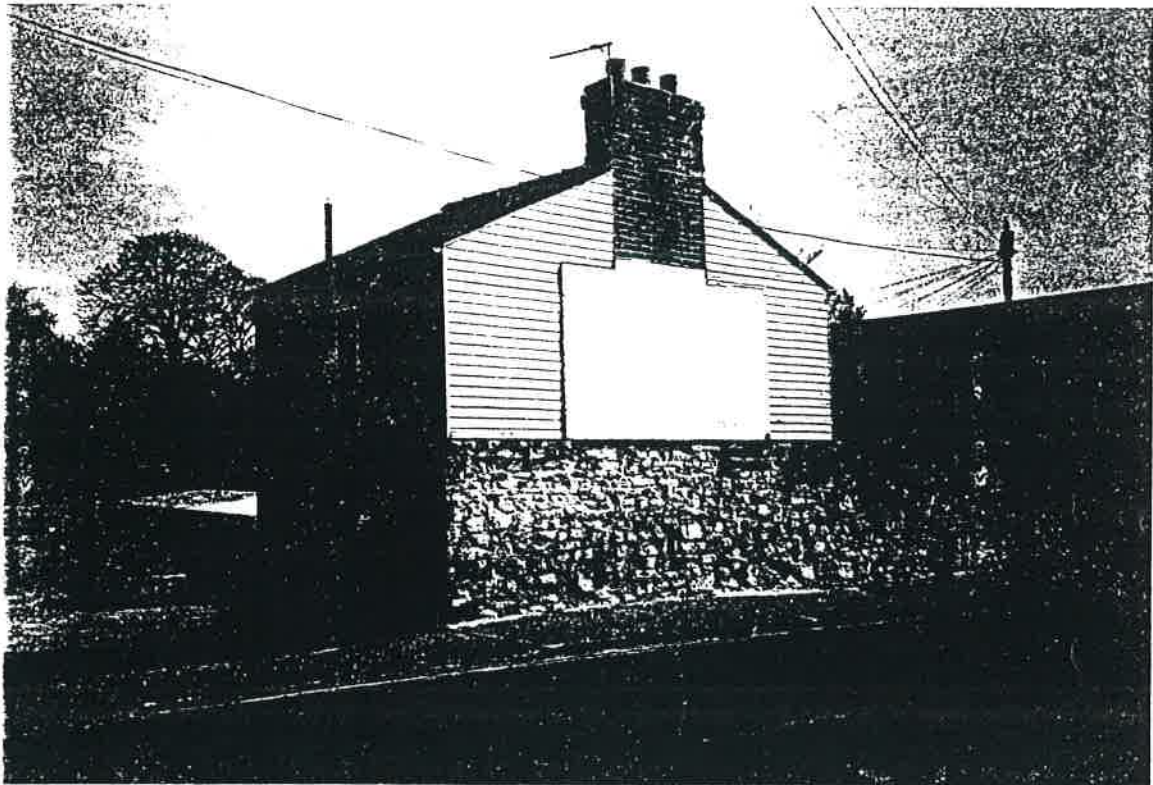



KNOWLES AND SON  
HERTFORD COLLEGE

LOCK HOUSE, SALTER'S BOATYARD, OXFORD  
HISTORIC BUILDING INVESTIGATION

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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT  
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# Lock House, Salters Boatyard, Oxford. Historic Building Investigation.

*Summary: Structural investigation of Lock House has shown that it is a timber-framed building with a brick stack constructed on a pre-existing stone wall. While much of the structure is original, the doors, windows, roof and wall cladding are modern. The date of the original structure is likely to be early to mid-19th century, and it may be the building depicted in the 1844 sale particulars and might possibly, as its name suggests, be related to the lock of c.1820.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by Hertford College / Knowles and Son to undertake a programme of building investigation at Lock House, Salters Boatyard, Oxford in advance of the proposed redevelopment of the site. An internal and external inspection of the building was undertaken, and an outline history of the site was prepared.<sup>1</sup> As further stage of this work a series of investigative openings were made into the internal walls of the building. The aim of the work was to determine the date of the building, discover how the plan of the building has evolved and establish the character of the original building and what remains of it.
- 1.2 A photographic record of the investigation openings and a brief record of the rooms was made, primarily with black and white negative with some selected colour slide images.
- 1.3 Sketch plans were made showing the location of the openings on both the ground and first floors of the building (Figures 1 & 2). A table has been created showing what building materials were seen via these wall openings (Table 1).

