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WARDINGTON MANOR, WARDINGTON: CHIMNEY BASE,
BATHROOM 1.7

HISTORIC BUILDING INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING

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WARDINGTON MANOR

WARDINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE

HISTORIC BUILDING INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out building investigation on behalf of the Architects Rodney Melville and Partners. The proposed works consisted of the removal of a cantilevered chimney base on the south west side of the house in bathroom 1.7. The remains of the chimney base having become inherently unstable as a result of the loss of support from associated fire damaged structures. The investigation and recording of the chimney base were completed as planned, revealing an insight into the materials used in the construction of the base and the general history of the property.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 The watching brief was been requested by the Architects Rodney Melville and Partners on behalf of Lord Wardington in relation to an application for Listed Building Consent (LBC) for the installation of a new concrete slab to the ground floor of the South-West wing. As a result of fire damage in this area of the property the chimney base revealed at first floor level has become inherently unstable and is temporarily supported by an Acrow prop. The Acrow prop will need to be removed as part of the construction of the concrete slab. OA has been commissioned by Rodney Melville and Partners to undertake building recording of the unstable chimney base prior to seeking dispensation for its removal as part of the laying of the slab.

1.2 LOCATION AND SCOPE OF WORK

1.2.1 Wardington Manor (SP 493 461) is located on the western side of the village (Thorpe Road), approximately 1 mile from the A361 Banbury to Daventry road and 6 miles from Banbury to the south west (Figure. 1). The chimney base is located in the western corner of bathroom 1.7 which is situated beyond the ground floor Oak Room in the south west wing of the house. The base itself is located at the interface of the ground and first floors.

1.2.2 The recording was to include a photographic, written and drawn record of the chimney base prior to its demolition. Any features of archaeological interest were to be recorded and the Local Planning Authority (LPA) was to be contacted as appropriate. The primary aims and objectives are outlined in further detail below in 2.

1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.3.1 Wardington Manor is situated in the Banbury Hundred in the ancient parish of Cropredy (although Wardington was considered a separate civil parish after 1888). The Manor is a substantial gabled house constructed primarily of local

ironstone and of an irregular H-shape in plan (Figure 2). Although the earliest date for the construction of the house is currently open to speculation, it is apparent that the core of the surviving house is medieval in date with documentary evidence attesting to the presence of a manor house in the mid 16th century. Ongoing historic building analysis has recently confirmed this.

- 1.3.2 George Chamberlayne drastically remodelled the building in 1665, with major alterations undertaken between 1905 - 1914 by Clough William Ellis. Further substantial works were undertaken between 1917- 1923 for the first Lord Wardington by Randall Wells, restoring the existing original details with a high degree of accuracy and making any alterations in keeping with the Jacobean elements of the house.
- 1.3.3 As a result of the fire in April of this year (Plates 1 - 4), an extensive programme of restoration and conservation work has been proposed by Rodney Melville and Partners, Architects, details of which are currently being finalised and are likely to run until the latter part of 2005.
- 1.3.4 As referred to in a proposed Written Scheme of Investigation for Building Recording and Archaeological Works (Prepared for Rodney Melville and Partners in September 2004), future research, if commissioned, would include further detailed research into the general historical context and narrative for the building and its immediate setting. This would incorporate existing material in addition to any information provided by Rodney Melville & Partners and Lord Wardington.

2 **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The general aims and objectives were:

- To make a record of the chimney base prior to its potential removal.
- To record any features of archaeological interest (such as different material and construction) during the building survey as appropriate.
- To produce a brief report detailing the findings of the survey of the chimney base.
- To deposit the site archive with the County Museum Service and to provide a copy of the report for the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

3 **METHODOLOGY**

3.1 **FIELDWORK METHODS AND RECORDING**

- 3.1.1 The fieldwork for the building recording was completed intermittently between April - May 2005. This included:
 - 3.1.2 *The Base Survey*
 - 3.1.3 The base survey for the programme of restoration and conservation work was commissioned by Rodney Melville and Partners and undertaken by On Centre



Surveys. Access to this data was kindly granted by Andrew Brookes of Rodney Melville and Partners and this survey forms the base plans for figures 3 and 4.

3.1.4 *The Drawn Record*

3.1.5 An elevation (1:25) was completed of the ground and first floor wall at the north west end of the south west wing showing the location of the cantilevered chimney base. This was undertaken after all panelling and other fixtures and fittings had been removed from both levels (Figure 5).

3.1.6 *The Photographic Record*

3.1.7 A full black and white and colour slide photographic record was made by OA of the chimney base and associated ground and first floor elevations. Photographs taken prior to the removal of the structure. It is also anticipated that a brief photographic record will be made after the chimney base has been removed. A wide selection of digital images were also taken at a resolution of 4000 DPI.

3.1.8 *The Written Record*

3.1.9 Brief notes were made of the chimney base as part of the annotated drawings. Additional notes were taken as appropriate.

