

No 32-33 Crown Court West Wycombe Village



Historic Building Investigation and Recording

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32-33 Crown Court, West Wycombe Village, Buckinghamshire
Report on Historic Building Investigation

Table of Contents

1 Introduction.....	5
1.1 Background.....	5
1.2 Wider background to the West Wycombe project.....	5
1.3 Methodology.....	6
1.4 Historical Background to West Wycombe Village.....	6
2 Description	8
2.1 Summary of phasing of building from VBS and listing.....	8
2.2 Summary description of overall building.....	8
2.3 Roof investigations.....	9
2.4 Internal investigations	12
3 Conclusion And Summary of Phasing.....	13
Appendix A. Listed Building Description.....	15
Appendix B. Vernacular Building Survey for Nos 32-33 Crown Court.....	16

Figures

Figure 1: Location plan

Figure 2: Extract from A Plan of West Wycombe Town (1767)

Figure 3: 1876 1st edition OS map

Figure 4: 1898 edition OS map

Figure 5: Ground floor plan (from VBS)

Figure 6: Plan of roof showing phasing and key features

Plates

Plate 1: General view of west elevation

Plate 2: Gable of north elevation above 20th-century lean-to

Plate 3: Outbuilding in garden

Plate 4: East elevation beneath scaffolding

Plate 5: West slope of southern bay (No.32)

- Plate 6: Rafter feet in west slope of southern bay
- Plate 7: West slope of southern bay
- Plate 8: West slope of central bay
- Plate 9: West slope of central bay
- Plate 10: Tie beam and rafter feet in west slope
- Plate 11: Truss 2 detail, west slope
- Plate 12: West slope of northern bay and north gable
- Plate 13: North end of west slope
- Plate 14: West slope of north bay
- Plate 15: West slope of north bay
- Plate 16: North end of west slope
- Plate 17: Wind brace in north bay, west slope
- Plate 18: West slope
- Plate 19: Rafter feet in west slope
- Plate 20: Northern bay roof space looking south-west
- Plate 21: Ceiling joists in northern bay
- Plate 22: Northern bay roof space looking south-east
- Plate 23: Northern bay roof space looking south
- Plate 24: Northern bay of roof space looking north through hatch
- Plate 25: Curved inner principals (or crucks) in northern gable
- Plate 26: Central bay of roof space, east slope
- Plate 27: Southern bay roof space looking south
- Plate 28: Southern bay roof space, west slope
- Plate 29: East slope of roof looking north
- Plate 30: East slope southern bay
- Plate 31: East slope wind brace in northern bay
- Plate 32: East slope northern bay
- Plate 33: East slope southern end of roof
- Plate 34: East slope northern end of roof
- Plate 35: Detail of collar, clasped purlin and curved inner principal
- Plate 36: Rafter feet detail
- Plate 37: Fireplace in ground floor front room (No.33A)
- Plate 38: North face of wall dividing No 32 from No 33 (Room 33A)
- Plate 39: East wall in Room 33A
- Plate 40: Rear room in No.33 (Room 33B)

32-33 Crown Court, West Wycombe Village
Historic Building Investigation and Recording

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) have been commissioned by The National Trust to carry out historic buildings recording and archaeological investigation during conservation works to a number of properties within the village of West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. The work relates to a programme of on-going refurbishment works (detailed further below) and the current report covers the recording of Numbers 32 and 33 Crown Court at the eastern end of the village. The National Trust HBSMR event No for this work is ENA7221.

1.2 Wider background to the West Wycombe project

1.2.1 The current work forms part of a wider project to refurbish the tenanted National Trust buildings within West Wycombe village and it is being carried out in a number of stages between 2012-2015.

1.2.2 The main works in the current programme include:

- Re-roofing and insertion of insulation
- Upgrades of services
- Upgrades of bathrooms and kitchen facilities
- Repairs to gutters

1.2.1 The National Trust owns c.50 tenanted buildings in the village and c.23 of these are listed. There is one Grade II* building (Steps House) while the others are listed at Grade II. No.s 32-33 Crown Court form a single Grade II listing dating to 1954 (see Appendix A).

1.2.2 The village forms a collection of vernacular buildings from a range of dates and with various historical functions and the current project provides a rare opportunity to undertake a single overarching study of a settlement such as this. The investigation of this group will particularly allow the easy comparison of constructional techniques between buildings to identify similarities between structures of different ages as well as highlighting evidence to show how constructional techniques or structural design in this area has evolved over time.

1.2.3 In September 2012 Gary Marshall (National Trust Archaeologist London and South East) issued a brief for the recording project and in October OA responded with a *Proposal for Building Investigation and Recording*.

1.2.4 Vernacular Building Surveys were undertaken on many of the buildings in the early 1990s and these provide much valuable information on the history of the structures and evolution of the village. The current recording work utilises existing plans and research undertaken by the Vernacular Buildings Survey in September 1993. For ease of comparison internal spaces and rooms use the same numbering system as used in the Vernacular Buildings Survey report. The VBS report should also be read in conjunction with the current report which is included here as Appendix B.

- 1.2.5 This document forms a stand-alone report on the investigation of No. 32-33 Crown Court and ultimately similar reports will be issued on the other buildings investigated at West Wycombe. The information contained in all these reports will then be distilled into a wider context study which will discuss the overall development of the village and highlight common themes or features between buildings.
- 1.2.6 The recording at No.32 and 33 focused principally on the roof structure following removal of the roof tiles and prior to the insertion of insulation. However it also included some recording at ground floor level and some observations were made on the exterior of the building. This report is intended to complement the Vernacular Building Survey rather than to replace it and it focuses particularly on the areas exposed. The VBS is reproduced here as an appendix while the main body of the current report discusses the areas recently exposed and assesses how this affects the previous understanding of the building.

1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 The work comprised three principal elements: a photographic, a drawn and a written survey. The *photographic survey* consisted of general photographs and specific details and was undertaken using 35mm black and white print film and digital photographs were taken using a Caplio 8 megapixel camera.
- 1.3.2 The *drawn survey* consisted of annotation of the first floor plan to indicate the exposed roof structure with other details measured in.
- 1.3.3 The *written survey* consisted of notes and annotation that complemented the photographic and drawn surveys and added further analytical and descriptive detail.
- 1.3.4 The main site work for the recording of No 32 - 33 Crown Court was undertaken on 3rd and 8th October 2013 although due to the fact that the roof works were undertaken without a full scaffold covering the on-site recording was by necessity particularly rapid. The roof was briefly uncovered in sections to allow repairs before being re-covered in case it started raining. This only allowed relatively short windows when the sections of roof could be recorded and it also meant that the whole roof was not uncovered in a single phase. The west slope of the southern bay (No.32) was uncovered without OA being on site but Gary Marshall did visit at this point and he provided digital photographs of this area to OA.
- 1.3.5 Dan Miles from the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory assessed the timbers on 2nd October 2013 for their suitability for dendrochronology but they were considered to be too fast growing and therefore not suitable.

1.4 Historical Background to West Wycombe Village

- 1.4.1 West Wycombe is a small historic village which is just detached from the modern western boundary of the much larger town of High Wycombe. Archaeological investigations have provided evidence of continuous occupation in the general vicinity since the Bronze Age, particularly on West Wycombe Hill and the area where St Lawrence's Church now stands.
- 1.4.2 In the first half of the 18th century West Wycombe Park and country house was laid out by Sir Francis Dashwood to the south of the village.

- 1.4.3 The current buildings in the village are believed to largely date from the early 16th century to the later 19th and they formed part of the Dashwood's estate. The village was located on the main road between London and Oxford and records show there were a large number of inns which prospered on the coaching trade.
- 1.4.4 By the early decades of the 20th century the buildings of the village had fallen into a state of considerable disrepair and in 1929 the village estate was purchased from the Dashwood Family by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA). The RSA undertook a programme of refurbishment under their Campaign for the Preservation of Ancient Cottages, a remarkable but little known campaign established in 1926 to protect cottage architecture by establishing a fund which purchased or restored cottages. (RSA ref: PR.EN/100). Documents relating to this purchase and refurbishment are held at the RSA Archives in London and this may be an avenue of valuable research in the current project.
- 1.4.5 In 1934, following the RSA refurbishment, the buildings were donated to the National Trust and they remain as a tenanted estate today.
- 1.4.6 Numbers 32-33**
- 1.4.7 Detailed historical research into No.32 and 33, as well as the village generally will be undertaken in due course as part of the current project and the findings will be incorporated into the final synthesised report on all the buildings of the village. The only sources so far consulted are historic maps and particularly those from 1698, 1767, the Tithe Map from 1849 and 25 inch Ordnance Survey maps (1876, 1898, 1921).
- 1.4.8 The earliest map to show the village is the 1698 estate map and although it is not reproduced here a copy of the map has been seen in the preparation of the current report. The map is schematic in nature, showing principal buildings in elevation, and its detail cannot be relied upon but it is interesting to note that it does not appear to show the buildings of Crown Court including No. 32-33. The buildings on the street front are shown, possibly stretching as far as the current location of Crown Court, but no ranges to the rear are indicated.
- 1.4.9 The 1767 estate map is more detailed and this map does clearly show Crown Court at the eastern end of the village with four ranges around a square yard and the east range (the current No. 32-33) divided into three properties (see Fig 2). The buildings are schematically represented in elevation and each range is shown as being two storied. The schematic nature of the map means that it would be unsafe to rely too heavily on the elevation for determining the historic form of the building but it is likely that the division into three properties does reflect the arrangement at this time. Crown Court is labelled '*Mr Dorrels. Eleven Cottages with Gardens, Yard*'.
- 1.4.10 The tithe map of 1849 again shows the building with a simple rectangular plan and the apportionment appears to just show John West (No.724) as the occupier of the cottage and garden and Sir George Henry Dashwood MP as the owner. This is reproduced in the Vernacular Building Survey (Appendix B).
- 1.4.11 The first edition OS map of 1876 shows the main rectangular plan building divided into four components (four properties?) and an extension to the rear of the block to north of centre. There is at least one outbuilding shown to the rear of the property, against the boundary wall to the east of the plot (Fig 3).
- 1.4.12 A broadly similar arrangement is shown on the 1898 map (Fig 4) except that the building is now shown divided into five blocks (presumably five properties). The property to the

south of the centre which was larger than the others on the 1876 map had been subdivided by 1898. Each of these properties would have been very small and smaller than most of the others in Crown Court.

- 1.4.13 The 1921 OS map again shows the building divided into five properties. It is interesting to note that the distinct skewed angle which forms the south end of the building is not apparent on any of the historic maps and therefore possibly relates to a reconstruction of this area, probably in the RSA works of c.1930.

2 DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary of phasing of building from VBS and listing

- 2.1.1 The listing suggests that the building is a 17th-century range of cottages with No.32 including the former No.31 Crown Court (see Appendix A). This assessment was probably just based on an external examination and the Vernacular Building Survey, which would have been a more detailed investigation, considers that the building has significantly older origins. The VBS considers that 32-33 is a large late medieval hall house which is one of the oldest buildings in West Wycombe village having originally been probably constructed in the early to mid 15th century. The VBS states that it was originally of cruck construction with the open hall in the southern two bays and a two storied northern bay with chamber above service room below. The current investigation believes that this interpretation of the structure being a cruck-framed medieval hall house is improbable, though not impossible, and that the list description is more likely to be an accurate reflection of the building's origins (discussed further below).

- 2.1.2 As mentioned above the building's timbers were assessed by Dan Miles from the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory for their suitability for dendrochronology but unfortunately they were considered to be too fast growing for the tree rings to be able to provide a felling date.

- 2.1.3 The VBS report believes that in the early 18th century the upper floor was added to the previously open hall in the southern two bays, the chimney stack was added and the roof altered to its current form. The VBS report suggests that the building would have comprised two cottages at this time: a large one in the two southern bays and a smaller one in the northern bay. In the early 19th the larger cottage was divided into two dwellings. The VBS also considers that the rear lean-to's were probably added in the late 19th or early 20th century to provide fuel and wash houses and that the two southern cottages were reunited in the mid 20th century

2.2 Summary description of overall building

2.2.1 *Introduction:*

- 2.2.2 As outlined elsewhere the current project is not intended to be a full descriptive record of this building. It has focussed on areas previously obscured and it is intended to supplement rather than replicate the VBS. However a brief outline description would be of use, particularly in relation to features noted in the current project.