## 2 EVIDENCE FROM THE INVESTIGATION

### 2.1 *General background and description*

- 2.1.1 It was believed that the building might date from the early 19th century, since a building in this location is shown on a sale plan of 1844. The name of the property suggests connections with the nearby lock which was created c.1820, and the building may be a surviving example of an early lock keeper's cottage, although further research would be required to confirm this. If the

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1 See OAU report *Salter's Boatyard, Folly Bridge Abingdon Road, Oxford. Archaeological Desktop Study* (April 1997).

connection were proved the building would be of some historical interest as many such dwellings were replaced by Thames Conservancy in the early 20th century to a set pattern during lock upgrading programmes. In this instance the lock itself did not outlive the 19th century, and the house has for long been part of the boatyard.

2.1.2 External examination of the building shows that it was constructed using a pre-existing boundary wall as the lower part of the west elevation. The wall is of coursed limestone rubble and stands approximately 6 feet in height above the modern pavement level. The rest of the building was constructed around this and is predominantly of light timber construction with a brick chimney stack rising internally. The weather boarding attached to the timber frame is a modern replacement, however what was seen of the timber framing via the investigative openings appeared to be original with modern additions. No historical evidence is left of the roof structure as this has also been replaced in recent years. A modern extension has been built to the east of the building housing bathroom and lavatory and was not included in the investigation. All the windows of the building are modern replacements thought to have been fitted in the original window locations.

2.1.3 Internally a series of 32 investigative openings were made in the wall surfaces. The location of these openings is shown on figures 1 & 2 and the building materials uncovered is reported in table 1. The results will be described briefly and conclusions drawn from them.

## 2.2 *Ground Floor Room 1 - GFR1*

2.2.1 The ground floor has two rooms. GFR1 (Openings 24 - 32) has recently been in use as a living room. The west wall is the coursed limestone rubble wall, as seen from the exterior. Its eastern surface viewed via openings 20 and 28 is weathered demonstrating the previous function as an exterior boundary wall. The wall has been refaced twice with grey plaster board and subsequently modern sterling board. The current fireplace is a modern replacement presumably built in the original location of the hearth. The red brick chimney stack has been disguised by modern boxing and coving. Dimensions of the bricks were investigated in every room in the building (Openings 8, 11, 21 and 27) and are of a consistent type throughout measuring 22.5 x 7 x 11 cm. The lime mortar binding the bricks was also similar throughout being light beige in colour with inclusions of grit.

2.2.2 The southern wall of GFR1 (Openings 29 & 30) is of lath and plaster with an inserted bay window / french door. All the laths exposed in the building are riven and fixed to studs by means of handmade nails. The lime plaster mix is also of one type throughout the building; it is light grey in colour with a hair binder and is 2cm in thickness. Information about the timber frame of the building was seen in several of the openings; the normal size of stud is 7 x 10 cm. However in opening 29 a corner post was exposed measuring 12 x

9cm. In opening 30 evidence for bracing was found.

- 2.2.3 The eastern wall of GFR1 was of lath and plaster to the southern end (opening 31) with modern pink plaster board to the north (opening 32); this disturbance probably being due to the modern breeze block built extension to the building.
- 2.2.4 The northern wall of GFR1, also the southern wall of GFR2, was found to be of lath and plaster construction (openings 19, 25 & 26) with an area extending 90 cm to the west of the connecting doorway of pink modern plaster board (opening 18). Two studs of this internal dividing wall were observed, opening 25 had a stud of 6 x 10 cm however the stud in opening 19 was 6 x 5 cm.
- 2.2.5 A modern entrance hall has been constructed using grey plaster board and is built into GFR1 (opening 24).
- 2.2.6 The wooden floor boards making up the softwood floor in GFR1 are suspended 57 cm above a ground surface covered in rubble and debris. The boards are laid E - W and are 17 cm in width, 2 cm thick and of various lengths. The bay window area is framed separately. The boards sit on joists running N - S with centres of 42 cm, measuring 7.5 x 10 cm and of various lengths.

