

WILTSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD



12, PICKWICK, CORSHAM



Historic Building Report

by

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Wiltshire Buildings Record,

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12, PICKWICK, CORSHAM

This report is additional to a building survey by Lyndon Smith and an historical account by Ellen Leslie.

Site and exteriors

No. 12 is set within a tight group of interconnected buildings on the south side of the Bath Road in what appears to be one original plot. To the east of the complex, possibly within the same original plot, a malthouse formerly stood very close to the east end of the houses. No. 12, attached to the matching no. 14, is next with no. 18, a larger house, at the west end. This may have been refronted in the early 19th century. Behind no. 18 is a slightly lower extension and beyond that the taller no. 16, facing east. It is reached from a door by the road within no. 18, next to no. 14. A passageway leads through. The 1837 tithe map shows a long outbuilding behind no. 16. At the rear of no. 12 a former small brewhouse or washhouse stands behind the site of the malthouse.

No. 16 was visited in 1983 for Wiltshire Buildings Record. It was concluded that it dated from the early 18th century, perhaps c. 1720, and was a small house with a workshop adjoining, an extension to no. 18 which may have been a clothier's house. At the time of the tithe map in 1837 nos. 18 and 16 were in one occupation. There were late 18th century and early 19th century alterations to no. 16 which perhaps indicated that the original industrial use of the premises had ceased.

No. 14 was sold in 2000 by Allen and Harris. A newspaper item about the sale in Property Chronicle shows a stone fireplace in one of the three reception rooms. It has a flat arch with a protruding keystone, usually a late 18th century type.

The windows of the facades of nos. 12 and 14 have unusual aprons of ashlar stone suggesting that they may all have been reset at a higher level at some date. No. 12 comprises two parallel ranges. The rear range is narrower and lower. There are no quoins in the east wall between the ranges suggesting that they were constructed at the same time. The rear range of No. 14 does not match that of no. 12 so may have been built at a different time.



From NW, no. 18 nearest to the camera



Nos. 12 and 14

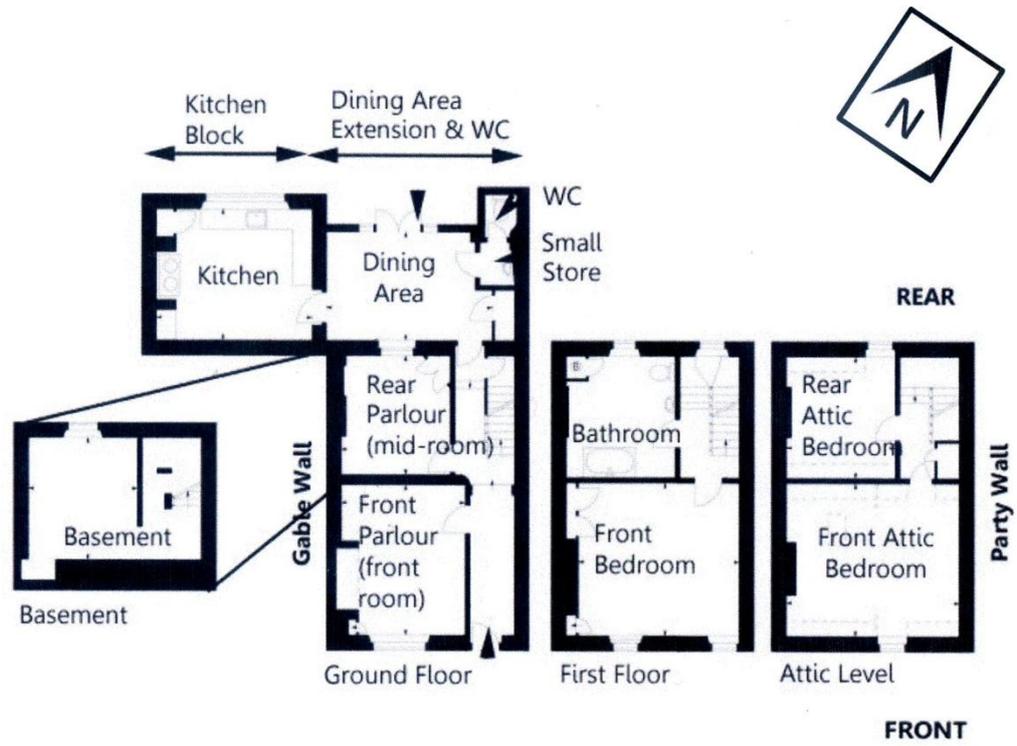


No. 12 from east with remaining side wall of the the demolished malthouse in the foreground.