- 2.2.3 No.32-33 Crown Court is a two storey building with gabled, tile-covered roof. It is timber framed with flint rubble and red brick nogging (Plate 1). There are single storey, weatherboarded lean-to extensions at the northern and southern ends which were almost certainly constructed in the c.1930 refurbishment. These partly obscure the north and south elevations behind although the gables of each are visible. The gable of the *north*

elevation has a pair of heavily weathered, curved timbers visible that it has been speculated could be surviving cruck blades (discussed further below – see Plates 2, 25). These timbers are jointed to a collar although this is hidden beneath a protective board probably added in the c.1930 works. The brickwork within this gable is different below and above the collar but both sections appear to be of probable 20th-century date. The gable of the *south elevation* is formed from probably 20th-century brickwork.

- 2.2.4 The *west elevation* faces into the court and is an intriguing constructional patchwork that provides much evidence of alteration since its original construction (Plate 1). The main construction is a timber box-frame from which most of the framing survives in the central and southern bays with brick nogging infill from various phases and some sections of the framing replaced or altered. However, the northern bay of the west elevation (ie No.33) is constructed from flint with brick dressings and without any visible timber framing. The footprint of the building is believed to be primary and therefore rather than this flint bay being a secondary addition it is likely that it was also originally timber framed but this has been replaced by the flint. There are two distinct phases however to this flint and brick section of wall in the west elevation because although most of the bricks are a dark red colour and relatively thin those in the upper part of the northern third of this bay are an orangey red colour and slightly larger. There is a clear straight joint between the two types of brick approximately 1.4 m south from the northern end of this wall, and it is likely that in this northern area the original timber framing remained in-situ after the rest of this bay was rebuilt in flint (late 18th/early 19th century?), but then this section was also rebuilt in brick/flint, probably in the late 19th century. It is interesting to note that most of the brickwork at the northern corner of this wall is the same dark red as further to the south and it is only the uppermost c.13 courses that are formed from the later orangey red brickwork.
- 2.2.5 The junction between the central and northern bays of the building, where the surviving timber frame abuts the flint rebuild, is of interest because the timber framing has started leaning to the east and this contrasts with the adjacent brick/flint wall which has been rebuilt vertically. The two doorways to the separate properties are either side of this junction, immediately adjacent to each other.
- 2.2.6 The *east elevation* (rear) of the building was also timber framed but it has now been much altered and the wall of No.32 appears to have been virtually entirely rebuilt in brick and flint. Some of the historic framing does survive in the northern bay, (ie the wall of No.33) including two full height posts at the south-east corner of No 33 (the junction with No.32). There is also a mid rail which acts as a lintel over the window although this is covered by a modern protective board. Beneath this lintel the brickwork has all been rebuilt (probably 1930s) but the brick nogging above is older and looks very similar to brickwork exposed inside in the chimney stack (probably 18th or early 19th century date). The lower part of the corner post has been removed beneath the mid rail in probably early 19th century brickwork (bricks c.6.5 cm tall)
- 2.2.7 It is worth noting that there is a well-built brick outbuilding at the end of the garden of No.33 (Plate 3) and a small weatherboarded outbuilding in the garden of No.32. These have not been investigated in the current project but they are a feature of houses in West Wycombe village.

2.3 Roof investigations

- 2.3.1 The key investigation in the current project focused on the roof which was uncovered to allow insulation to be inserted and minor repairs to be undertaken. Recording was undertaken from scaffolding while the roof was uncovered but this was only of a rapid

photographic and descriptive nature because the scaffolding was open to the elements rather than incorporating a covering over the top. This meant that due to the potential threat from rain the roof structure was left uncovered for as short a period as possible and there was only a brief window when recording was possible.

- 2.3.2 The main roof is three bays long and divided by four trusses which have been numbered here 1-4 from the south end. The structure appears to divide into two main phases: the historic roof which survives largely intact (albeit with a severe sag) and the extensive works undertaken as part of the 1930s refurbishment which comprised adding new rafters on top of the old ones to counter the sag.
- 2.3.3 Three of the four trusses (No's 2-4) are of the same type with substantial tie beam (c.22 cm²), collar (c.16 cm tall by c.12 cm), principal rafters (c.13 cm²) and a further pair of members which are beneath the principal rafters and which are tenoned to the underside of the collars. These members sandwich the lower of two tiers of purlins (18 x 12 cm) between themselves and the principal rafters and they are a particularly interesting feature of the roof. The NT Vernacular Building Survey report interpreted these curved members as pairs of cruck blades and almost the only surviving elements of a late medieval hall house on this site but in the current report it is thought that they are more likely to be *curved inner principals* and forming part of the 17th or 18th-century building.
- 2.3.4 Curved inner principals are a characteristic feature of a particular roof form found widely in this general area (South Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire) with a particular concentration in the Wycombe district. Studies of this roof type suggest that the earliest examples are from the mid 17th century but they are most commonly found in the mid to late 18th and they can be found in 19th century buildings (Clark, 2004). The curved inner principals in this building vary in size but they are c.24 cm tall x 11 cm wide.
- 2.3.5 It is possible that these curved members are partially surviving crucks from a greatly altered former hall but there should be some evidence to suggest that the cruck blades formerly continued down towards the ground prior to the secondary insertion of the tie-beams. Unfortunately the junction between the curved inner principals and tie-beams in each truss are obscured by slightly raised ceiling and insulation so it was not possible to closely examine this area.
- 2.3.6 The upper purlins are clasped between principal rafter and the collar. The purlins appear to be scarfed immediately to the north of each truss with two pegs adjacent to the principal rafter/curved inner principal.
- 2.3.7 It is interesting to note that some of the purlins are formed from whole tree trunks rather than halved or quartered and this characteristic has been seen in other buildings at West Wycombe (40-41 and No.52). This use of probably cheaper pieces of wood from smaller trees (albeit whole trunks) is suggestive of a later date of construction (possibly more likely to be 18th century than 17th century) and it may also be something of a local characteristic.
- 2.3.8 **Truss 1** at the south end of the building is different to the others and this may reflect the map evidence that suggests this end of the building was formerly squared rather than being skewed as it is now. This truss comprises a tie beam, two collars which each clasp a purlin and no curved inner principals (Plate 27). The upper collar is a secondary replacement (1930s?) with 'bird's mouth' notched ends and it is inserted between the principal rafters. The lower collar in Truss 1 is primary and it has been protected externally by the addition of a series of tiles. Two stud posts survive beneath this collar

from what would have been a closed frame while immediately to the south of this the gable is formed by rebuilt brickwork probably from the 1930s works. In the eastern principal rafter a peg remains in-situ in the mortice from a former purlin below the level of the current upper purlin

- 2.3.9 The ceiling in the southern bay (Bay 1) is largely obscured by modern insulation but the ceiling appears to be modern and there are fragments of newspaper apparently from 1965 within this. The purlins in Bay 1 are held apart by a spreader beam with 'birds mouth' notched ends (Plate 28).
- 2.3.10 **Truss 2** between the southern and central bays is sandwiched between two separate brick chimney stacks which the VBS believes were added in the early 18th and early 19th centuries (Pl.11, 18, 35). The addition of the later stack (the northern of the two) reflects the subdivision of the building into three small cottages. In the central bay there is similar modern insulation to that in the southern bay (Pl. 26).
- 2.3.11 **Truss 3** between the central and northern bays is closed with eight rough studs to the north side (Pl. 23). Some laths survive fixed to the studs but only in a very fragmentary form with no plaster and no evidence of former plaster. It may be that the studs and laths were inserted to form a very crude division between properties although it wasn't plastered because this does not appear to have ever been a habitable loft space. It may be that the unplastered laths held a rough straw to act as an insulation. Immediately to the south of it a modern (later 20th-century) stud partition has been constructed, presumably to replace the previous lath partition.
- 2.3.12 **Truss 4** at the gabled northern end of the building is again of the main basic type with curved inner principals but it has brick nogging that is probably from the 1930s works (Pl. 24). This brick nogging is not bonded to the adjacent chimney stack which probably dates from the 18th century. An interesting feature of the northernmost truss is the fact that there are empty mortices in the sides of both the principal rafters from where a wind brace could have gone but there are no corresponding mortices in the purlins so it is unlikely that there were wind braces at this end of the building. It is more likely that the empty mortices show that the principal rafters have been reused from elsewhere, presumably as a pair (Pl. 13 & 16).
- 2.3.13 In the northernmost bay there are straight **windbraces** to each slope beneath the upper purlin and immediately to the north of Truss 3 (ie the other end of the bay to empty mortices referred to above – Pl. 14, 15, 20). There are also similar straight wind braces to each slope at the southern end of the building (Pl. 5) but there doesn't appear to be any evidence of further windbraces in the other bays and this occasional use of windbraces rather than uniformly along the building is a feature that has been previously noted in other buildings at West Wycombe.
- 2.3.14 The **common rafters** are laid flat and although there are various sizes they are generally c.10 cm wide x 5 cm tall. The primary rafters are waney, with some retaining bark, and they all appear to be pegged to the purlins although in most cases this is obscured by the secondary nailed softwood packing rafters on the top. There is no ridge piece and the rafters are tenoned at the apex. Again the nature of the apex tenons are largely obscured by the secondary rafters over the primary but it appears that the principal rafters have bridle tenons while the common rafters are half lapped at the apex.
- 2.3.15 There are nine pairs of old common rafters in each of the three bays but secondary purlins have been added onto the backs of these rafters (almost certainly in the c.1930

RSA works) and contemporary rafters then nailed on top of these. The new rafters are directly above the historic ones and in several areas long additional wedges have been inserted between the two phases of rafters. In almost all cases the upper rafters comprise two pieces of timber with their ends adjoining. The c.1930 works would have reprofiled the severely sagging roof.

- 2.3.16 The *wall plate* is 13 cm tall and at least 15 cm deep. The wall plate appears relatively consistent along both sides of the roof without clear empty mortices for old rafters (although much is hidden). The rafters are notched over the wall plate. There are two matching scarfs in the wall plate, each one c.50 cm to the north of the two trusses (Pl. 10, 36). Peg holes are visible in both wall plates that relate to the existing and former posts in the wall beneath. There are many peg holes in the face of the eastern wall plate confirming that there was framing to the east wall and some of the pegs remain in-situ.
- 2.3.17 As referred to above it is assumed that the west elevation in the northernmost bay was timber framed and therefore there would have been three posts jointed to the wall plate, c.1.05 m apart. The northern peg hole is clearly visible in the face of the wall plate, very close to the straight joint between the two phases of brick dressing, but the other two are not clearly visible. They may be obscured by mortar infill etc.
- 2.3.18 When the recording of the roof was undertaken much of the upper face of the first floor ceiling was obscured by modern insulation but it was exposed in the northern bay. The structure of the ceiling here was suggestive of a 19th or possibly even an earlier 20th century date and it was crudely constructed with two overlapping principal joists (east to west) and softwood common joists nailed to these (Pl. 20-21). The common joists are vertically set and incorporate clearly reused members.

2.4 Internal investigations

- 2.4.1 Various refurbishment works were undertaken within the northern bay of the building (No.33) which exposed previously obscured fabric or structure and recording was undertaken in these areas. The main recording was undertaken at ground floor level where plaster was removed from patches on several walls including a horizontal strip on the front (west) wall in Room 33A. This was immediately to the north of the window, at sill level (above mid-height matchboarding) and it revealed brickwork similar to that on the external face of the same wall. It also confirmed that the full height straight joint in this area continues through the wall. As outlined above it appears that the originally timber framed west wall was rebuilt in brick in several phases so that the section to the south of this straight joint was replaced by brick at a slightly earlier date than the section to the north of the joint, extending up to the corner.
- 2.4.2 Also in Room 33A a large section of the lime plaster from the south wall was removed at the foot of the stairs, above the mid-height match-board panelling (Pl. 38). This confirmed that the south wall is a pegged timber stud partition with single-skin, brick nogging and the nature of the wall is suggestive of an 18th or possibly early 19th-century date. The bricks are c.6 cm tall by 22 cm long. A similar section of plaster was removed from the east wall of this room, dividing it from the rear scullery and this confirmed that this wall was also single skin brick with a simple timber lacing pieces (Pl. 39). This wall is very crudely constructed so that although mortar has been used in the horizontal joints to bond the bricks mortar has not been applied to the vertical sides of the bricks to bond. The nature of the construction and brickwork of this easterly wall is slightly different to that in the southern wall although a similar lime mortar has been used in each.