4 **DESCRIPTION**

4.1.1 The remains of the chimney base are located in the south west wing of the manor house (Plates 1 - 4). The structure is positioned in the western corner of the bathroom (1.7) at a level directly between the ground and first floors (Plates 5 - 6). The base was located under softwood floor boards and below joist level at first floor within the Blue Room (2.4) and protruded slightly below ceiling height at ground floor level, the protrusion having been made into a feature of the bathroom. At ground floor level there is a window located directly to the left, (which has been partially fitted over the chimney base) whilst at first floor level there is a doorway (currently blocked) located to the right. At first floor level there are also two areas of comprehensive repair / blocking of the original wall fabric on the north western and south western elevations. The examination of this structural element will hopefully add further to our understanding of the history and phases of construction of Wardington Manor, specifically the south west wing.

4.1.2 As a result of a substantial episode of burning in the roof space of the south west wing in April 2004 much of the roof structure collapsed on to the first and partially the ground floors. The extent of the damage to this area of the house has necessitated temporary removal of the floorboards and joists, panelling, and permanent removal of the plasterwork from the ground and first floor rooms of the south west wing. This specifically included the removal of the plasterboard lining and associated fixtures and fittings in bathroom 1.7. revealing the structure of the chimney base supported by the plasterboard. As a result of the fire damage the base has become inherently unstable with no significant means of vertical support and has been temporarily propped. In addition to issues of failing structural stability, it may also be necessary to remove the chimney base and associated Acrow to facilitate further restoration

work in the south west wing, specifically to also allow the laying of a new concrete floor throughout the oak and smoke rooms and associated rooms/corridors.

- 4.1.3 The chimney base survives as a triangular corner piece constructed of two courses of rubble local limestone laid on top of an oak platform. The timber base has been constructed in four sections with the widths of oak (front to back) as follows, 0.33m, 0.18m, 0.24m and 0.25m. The height of the timber visible at the front is 0.18m. The width of the front timber stretching from the south west elevation to the north west elevation is 2.08m and the width from the front of the base to the corner is 1.06m. The front timber appeared to be heavily tooled and has five thin wooden strips attached for the possible fixing of panelling, removed after the fire (Plates 7 - 11).
- 4.1.4 Set on top of the timber base is a further 0.20m of roughly coursed rubble / semi dressed local stone. The blocks varied in size from 0.10m x 0.06m to 0.32m x 0.16m. Patches are visible of a sandy pink render on the face of the stone approximately 5mm - 10mm thick. The bonding material between the rubble and semi-dressed stones (where observable) appeared to be entirely natural, consisting of a light red-brown clayey silt with no lime or other similar material present.
- 4.1.5 Both the stone and the timbers below appeared to be keyed into the respective elevations but with no further bonding observable. On the left hand side of the chimney base (south west elevation of the former bathroom) it could be observed that the window frame (window W 1.10) partially overlapped the structure and hence could be identified as a later feature or insertion (Plate 7).

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 From the building recording undertaken it was observed that the rubble elements of the chimney base were constructed primarily of a local limestone laid in approximately 2 courses, employing a natural mortar and showing the remnants of a light pink render on its face. Four lengths of heavily tooled timber had been utilised as the supporting base upon which this stone had been set. The timber lower support and some elements of the stonework on top had been keyed into the respective elevations. Aerial photos prior to the fire do show a chimney on the ridge of the south west wing roof near to the location of the chimney base as located in bathroom 1.7. This appeared to be a single stack stone construction very similar to those observable elsewhere at the property. Photographic evidence also indicates that the chimney had been dismantled well before the outbreak of the fire. At first floor level the areas of blocking and alteration to the two elevations adjacent to the base are also indicative of prior removal of a fireplace and related chimney stack, however the precise means of transferring a masonry flue from the outside wall to the centre line of the roof can only be postulated, (Plates 12 - 16).
- 5.1.2 No medieval elements were readily identified within the structure observed, although the accurate dating of the feature on the evidence available is inconclusive. Due to its current poor state of repair and obvious structural instability the removal of the chimney base is essential and will not significantly effect the historic integrity of this area of the house. It is noted that the temporary Acrow is the only visible means by which the base is



currently supported, which will be required to be removed if the laying of the concrete slab is to go ahead.

- 5.1.3 It is suggested that a member of OA historic building staff be present during its demolition to observe and record the nature of the fabric and any further historical information that might be gleaned from its removal. Should further more substantive dating evidence be required it would be possible to arrange a dendrochronological assessment of one or all of the timbers retrieved from the base. This may enable an idea to be given of whether the structure is part of the original medieval core of the building.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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7 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Wardington Manor, Wardington, Oxfordshire

Site code: WAMA04

Type of evaluation: Building Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: Work undertake April - May 2005

Summary of results: Recording of redundant chimney in bathroom 1.7, south west wing prior to demolition. No unusual construction features were observed although the nature of its exact original use and date were inclusive.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.