### 2.3 *Ground Floor Room 2 - GFR2*

- 2.3.1 Room GFR2 has been recently used as a kitchen and this was no doubt its original function. All walls of this room have an additional covering of modern rendered pink cement. The west wall is the rubble wall described above, it has been refaced using grey plaster board (opening 20). The brick built chimney stack presumably served as the flue for a range, no evidence of this could be found as the area had been covered in hard cement. The stack projects 41 cm from the rubble wall surface.
- 2.3.2 The northern wall of GFR2 is of modern grey plaster board (opening 23). The southern wall has been described above 2.4.4. The eastern wall is of modern plaster board partitioning forming an under the stairs storage space.

### 2.4 *Staircase*

- 2.4.1 The staircase is concealed behind a door in GFR2 with original beaded doorframe. It is of softwood construction with 11 steps in the flight, with a rise of 22 cm and a width of 24 cm. The west wall of the stair case is covered with wooden panels up to first floor level, above this level opening 15 shows it to be of modern plasterboard.. Openings 16 & 17 show the north and east walls to be of lath and plaster construction.

### 2.5 *First Floor Room 1 - FFR1*

- 2.5.1 The first floor of Lock House is currently split into two rooms; however it appears from the investigative openings made that there was originally only one room. The west wall of the upper floor exposed by the investigative openings is not the rubble wall seen in the ground floor openings but lath and plaster construction on the timber framing of the upper section of the west elevation. The brick stack takes up the majority of the wall surface and projects 44 cm into the room; openings 8 & 9 uncovered the central fireplace. No original fittings were revealed beneath the plaster board blocking. The fireplace was 45 cm in width with a vertical height of 98 cm above the floor boards; it has a depth of 20 cm. The flue slopes diagonally up the stack.
- 2.5.2 The southern wall of FFR1 is of lath and plaster construction on the buildings timber frame (openings 5 & 6). The eastern wall is also of lath and plaster work on the timber frame although the window is a replacement and has a surrounding of modern pink plaster board. The northern wall of FFR1, also the southern wall of FFR2, is a modern construction of pink plaster board.
- 2.5.3 The floor of FFR1 is of softwood. The boards run E - W and measure 22.5 cm in width and 2.5 cm in thickness with various lengths. The joists have dimensions 5 x 13 cm and are spaced at 38 cm centres. The floor in front of the fireplace has a stone support measuring 89 x 46 cm. The floor of FFR2 is of the same construction as FFR1.

## 2.6 *First Floor Room 2 - FFR2*

- 2.6.1 The west and north walls of FFR2 are of lath and plaster construction fixed to the timber frame of the building, and have been covered with various layers of modern wooden board (openings 12, 13 & 14). The brick chimney stack takes up the southern half of the wall and stands 32 cm proud of the wall surface (opening 11). No evidence for a blocked fireplace was found, adding to the evidence that the upper floor was originally only one room.
- 2.6.2 The southern and eastern walls of FFR2 are of modern pink plaster board (openings 10 & 15). The door from the stairs in the eastern wall is modern as are the skirting boards of the room unlike those of room FFR1.

## 3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The *original building* consisted of the pre-existing rubble boundary wall seen in the west elevation, the internal brick chimney stack and a timber frame with an outer surface of weather boarding and an inner surface of lath and plaster construction. The ground floor of the building was originally two rooms probably used as living room and kitchen. The first floor of the building was originally only one room. Evidence for this is that the dividing wall between the present FFR1 and FFR2 is of modern construction pink plaster board and is not recognised as a barrier by the wooden floor as it is of the same

construction and framing in both rooms. A further consideration is that the upper floor is served by only one hearth and that the skirting boards and door of FFR2 are modern unlike those of FFR1. How the upper room related to the staircase is unclear; the dividing wall between the stairs and FFR2 is of original wooden panels up to first floor level and then of modern grey plaster board. However an original door frame is sited at the top of the stairs opening into FFR1 providing evidence that the stairs were sealed off from the bedroom in the original building.