- 2.4.3 The first floor structure which forms the ceiling in Room 33A consists of a north-to-south chamfered principal joist that rests on a 7 cm tall plate in the partially exposed brick nogging wall, and east-to-west common joists tenoned into the principal. The north end of what appears to be the principal joist which extends south through No.32 is also visible in this wall, adjacent to the joist in No.33. This floor would be consistent with a date of late 17th or early 18th century.
- 2.4.4 In the north wall of this room there is a large chimney breast which had a simple 1930s tiled fireplace (presumably inserted in the RSA refurbishment) but this has been removed in the current works and the structure behind partly exposed (Pl. 37). There appears to have been a large original opening, c.1.6 m wide, which was infilled with 20th-century brickwork (possibly two phases) and the tiled 1930s fireplace. At the western side of the original 1.6 m wide opening there is a straight joint between the old brickwork, of which very little is exposed, and the 20th-century brickwork and at the eastern end there is an opening which has revealed a smokey blackened jamb to the old brick.
- 2.4.5 There is a small kitchen or scullery to the rear (Room 33B) and the same common joists continue through this area from the front room although here they not painted (Pl. 40). They rest on a plate in the internal wall to the east and the joists are laid relatively flat (c.10 cm x 7 cm). The ceiling of the northern part of this room is modern and clearly much more recent than the other areas exposed at ground floor level.
- 2.4.6 Also in this room part of the east wall of the large stack was exposed and the bricks here again appeared to be of 18th or possibly early 19th century date. The lean-to at the north end of the building includes a WC in the room to the east but nothing here has been exposed in the current work.
- 2.4.7 No areas were exposed within the southern property (No 32) and no recording was undertaken in this part of the building.

3 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF PHASING

- 3.1.1 The current project has allowed an investigation of previously hidden parts of this building and it has also enhanced our overall understanding of the structure. The main work focused on the roof and this appears to have two main phases: the original construction which was probably in the late 17th or early 18th century and then the repair works undertaken by the RSA in the early 1930s.
- 3.1.2 The National Trust's Vernacular Building Survey report on the building from 1993 interpreted elements of the roof trusses as surviving cruck frames and from this concluded that the building was a much altered medieval cruck-framed hall house, dating from the early to mid 15th century, from which little original survives other than the crucks. However, far more of the roof has been exposed in the current project and it seems more likely that the members previously identified as cruck blades are curved (or cranked) inner principals, a distinctive local roof type found particularly widely in South Oxfordshire and the Wycombe district. The roof structure strongly appears to have been constructed in a single phase rather than the curved members surviving from a considerably older hall house. They appear contemporary with the tie-beams which would not have been found in an open hall, although a close inspection of this junction was not possible and there was no evidence of smoke blackening to the timbers.

- 3.1.3 It is possible that these curved members were reused from a previous cruck building elsewhere but in the current building they are acting as curved inner principals. Studies of the distribution of curved inner principals suggest that the earliest examples are from the mid 17th century and their use can still be found in buildings from the 19th century but they are most commonly found in buildings of mid to late 18th century date. The nature of the flat rafters and timber framing suggests that the building is probably not later than the mid 18th century and the most likely date of construction is therefore felt to either be the late 17th or early 18th century. The box timber framing and the extent to which this framing has been replaced may suggest the earlier part of this range although it could be significant that no building is shown here on an estate plan of 1698. The schematic nature of this map means that its detail and accuracy cannot be relied upon however.
- 3.1.4 The 1930s refurbishment works undertaken on the roof by the RSA comprised adding additional rafters to the backs of the original members restore the original profile of the roof slopes.
- 3.1.5 There are several common features in No 32-33 Crown Court which have been noted elsewhere at West Wycombe including the use of windbraces in occasional bays rather than consistently through the building, extensions added in the 1930s works, timber framing re-faced or replaced and lengths of timber (packing pieces) added on top of rafters to re-profile the roof line.

Oxford Archaeology
May 2014

Bibliography

Clark D 'Cranked Inner Principals' *Vernacular Architecture* Vol 35 (2004)

APPENDIX A. LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

32 AND 33, CROWN COURT, WEST WYCOMBE
(Formerly listed as Nos 31, 32 & 33)

Grade: II

Date first listed: 09-Jan-1954

Date of most recent amendment: 28-Jun-1973

No 32 includes the former No 31. C17 range of cottages on east side of Crown Court. Timber framed with flint rubble and red brick nogging, old tiled roof. 2 storeys; 5, formerly 3, flush set casements. Cut bracketed doorhoods, doorway on right blocked and casement substituted.

Nos 27 to 30 (consec), Nos 32 and 33 form a group.

NGR: SU8311594645

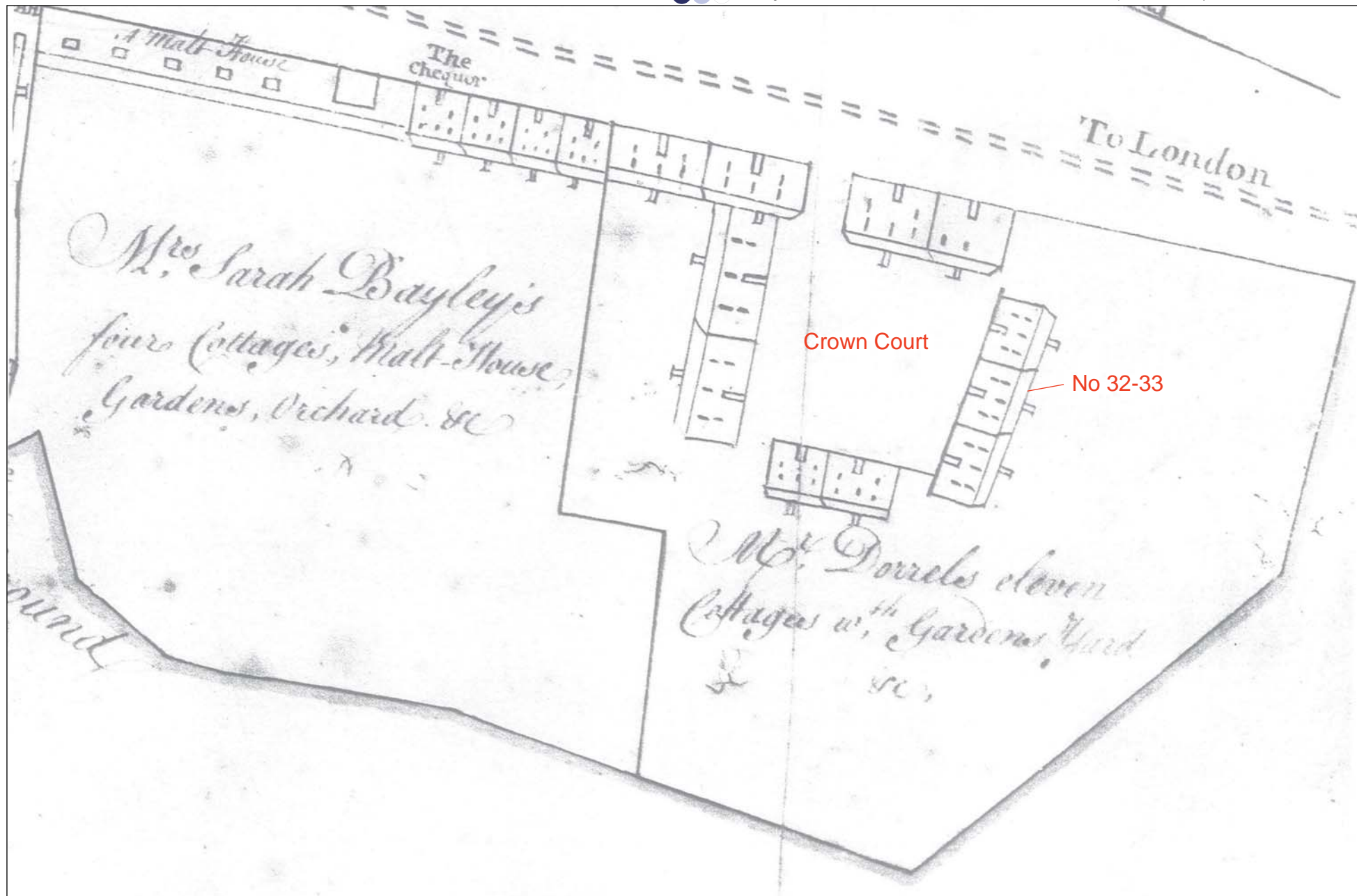


Figure 2 : Extract from 1767 map



Figure 3: 1876 OS map (25 inch map)

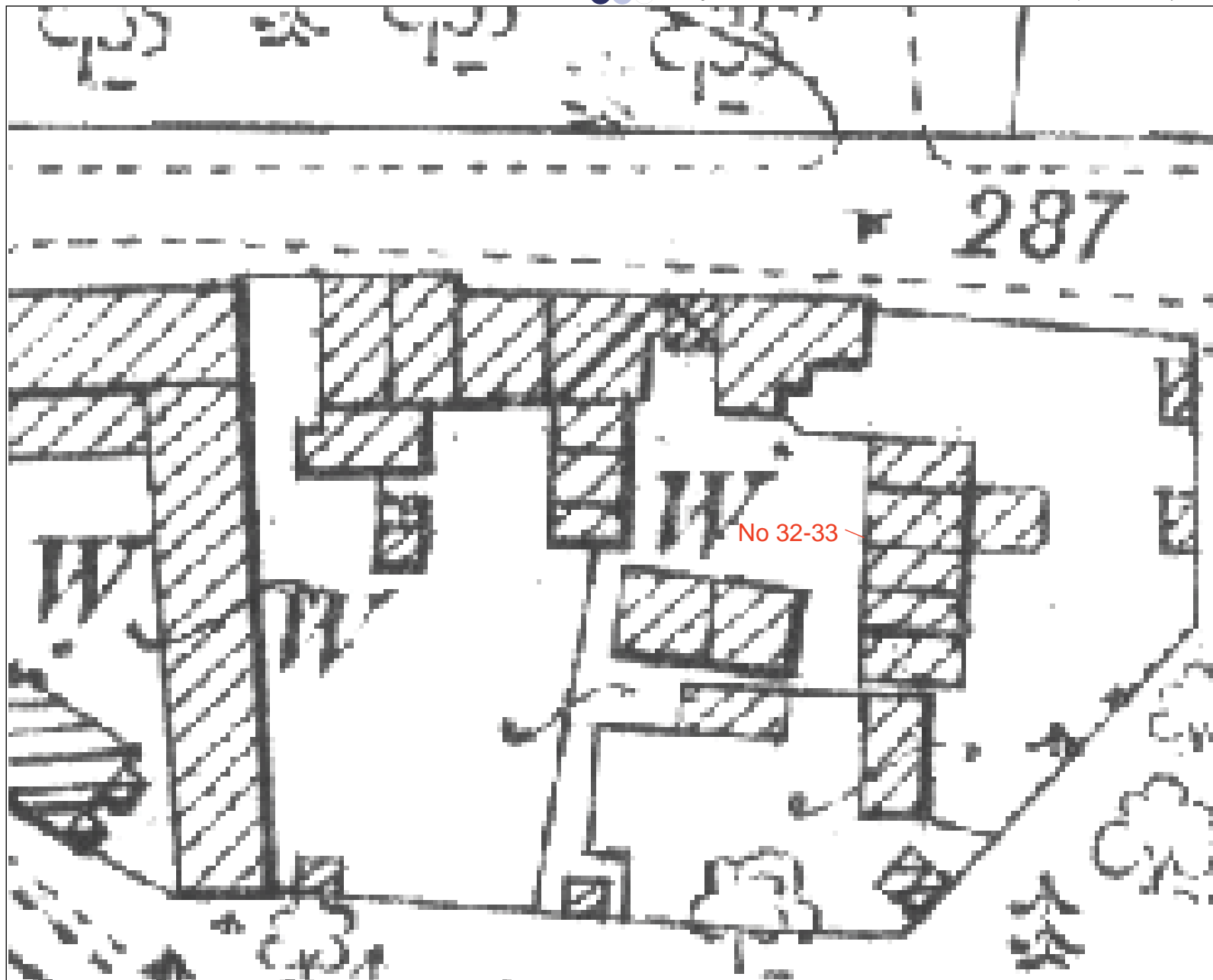


Figure 4: 1898 OS map (25 inch map)

