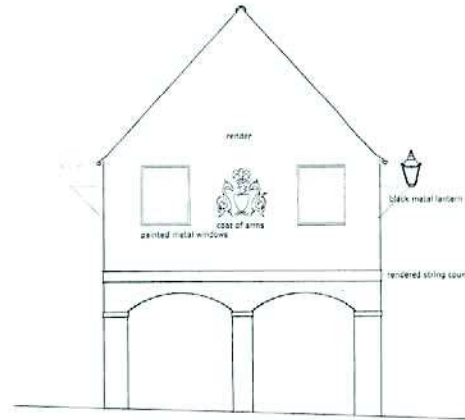
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2012

Figure 1: Site location

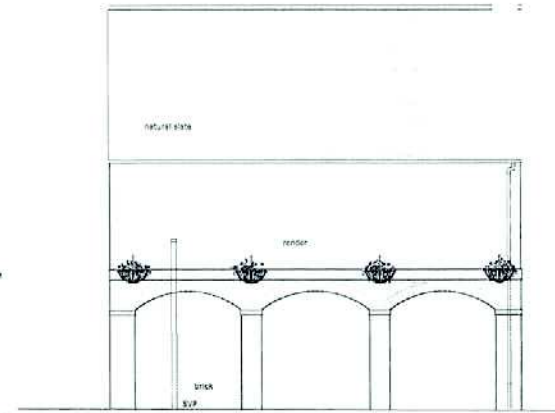
REVISIONS	Date



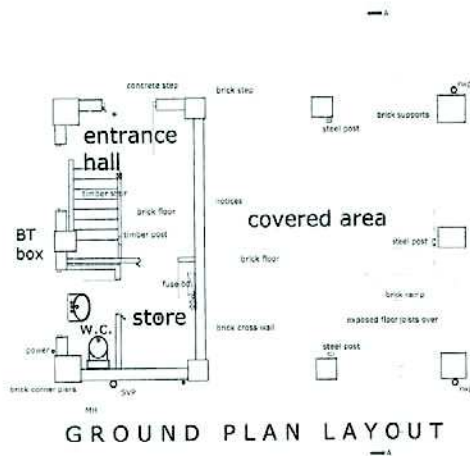
EAST ELEVATION



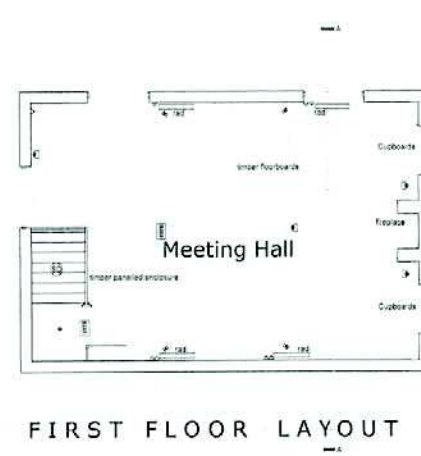
SOUTH ELEVATION



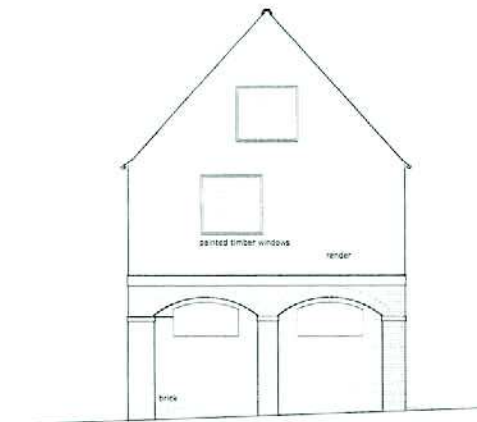
WEST ELEVATION



GROUND PLAN LAYOUT



FIRST FLOOR LAYOUT



NORTH ELEVATION



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Project: PARISH MEETING HALL MARKET PL. DEDDINGTON OXFORDSHIRE	
Title: DEDDINGTON CHARITY ESTATES	
Client: SURVEY OF EXISTING - PLANS & ELEVATIONS	
Scale: 1:50	Date: Oct 09
Sheet: 472.03A	Drawn: [Signature]

Figure 2: Plans and elevations (taken from survey by Tony Herring Associates).



Figure 3: Historic photograph probably from turn of 20th century (taken from Deddington OnLine website)



Plate 1: General view from south-east



Plate 2: Coat of arms on south elevation



Plate 3: West elevation



Plate 4: General view from north



Plate 5: Window in north elevation



Plate 6: East elevation



Plate 7: Door in east elevation



Plate 8: North side of undercroft



Plate 9: Details in underside of first floor



Plate 10: Scarf joint and metal strengthening in first floor



Plate 11: Empty mortice in underside of first floor



Plate 12: South-west corner of undercroft



Plate 13: Underside of hearth in south wall



Plate 14: General view of underside of first floor



Plate 15: Rear of front door



Plate 16: Staircase



Plate 17: Window by staircase

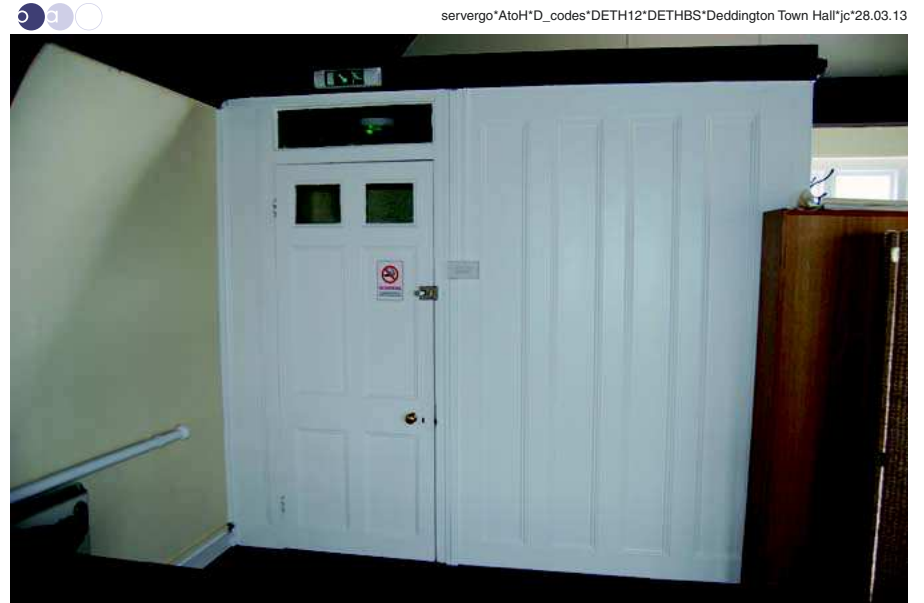


Plate 18: Stair enclosure at first floor



Plate 19: General view of first floor room



Plate 20: Panelling and window in south wall



Plate 21: Window in east wall



Plate 22: General view of roof



Plate 23: Fireplace in south wall



Plate 24: Detail on corbel in roof structure



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