Plate 1: View north west - general view of house.



Plate 2: View south east - general view of house.

Plate 3: View north east - fire damage to roof on south west wing.



Plate 4: View north west - general view.





Plate 5: View north west - stripped bathroom 1.7 beyond the Oak Room.



Plate 6: View west - timber and stone elements of the chimney base.

Plate 7: left side of base - note it extends behind the window frame.



Plate 8: Right side of base showing timber and rubble construction.





Plate 9: View west - chimney base with brick repairs to first floor walls.



Plate 10: View west - detail of chimney base structure.

Plate 11: Underside of the four timbers forming bottom element of the base.



Plate 12: View north west -first floor with base location to the left.



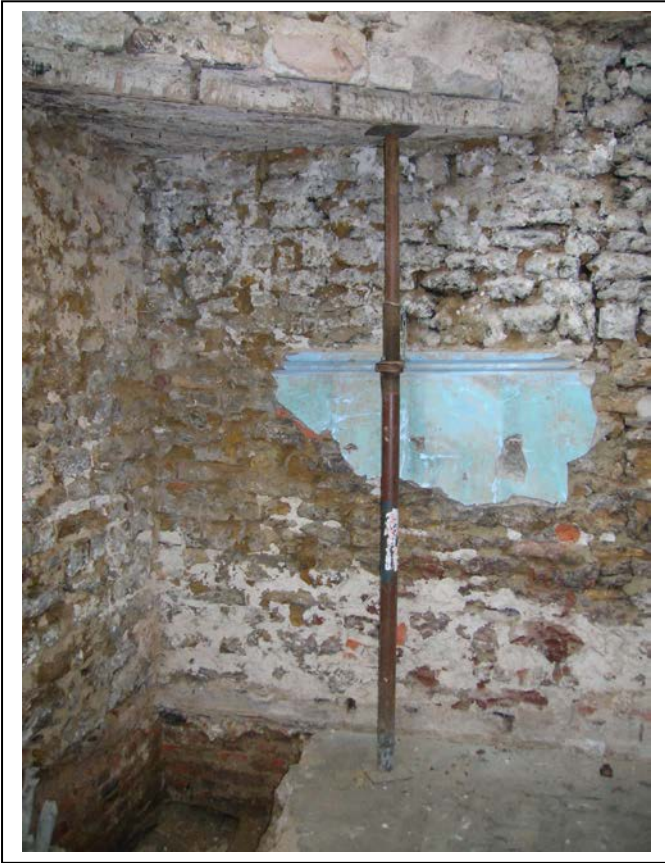


Plate 13: View north west - stripped walls of bathroom 1.7 below chimney base showing support.

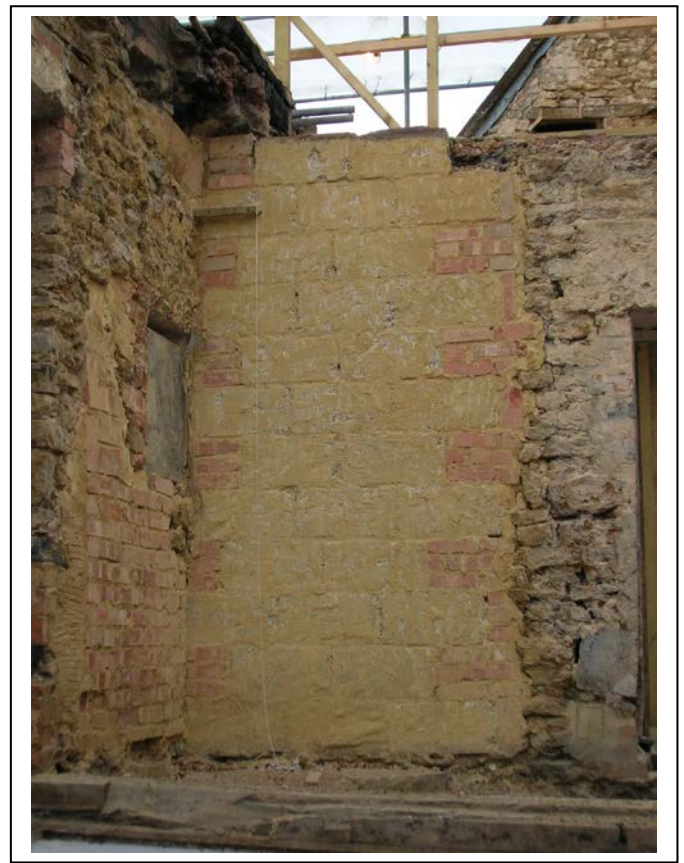


Plate 14: Blocked alterations / repairs adjacent to the chimney base at first floor level.

Plate 15: View south west - repaired area at first floor level adjacent to the chimney base.

Plate 16: Detail of chimney base and support below.