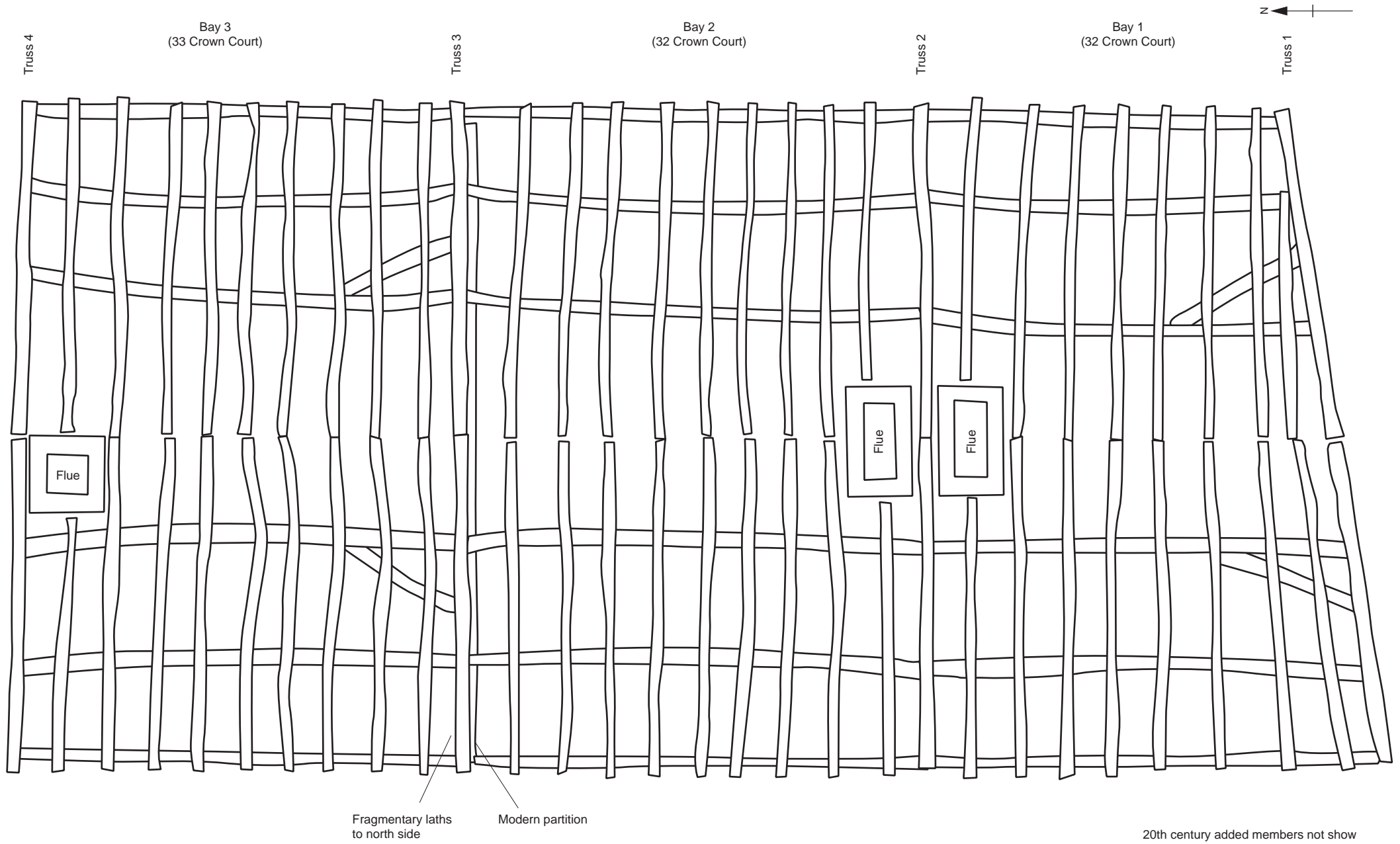


Figure 5: 32-33 West Wycombe Roof Plan

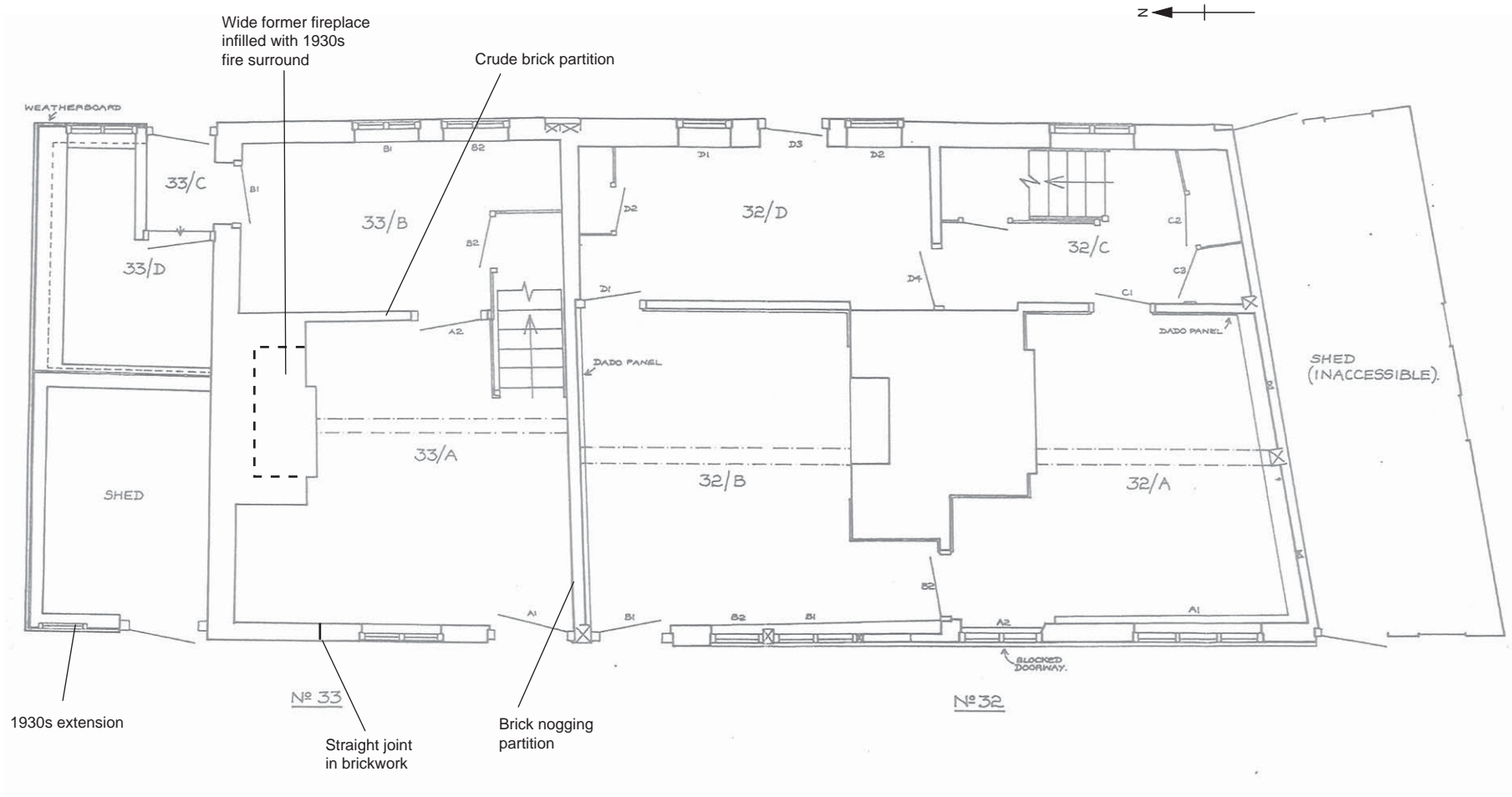


Figure 6: Ground floor plan of 32-33 showing areas investigated



Plate 1: General view of west elevation



Plate 2: Gable of north elevation above 20th-century lean-to



Plate 3: Outbuilding in garden



Plate 4: East elevation beneath scaffolding



Plate 5: West slope of southern bay (No.32)



Plate 6: Rafter feet in west slope of southern bay



Plate 7: West slope of southern bay



Plate 8: West slope of central bay



Plate 9: West slope of central bay



Plate 10: Tie beam and rafter feet in west slope



Plate 11: Truss 2 detail, west slope



Plate 12: West slope of northern bay and north gable



Plate 13: North end of west slope



Plate 14: West slope of north bay



Plate 15: West slope of north bay



Plate 16: North end of west slope



Plate 17: Wind brace in north bay, west slope



Plate 18: West slope



Plate 19: Rafter feet in west slope



Plate 20: Northern bay roof space looking south-west



Plate 21: Ceiling joists in northern bay



Plate 22: Northern bay roof space looking south-east



Plate 23: Northern bay roof space looking south



Plate 24: Northern bay of roof space looking north through hatch



Plate 25: Curved inner principals (or crucks) in northern gable



Plate 26: Central bay of roof space, east slope



Plate 27: Southern bay roof space looking south



Plate 28: Southern bay roof space, west slope



Plate 29: East slope of roof looking north



Plate 30: East slope southern bay



Plate 31: East slope wind brace in northern bay



Plate 32: East slope northern bay



Plate 33: East slope southern end of roof



Plate 34: East slope northern end of roof



Plate 35: Detail of collar, clasped purlin and curved inner principal



Plate 36: Rafter feet detail



Plate 37: Fireplace in ground floor front room (No.33A)



Plate 38: North face of wall dividing No 32 from No 33 (Room 33A)



Plate 39: East wall in Room 33A



Plate 40: Rear room in No.33 (Room 33B)

APPENDIX B. VERNACULAR BUILDING SURVEY FOR NOS 32-33 CROWN COURT

NO.s 32 AND 33, CROWN COURT,
WEST WYCOMBE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.



The National Trust

VERNACULAR BUILDINGS
SURVEY

THAMES AND CHILTERNS REGION

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION TO SURVEY ; LISTED BUILDINGS

SUMMARY SHEET

1977 EDITION O.S. 1:2,500

* SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL VALUE

* HISTORY OF OWNERSHIP, OCCUPANCY AND USE

HOUSE : SUMMARY SHEET

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

PLANS : as existing at time of
survey

BUILDING DESCRIPTION : External Appearance
Internal Features

* ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPHS AND DOCUMENTS

HISTORICAL MAPS

PLANS FOR PAST CONVERSIONS / MODERNISATION

PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

* Included only where appropriate.

This report concentrates on features considered to be of particular importance with regard to the history of the building or its future management. Some modern features such as replacement doors or windows may not have been described in full.

It is possible that other historic details obscured or inaccessible at the time of the survey may come to light, particularly during building works, and the report will then need to be updated or amended.

Consultation with the Vernacular Buildings Survey team would be most valuable prior to any repair work or alterations so that arrangements could be made for any necessary further recording.

Listed Buildings There are three grades.

- Grade I - buildings of exceptional interest.
- Grade II* - particularly important buildings of more than special interest.
- Grade II - buildings of special interest which warrant every effort being made to preserve them.

Listed Building Consent from the Local Planning Department is required for any proposal to demolish, extend or alter a listed building in any way that affects its character.

A building's character is easily marred by minor but inappropriate alteration. Details such as the materials and techniques used in repointing or rendering, the arrangement and design of doors and windows and internally the surface treatment of walls and timberwork are all critical.

Many other features contribute to the understanding and value of historic buildings and the survival of an early plan in particular should be respected

1.
963

CROWN COURT
WEST WICKHAM

~~WEST WICKHAM~~
Nos 32 & 33
(formerly listed as
Nos 31, 32 & 33)

SU 8394 9/123

9.1.54.

II

CV

2.

No 32 includes the former No 31. C17 range of cottages on east side of Crown Court. Timber framed with flint rubble and red brick nogging, old tiled roof. 2 storeys; 5, formerly 3, flush set casements. Cut bracketed doorhoods, doorway on right blocked and casement substituted.