- 3.2 The *date of this building* is likely to be 19th-century, and the character of both the external brickwork and the framing is consistent with an early to mid-19th-century date (e.g. similar to early Victorian brick housing in Oxford, and softwood framing in Paisley House of c.1844). The investigative openings made clear that a substantial amount of the original building still exists, albeit in places covered by several layers of modern resurfacing. What was glimpsed of the timber frame through the openings suggests that it too is largely original with modern additions. The external weather boarding however is all a modern replacement as is the roof. The wooden flooring is original with some modern patching.
- 3.3 *Modern alterations* to the building were seen in all the rooms, and the majority of this activity was resurfacing of walls. The fireplaces and flues served by the brick chimney stack have been altered in GFR1 and blocked in GFR2 and FFR1 (openings 8, 9, 27, 21, 22). An entrance hall has been constructed of plaster board and built into GFR1 (opening 24). A bay window has been inserted into the south wall of GFR1. Other plaster boarding is seen around the replacement windows and doorframes (openings 18 and 32). The north wall of GFR2 has been rebuilt using modern plaster board as has the dividing wall between the stairs and FFR2. The most significant of the modern alterations however is the division of the first floor into two rooms with a modern wall of plaster board (openings 1, 2 & 10) and is discussed above at §3.1.

Kate Newell  
 Oxford Archaeological Unit  
 June 1997

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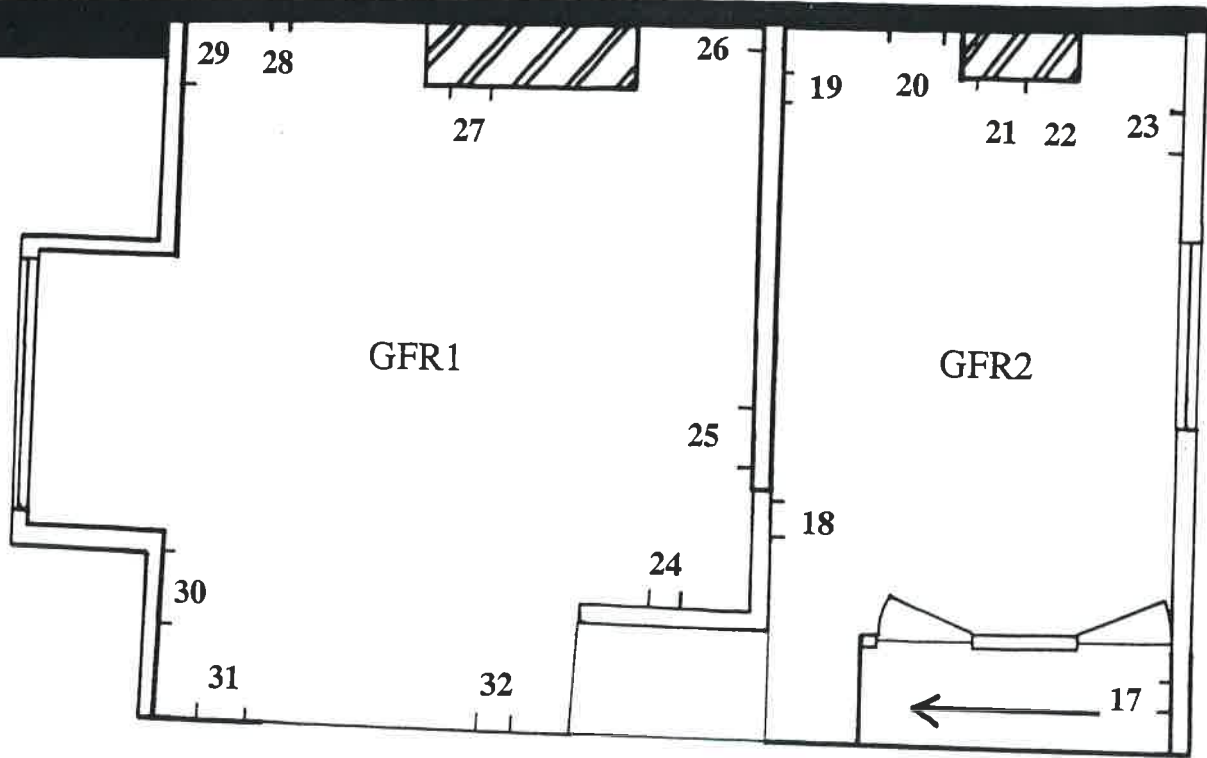


Figure 1: Ground Floor Sketch Plan. Showing location of investigative openings.