Nos 27 to 30 (course), Nos 32 and 33 form a group.

Estate	County	Name	Grid Ref.
West Wycombe Village	Buckinghamshire	32 and 33 Crown Court	SU 831 946

Listed Grade
II

Archaeology survey
Number
No.32 - 153 224
No.33 - 153 225

Survey Date
December 1993

Surveyor
H.E.Garside
G.Izzard
A.K.Waters



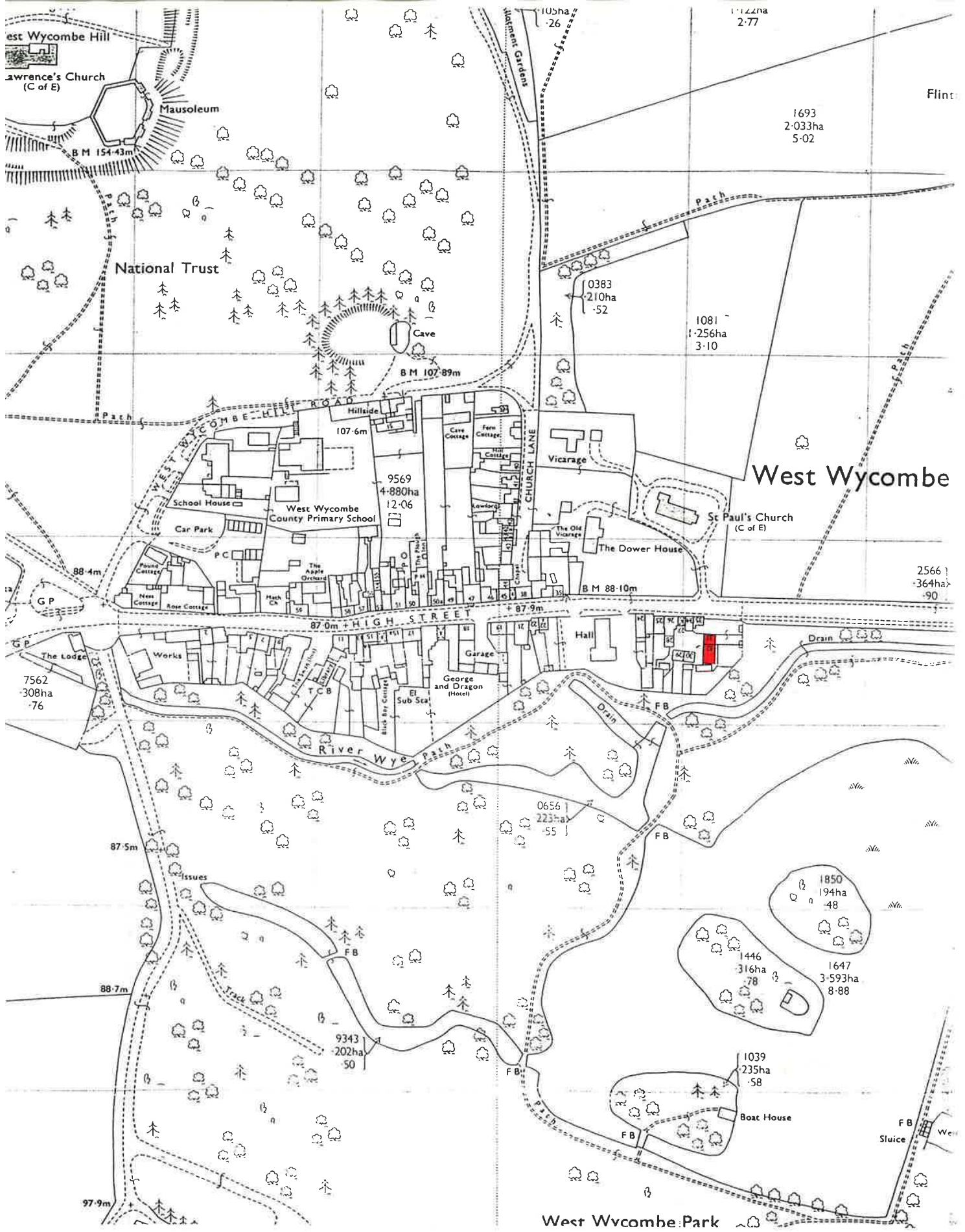
Situation Crown Court stands at the eastern end of West Wycombe village. Nos 32 and 33 are set behind a range of buildings which front the street, on the eastern side of the small courtyard.

Likely Date Early-mid 15th century, altered early 18th, early 19th and mid 20th century. Lean-tos added late 19th century.

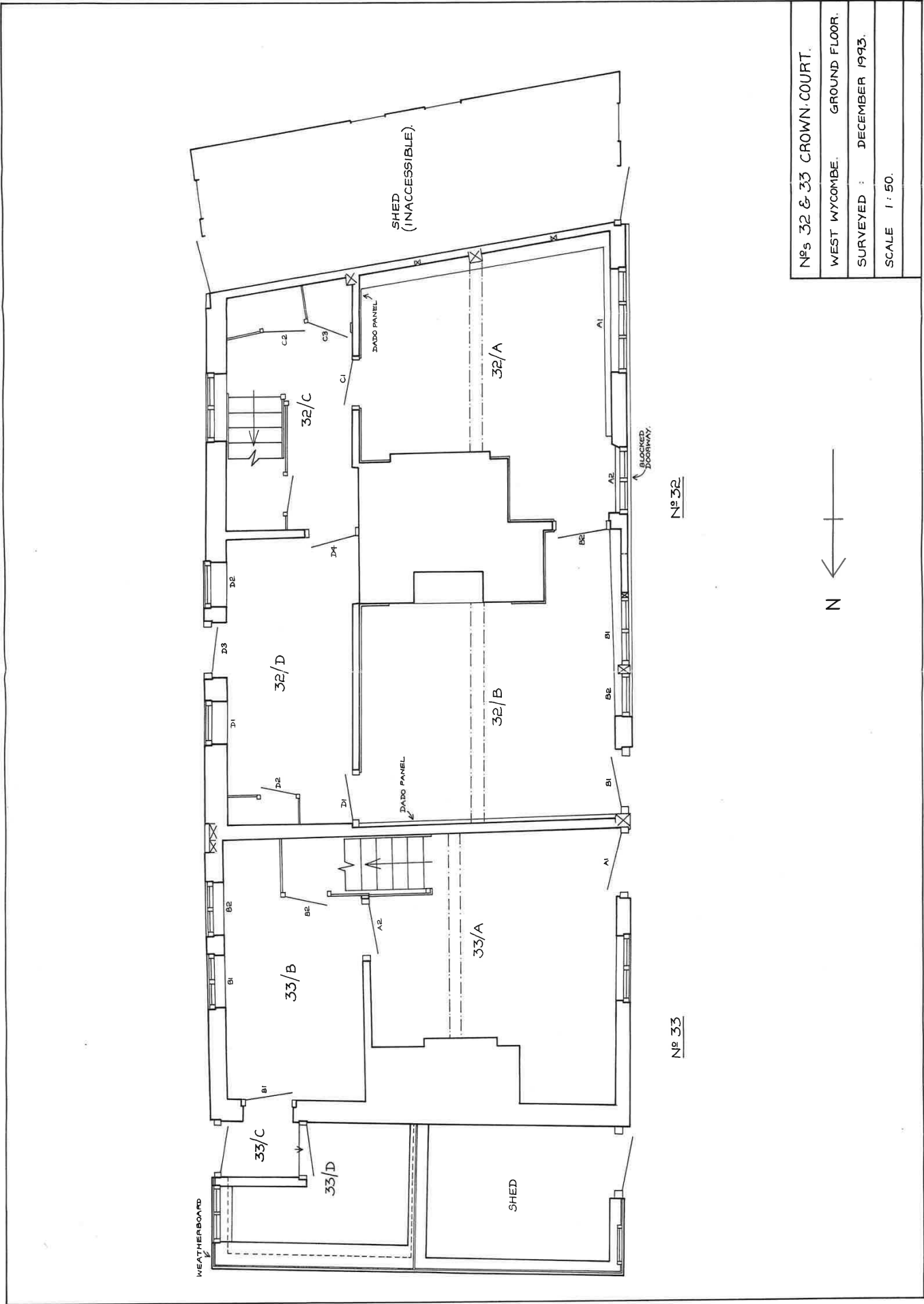
Historical Value Large, late medieval, timber-framed house, originally of cruck construction. One of the oldest buildings within the village. Divided into two cottages in the early 18th century and three cottages in the early 19th century, reflecting the changing status of the building and the increased demand for housing.

Other Sources See maps towards rear of report and separate volume of West Wycombe Appendices.

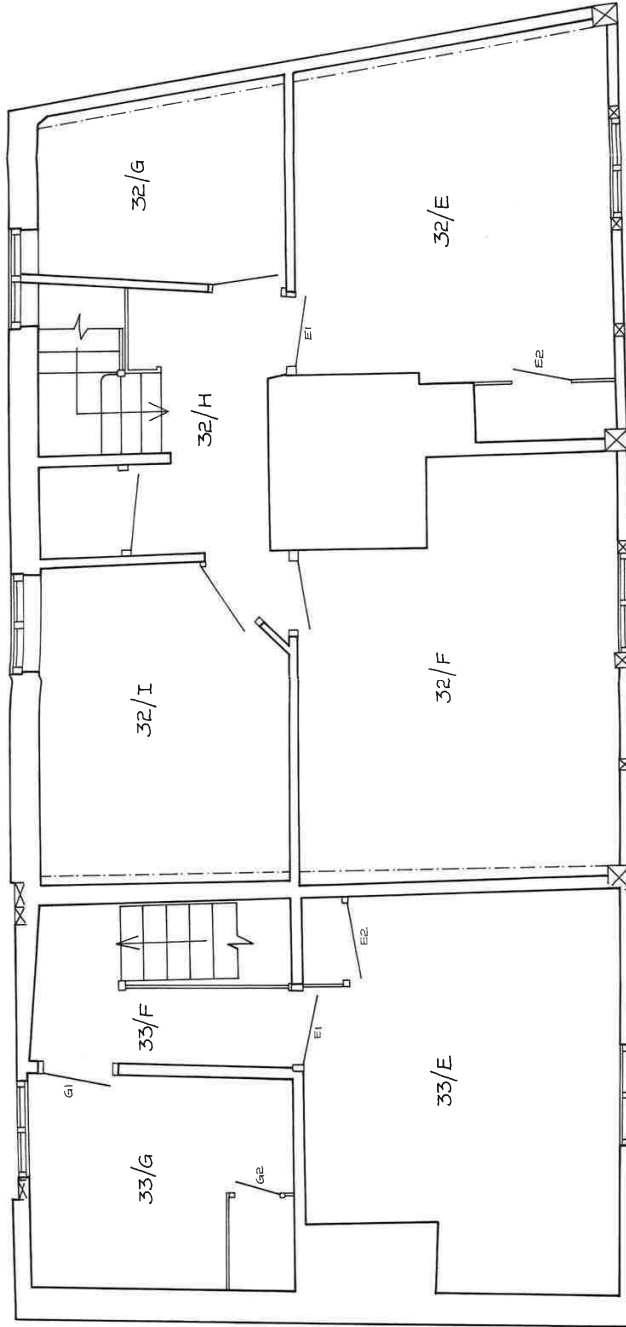
Rooms and Facilities	
NO.32.	NO.33.
<u>Ground Floor.</u>	<u>Ground Floor.</u>
Room A - living room B - dining room C - hall and stairs D - kitchen	Room A - living room and stairs. B - kitchen C - lobby D - bathroom
<u>First Floor.</u>	<u>First Floor.</u>
Rooms E,F and I - bedrooms G - bathroom H - landing	Rooms E and G - bedrooms F - landing
External Shed - inaccessible	External Shed - fuelstore



1977 Edition O.S. 1:2,500.



Nos 32 & 33 CROWN COURT.	
WEST WYCOMBE.	GROUND FLOOR.
SURVEYED :	DECEMBER 1993.
SCALE	1 : 50.



N^o 32

N^o 33



N ^{os} 32 & 33 CROWN COURT.	
WEST WYCOMBE.	FIRST FLOOR.
SURVEYED :	DECEMBER 1993.
SCALE :	1 : 50.

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT NO.S 32 AND 33.

Period I. Early-Mid 15th Century.

Originally constructed as a large, late medieval, timber-framed house, probably during the early-mid 15th century. The original building was probably of three bays, divided by cruck trusses, elements of which remain within the present roof structure. The hall probably occupied the two bays towards the south end, which are likely to have been open from the ground floor to the roof. The northern bay was probably two-storey, containing service rooms on the ground floor and a chamber above, accessed directly from the room below. The northern bay was possibly narrower than it is today, heated by a projecting brick stack in the gable end.

Period II. Early 18th Century.

The next phase of building which is represented within the existing structure occurred during the early 18th century, it is not known what alterations had been carried out during the intervening centuries.

During the early 18th century the southern bays were floored-in, the chimney stack was inserted and the roof structure altered to its present form. These alterations were probably associated with the conversion of the building to two cottages.

The two cottages which resulted from these alterations were unequal in size. The northern bay formed a small, two storey cottage. The building was probably extended at this time with the northern stack being incorporated into the interior of the cottage.

The second cottage was larger, with two main rooms on each floor, probably only one of which was heated, on the ground floor there was also an unheated service room to the rear.

Period III. Early 19th Century.

During the early 19th century the building was altered again to provide three small cottages. A second stack was inserted backing onto the earlier chimney separating the two bays towards the south.

Each cottage comprised a heated main ground floor room with a small service room to the rear. The stairs were also located within the rear room. There were probably two unheated rooms on the first floor.

Period IV. Late 19th Century.

The weatherboarded lean-tos were probably added during the late 19th or early 20th century to provide fuel stores and wash-houses for each of the cottages, and possibly also one of the dwellings within the range facing the street.

Period IV. Mid 20th Century.

During the mid 20th century the central and southern cottages were altered to provide a single dwelling. This comprised two heated living rooms, a kitchen, hall and stairs on the ground floor, with three unheated bedrooms, bathroom and landing above.

The smaller cottage was enlarged at this time when part of the lean-to was taken within the house to provide a bathroom.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION NO.S 32 AND 33 CROWN COURT.

EXTERNAL APPEARANCE NO.S 32 AND 33.

Plan/Form.

Three bay, two storey main block with single storey lean-to against each gable end.

Walling.

- Front Elevation** - bays divided by main posts, rail jointed into posts, walling studs run between rail and wall plate. Brick infilling and brick to ground floor; flint plinth with brick plinth course and quoins. No timber-framing towards north; this is constructed of flint with brick quoins.
- Gable Elevations** - brick.
- Rear Elevation** - southern bay built of brick in flemish bond, no timbers are exposed. Central bay constructed of flint with brick quoins, stud exposed to south of window D1. Northern bay is built in a mixture of flint and brick, flint panel towards north, brick quoins.
- Lean-tos** - weather-boarding on brick plinth.

Roofs.

- Main Block** - gabled. Plain tile covering with circular section ceramic ridge tiles.
- Lean-tos** - covering as main block.

Chimneys.

- Main block** - two internal ridge stacks, brick with plain bands towards top.
- internal gable wall ridge stack to north. Brick with plain band towards top.
- Southern Lean-to** - lateral wall stack, brick with plain band towards top.

Openings.

- Front Elevation** - first floor openings are set below wooden wall plate and between wall studs. Ground floor openings within each end bay are set below header arches; jambs as walling. Those to central bay have surrounds as walling. Small wooden canopy over each door carried on moulded wooden brackets.
- Rear Elevation** - first floor openings are set below wooden wall plate and between wall studs. Ground floor openings within

southern bay are set below segmental brick arches; jambs as walling, wooden cills. Those within central bay are set below flat brick arches; brick jambs, wooden cills. Those within north bay are set below storey rail; brick jambs, wooden cills.

Lean-tos

- openings set within weatherboarding.

INTERNAL FEATURES NO.32.

Floors.

- All, except rooms C and D - inaccessible wooden floor.
Rooms C and D - concrete.

Ceilings.

- Rooms A and B - transverse wooden beam, plain chamfered with run out stops. Joists exposed, some are plain chamfered with run out stops.
C - squared joists exposed.
D - plaster board and battens.
All to first floor - plain plastered.

Partitions.

- Rooms A-C,B-D,E-G and F-I - stud wall, probably lath and plaster.
A - studs exposed in gable wall, later post inserted towards centre, jointed into soffit of beam.
E - wall plate projects from front wall, brace is jointed into soffit of wall plate and to corner post towards south. The tie-beam is jointed into corner post and there is a brace running between soffit of tie-beam and corner post. Queen post is jointed into top face of tie-beam; studs are jointed into soffit of tie-beam.
F - wall plate projects from front wall and is jointed into main post towards north. Post has a gunstock head. A rail is exposed just above floor level in front wall. Studs run between wall plate and rail. The main post carries tie-beam of truss to north.
G - tie-beam in gable wall, queen post jointed into top face. Brace runs from a concealed corner post to soffit of tie-beam. Wall plate is exposed in east wall.
H - tie-beam is carried across room to join concealed main post in east wall.

- I - tie-beam exposed in gable wall, brace is jointed to soffit and to concealed main post to east. Wall plate projects from east wall.

Stairs.

- Room C - modern straight run onto quarter landing, straight steps lead onto first floor landing. Modern hand rail.

Fireplaces.

- Room A - modern 1930s surround.
 B - large rectangular opening. Plank mantel shelf supported on moulded plank brackets.

Doors.

- Room B1 - period plank door, modern plank skin to internal face.
 B2, C3, D3, D4 and E2 - period plank and batten door.
 C1 and D1 - as B2 with period metal thumb latch.
 C2, D2 and F - standard hollow-core door.
 E1 - period ledged and braced door, period spoon-ended strap-hinges.
 G and H - modern ledged and braced door.
 I - modern plank and batten door.

Windows.

- Room A1 - period triple-light, beaded mullions. Two fixed-lights, one side-hung casement. Six glass panes to each light, moulded glazing bars.
 A2 - modern double-light, squared mullion. One fixed-light, one side-hung casement. Six glass panes, moulded glazing bars.
 B1 - period double-light, plain chamfered mullion. One fixed-light, one side-hung casement. Six glass panes to each light, moulded glazing bars.
 B2 - period fixed-light. Six glass panes, moulded glazing bars.
 C - period double-light, beaded mullion. One fixed-light, one side-hung casement. Four glass panes, slender moulded glazing bars.
 D1 - modern side-hung casement. Four glass panes, moulded glazing bars.
 D2 - modern fixed-light. Four glass panes, moulded glazing bars.
 E - period double-light, plain chamfered mullion. Two side-hung casements. Six glass panes to each light, moulded glazing bars.
 F - modern double-light, squared mullion. Four glass panes to each light, moulded glazing bars.

- G/H - shared light. Modern side-hung casement to each room. Four glass panes to each light, moulded glazing bars.
- I - modern double-light, squared mullion. Two side-hung casements. Four glass panes to each light, moulded glazing bars.

INTERNAL FEATURES NO.33.

Floors.

- Room A - inaccessible wooden floor.
- B,C and D - concrete.
- E,F and G - period wooden floorboards.

Ceilings.

- All except room A - plain plastered.
- Room A - axial wooden beam, plain chamfered with run out stops. Exposed joists, some plain chamfered with run out stops.

Partitions.

- Rooms A-B and E-F/G - brick.

Stairs.

- Room A - modern straight run.

Fireplaces.

- Room A - 1930s tiled surround.

Doors.

- Room A1 - period plank door, modern skin internally. Decorative, period metal thumb-latch.
- A2 - standard hollow-core, single glass pane.
- B1,B2,D,E2 G1 and G2 - standard hollow-core door.
- C - modern plank door, modern board skin.
- E1 - modern plank and batten door.

Windows.

- Room A - modern double-light in period beaded surround with beaded mullion. One fixed-light, one side-hung casement. Six glass panes to each light, moulded glazing bars.
- B1,B2 and G - modern double-lights. Two side-hung casements, squared mullion. Four glass panes to each light with moulded glazing bars.
- D - modern double-light, beaded mullion. One fixed-light and one side-hung casement. Four glass panes, moulded glazing bars.
- E - period double-light, beaded mullion. Two side-hung casements. Six glass

panes to each light, slender moulded
glazing bars.

INTERNAL ROOF STRUCTURE NO.32 AND 33.

Roof structure is divided into three bays by two internal trusses. Retains elements of an early 15th century roof structure.

The principal rafters of each truss are lapped and pegged at the apex. A collar is jointed and pegged into the principals. The tie-beams are not visible from within the roof space.

Each truss retains a pair of cruck blades from the earlier roof, probably early 15th century. Only the upper part of the crucks remain, they probably stand on the tie-beam. They butt against the principals towards the base, curve upwards and are double pegged to the soffit of the collar.

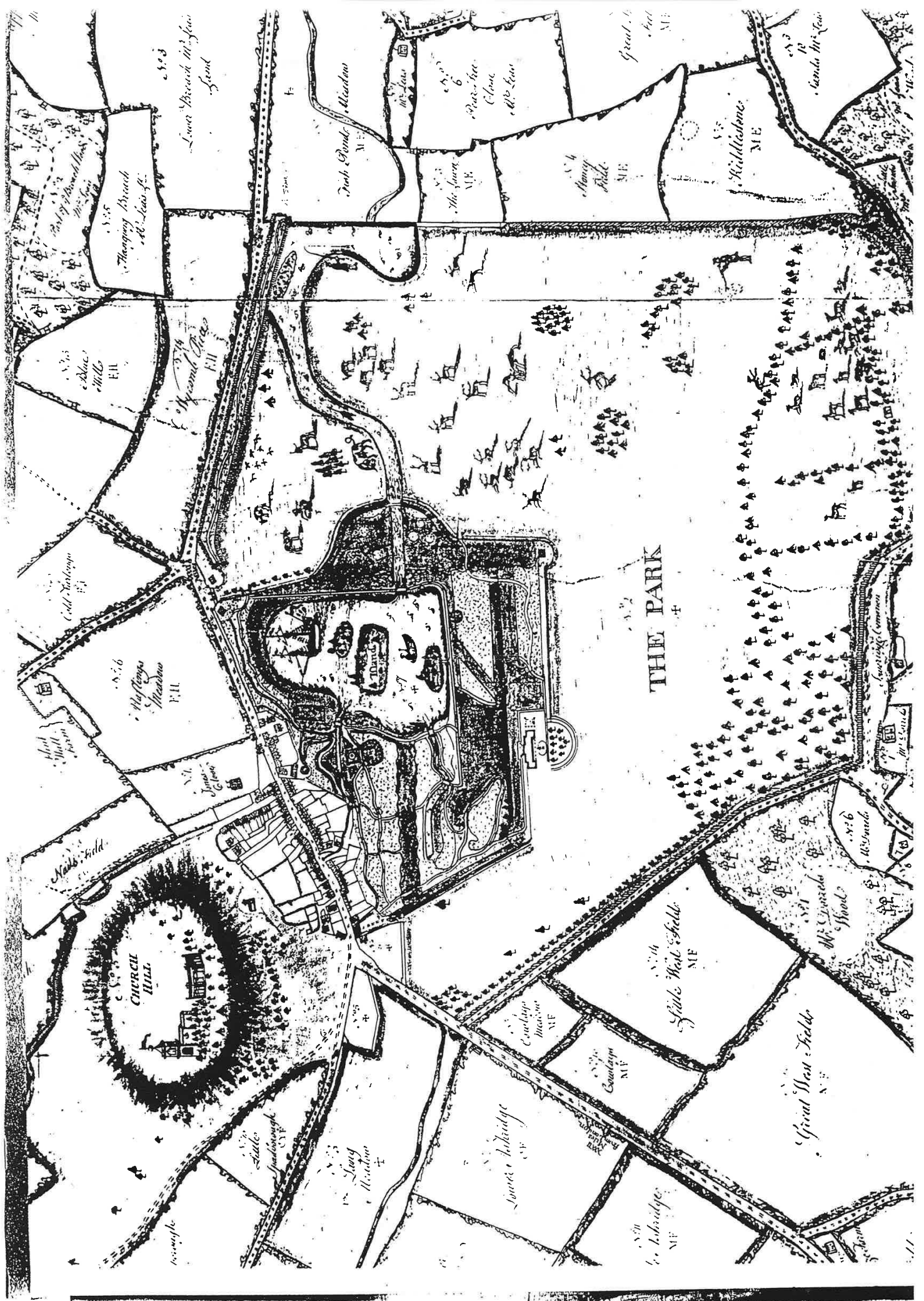
The truss towards the north end of the roof has been infilled with lath and plaster, most of which has since been removed.