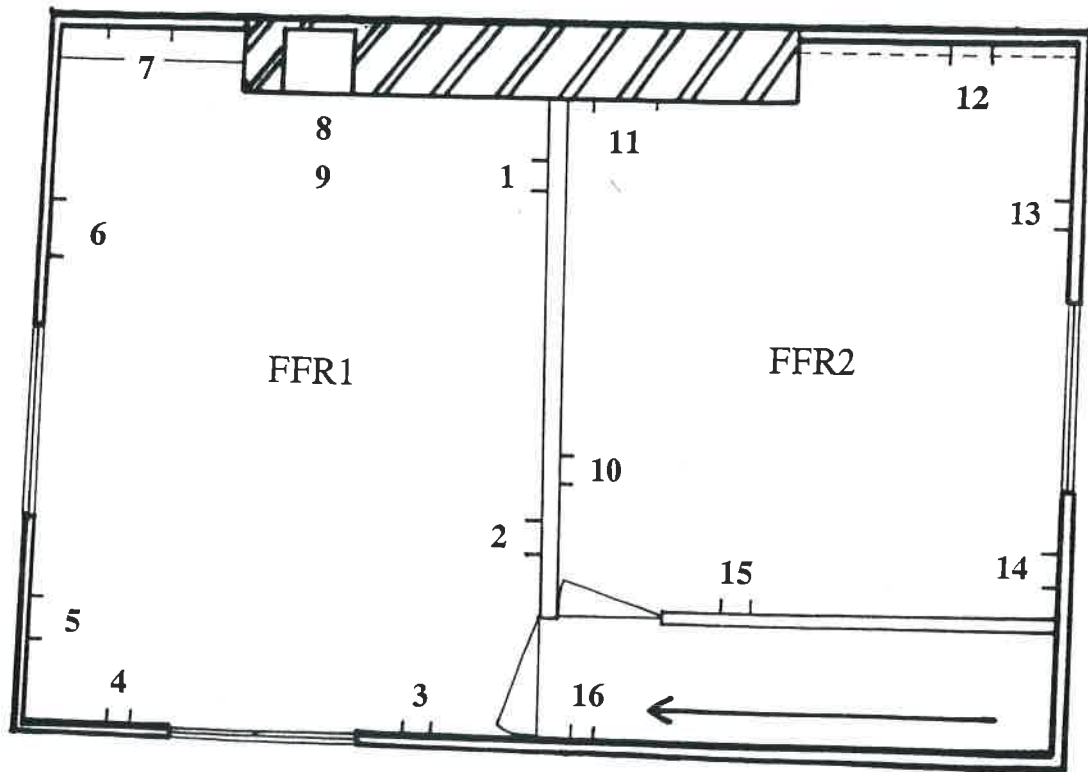


Figure 2: First Floor Plan Sketch Plan. Showing location of investigative openings.

KEY

	Rubble Wall
	Brick
	Lath and Plaster
	Modern Plaster Board



Scale - 1:50 at A4

TABLE 1: BUILDING MATERIALS SEEN IN THE INVESTIGATIVE OPENINGS

No	Building Material	No	Building Material
1	Pink Plaster Board	17	Lath and Plaster
2	Pink Plaster Board	18	Pink Plaster Board
3	Lath and Plaster	19	Lath and Plaster
4	Lath and Plaster	20	Grey Plaster Board through to rubble wall
5	Lath and Plaster	21	Red Brick
6	Lath and Plaster	22	Red Brick
7	Lath and Plaster	23	Grey Plaster Board
8	Red Brick	24	Grey Plaster Board
9	Red Brick	25	Lath and Plaster
10	Pink Plaster Board	26	Lath and Plaster
11	Red Brick	27	Red Brick
12	Lath and Plaster	28	Grey Plaster Board through to rubble wall
13	Lath and Plaster	29	Lath and Plaster
14	Lath and Plaster	30	Lath and Plaster
15	Pink Plaster Board	31	Lath and Plaster
16	Lath and Plaster	32	Pink Plaster Board