There are two tiers of purlins each side of the roof. The upper tier are clasped between the principals and the collar. The lower tier are sandwiched between the principals and the curved braces. The purlin timbers are jointed at each truss with a slip tenon joint.

The common rafters are lapped and pegged at the apex.

The timbers in each gable end comprise a slender collar and a pair of curved braces. The upper tier of purlins is carried on the collar whilst the lower tier is notched into the back of the brace.

Towards the north end of the roof there are two lengths of inserted timber which run across the roof and are lapped against each other towards the centre.



Thompson Branch
R. Lee, Jr.
1855

Lower Branch of Fall
Land
1853

Trab Branch
Meadow

Mr. Lee
Mr. Lee
Mr. Lee
1856

Mr. Lee
ME

Henry
Field
ME

Ridgstone
ME

Gravel
ME

Blue
Mills
E.H.

My wood
Place
E.H.

Coll. Vantage
E.H.

Wings
Meadow
E.H.

James
Grove
E.H.

North
Field
E.H.

CHURCH
HILL
E.H.

Little
Meadow
E.H.

Long
Meadow
E.H.

Lower
Arbridge
E.H.

Arbridge
ME

Coatway
Meadow
ME

Coatway
ME

Little
Wab. Field
ME

Great
Wab. Field
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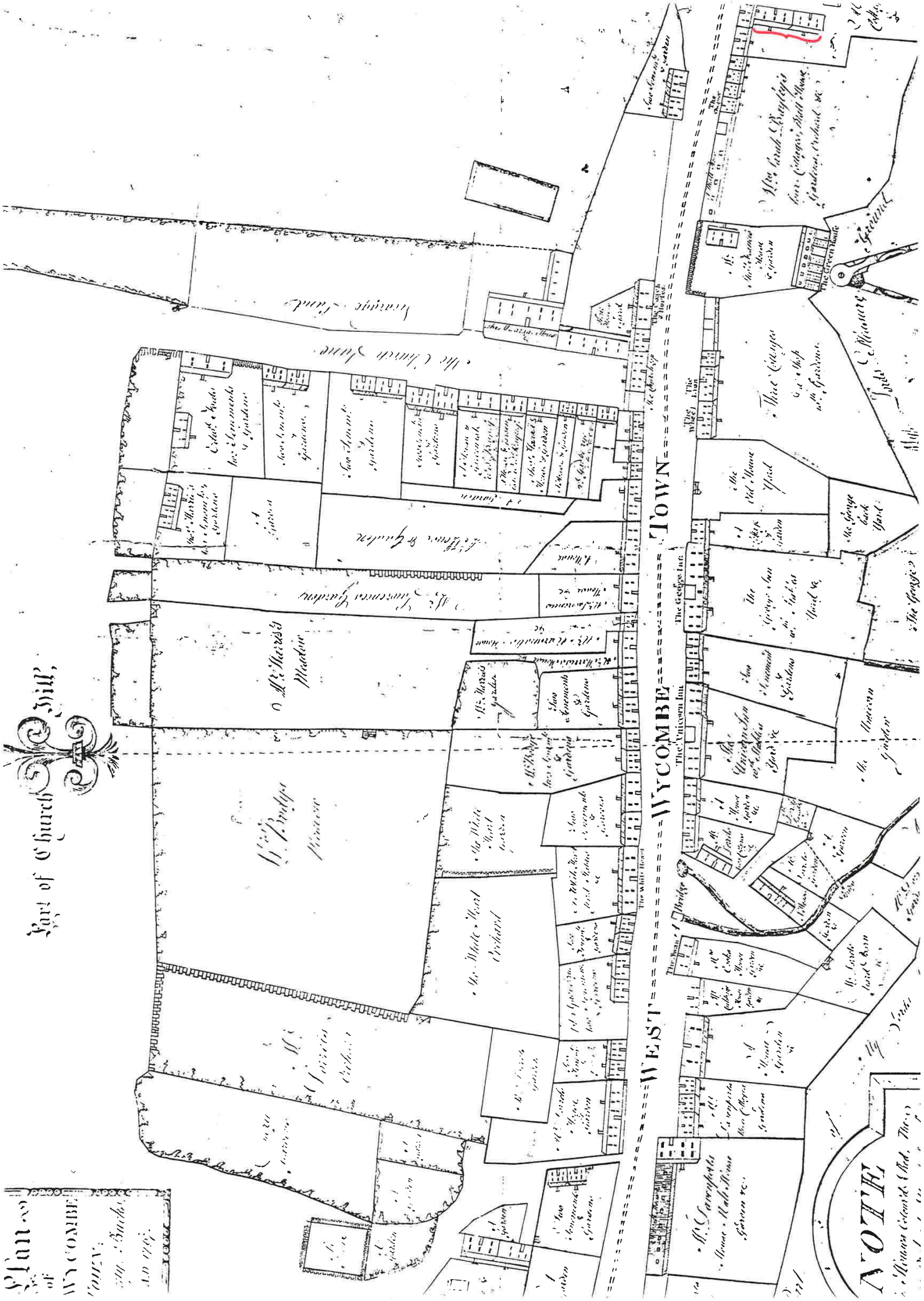
Mr. Lee
ME

Coatway
Common
ME

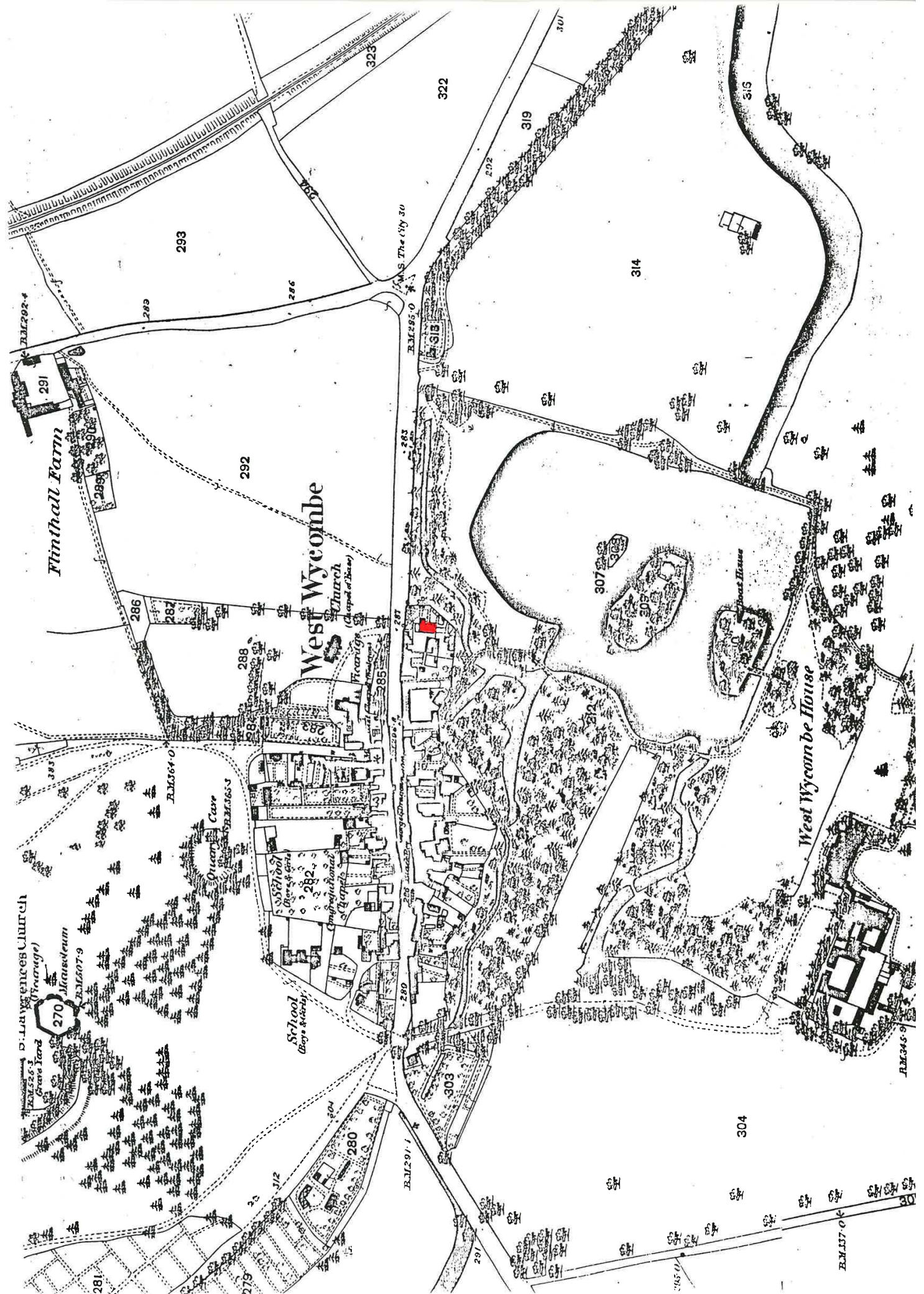
THE PARK
E.H.

Plan of
 WYCOMBE
 1799. By
 A.D. 1799.

Part of Church Hill,



NOTE
 The River Wycombe
 The Church Hill
 The Green Lane
 The White Street



Flinthall Farm

West Wycombe Church
(Church of St. Peter)

West Wycombe House

D. Lawrence's Church
(Graveyard)

School
(Boys & Girls)

270

Manse

School

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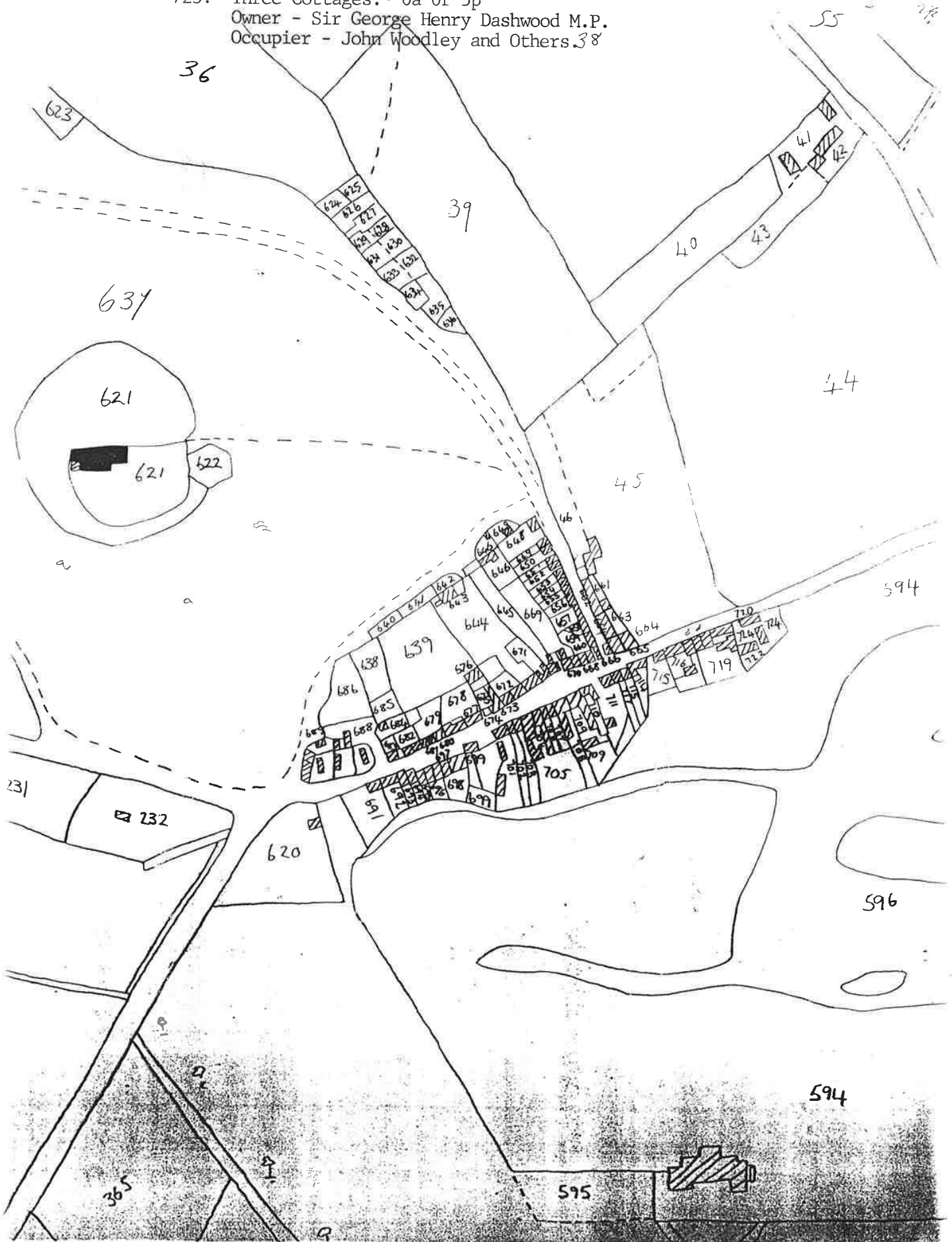
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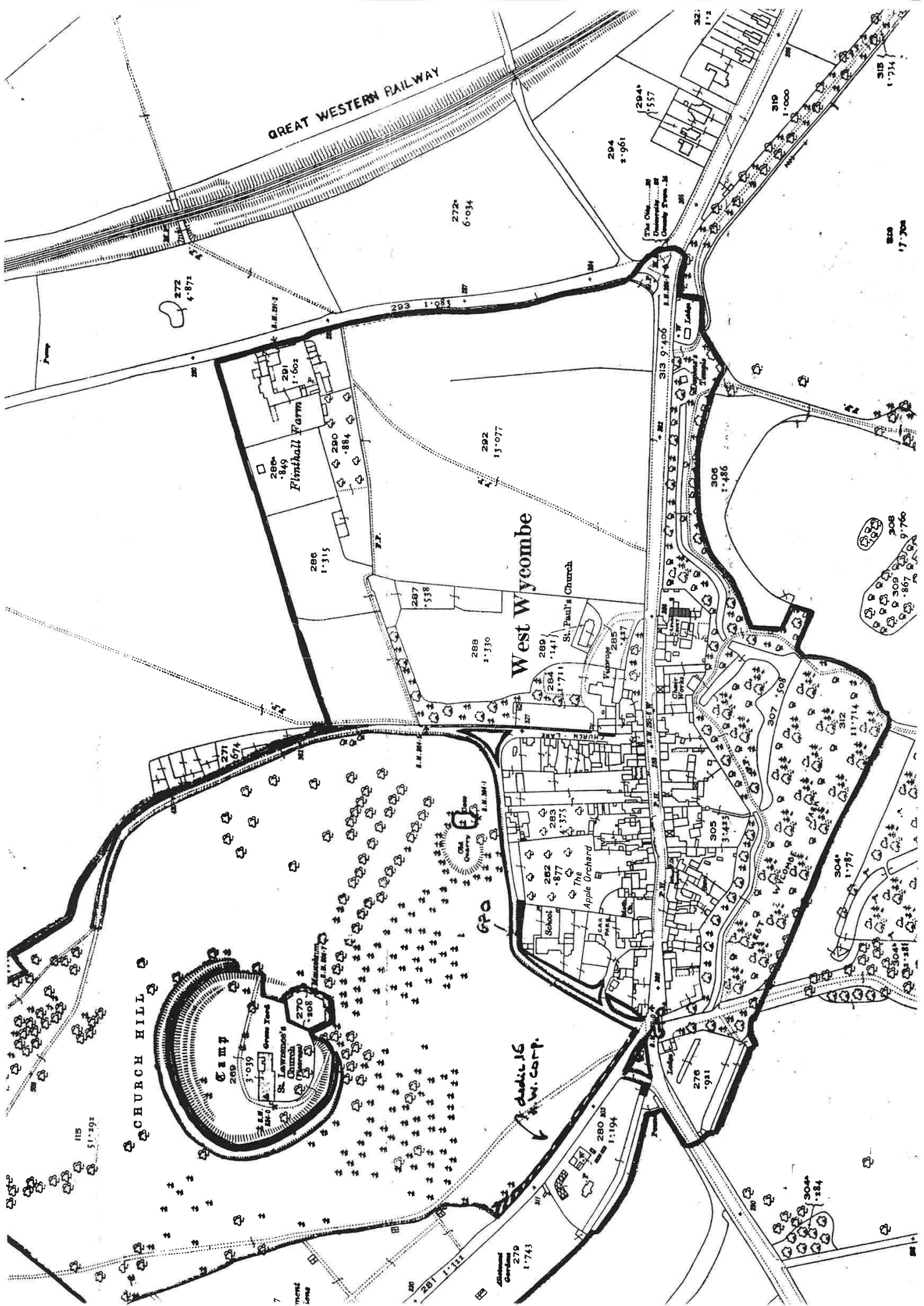
Manse

Manse

West Wycombe Tithe Map, 1849. Bucks. R.O. Ref:420

- 724 - Cottage and Garden - 0a 0r 15p
Owner - Sir George Henry Dashwood M.P.
Occupier - John West.
- 723? - Three Cottages.- 0a 0r 5p
Owner - Sir George Henry Dashwood M.P.
Occupier - John Woodley and Others 38





GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

West Wycombe

CHURCH HILL

Fimthall Farm

St. Paul's Church

dudley 16
W. Corp.

272
4-872

272
6-034

294
2-961

294
1-557

319
1-000

315
1-734

329
17-308

293
1-083

286
1-315

286
1-849

291
1-602

280
1-884

287
1-538

288
2-330

289
1-141

283
1-375

282
1-977

283
1-711

283
1-437

306
1-486

307
1-508

312
11-714

304
1-787

304
1-284

304
1-281

304
1-284

115
51-292

279
1-743

276
1-91

280
1-104

304
1-281

304
1-284



VIEW FROM NORTH-WEST. R.251 N.27



CENTRAL PART OF FRONT ELEVATION. R.251 N.28.



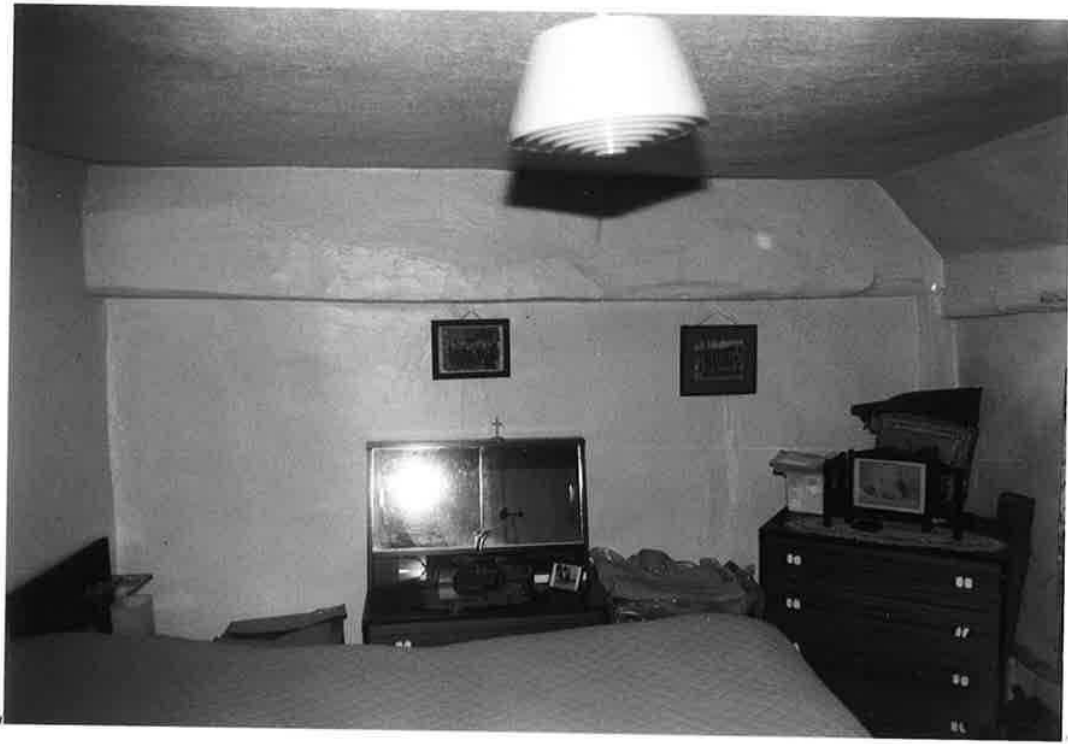
PART OF FRONT ELEVATION R.251 N.18



VIEW FROM SOUTH-EAST. R.251 N.25



PART OF REAR ELEVATION R.251 N.20



BEDROOM E. LOOKING SOUTH. R.251 N.30

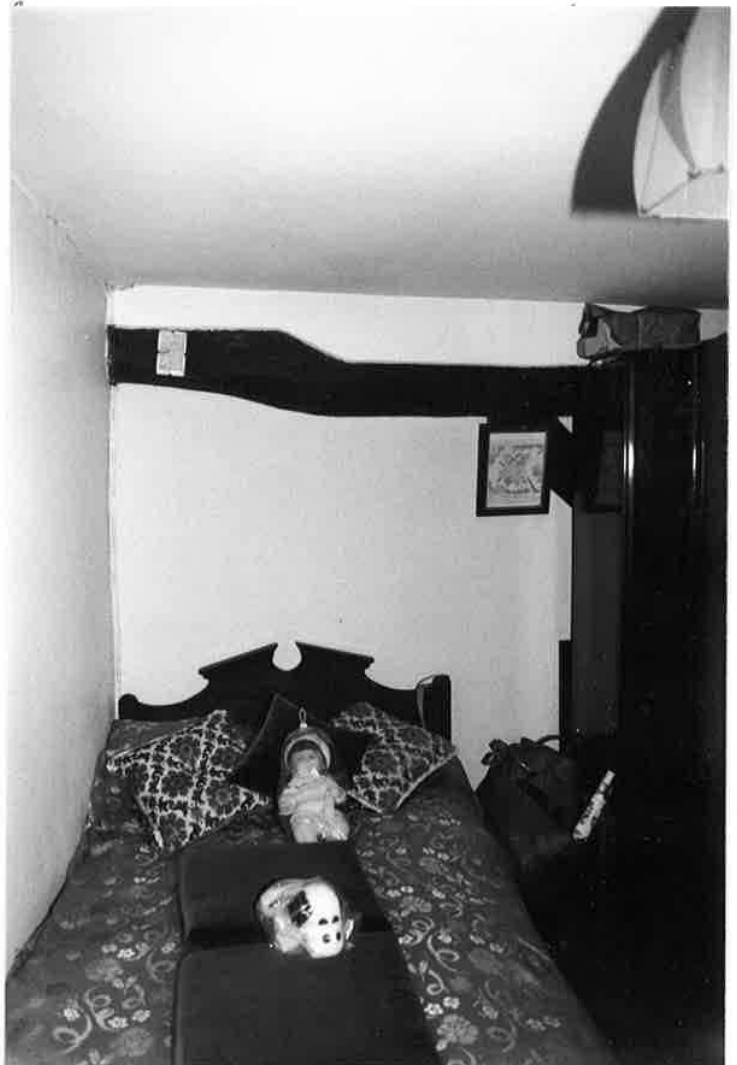


LANDING H, NO 32, LOOKING NORTH. R.251 N.29.



BEDROOM F, LOOKING NORTH-WEST. R.251 N.31

BEDROOM I,
LOOKING NORTH.
R.251 N.32





ATTIC ROOM H, LOOKING SOUTH. R. 251. N. 7.



INTERNAL ROOF STRUCTURE
LOOKING SOUTH SHOWING
REMNANT OF EARLIER
CRUCK TRUSS.
R. 251 N. 23.

INTERNAL ROOF
STRUCTURE LOOKING
SOUTH-WEST.
R.251 N.22





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