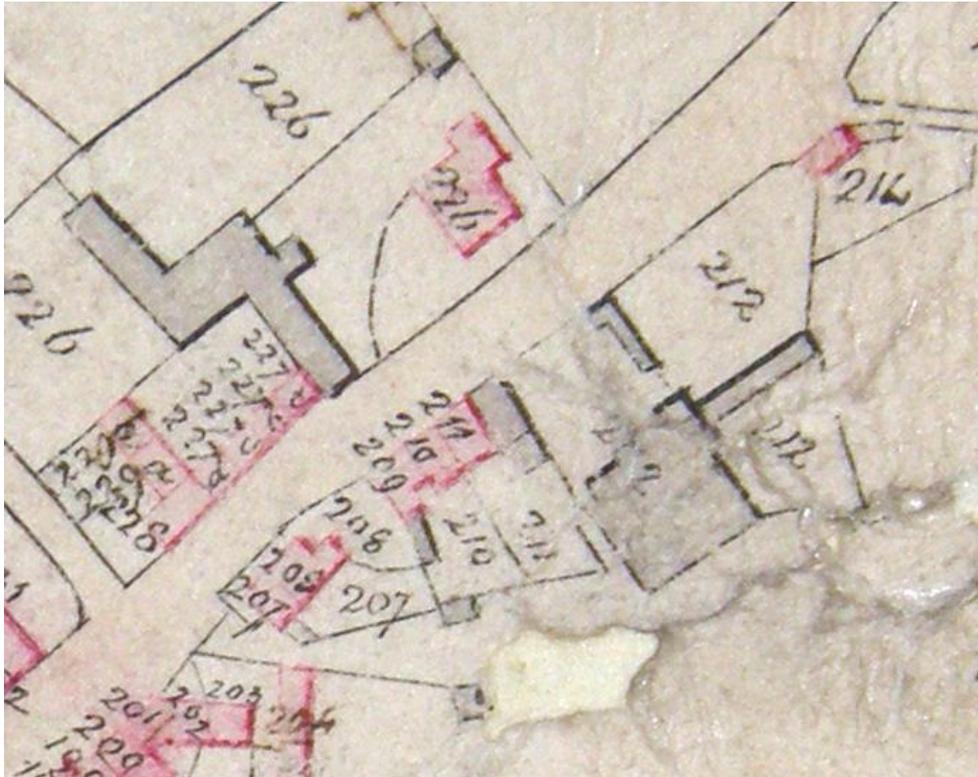


East wall of the brewhouse with blocked doorway and indications of a former lower gable.

PLAN OF PROPERTY



Sketch plan of no. 12 (Courtesy of Lyndon Smith)



Tithe map of 1837. No. 12 is plot 211

Description of no. 12

Ground floor

Both the front wall and rear wall of the front range are 20 inches thick. The front range is two bays long with $1\frac{1}{2}$ bays for the front room and a $\frac{1}{2}$ bay entrance hall.

Front room

The entrance door to the room has heart-shaped cutouts to provide borrowed light to the hall. It has HL hinges. The stone fireplace in the east wall is, according to the owner, similar to others in the locality. It has an arched lintel and a large bead surround. The surround protrudes from the wall of the room and the outside of the jamb and the top of the lintel have a step/ogee moulding. The floor of the hearth is of flagstones with a flagstone apron in front. The rest of the room is floored with narrow planks. The rear wall of the hearth has a tall niche towards the south end and a curved wall with a narrow shelf at the north end. This suggests there was once a bread oven in the north wall of the hearth. The space between the fireplace and the front wall of the house is now occupied by a wall cupboard.

South of the fireplace in the east wall there is a large arched alcove with a beaded surround. A corner cupboard in the north-west corner of the room was probably brought in. The cornice round the ceiling is interrupted over the front double-sash window but continues over the ceiling beam. This is another feature suggesting that the position of the windows has been raised. The moulding of the cornice, from the top, is bead/flat/step/quarter round/step. The beam has a large bead moulding. The sash windows have 12 panes and brass fixings.



Door to front room



Front room fireplace



Oven position



Arched alcove

Rear room

This is a step up from the front range. The entrance door to the rear room again has HL hinges. The fireplace on the east wall has a late 19th century grate with a green tiled surround. It has unusual rounded stands. There is a full height corner cupboard in the south-west corner of the room.





Corner cupboard

Staircase

There is a stair arch in the entrance hall. The newel post is tapered with ring mouldings at the top and bottom. The balusters match the newel post. There is one baluster to the tread. The handrail has a rounded top and is ramped on the landing.



Staircase arch



Staircase

Cellar

The ladder stair down to the cellar is underneath the main stair. From it the underside of the main stair is shown to have a number of old re-used timbers, some rather blackened. The cellar floor is of random flagstones. The water table is high and the level is visible in a sump. An alcove in the north-east corner of the cellar may be the site of an earlier stair. The ceiling was formerly at a higher level. Two stone corbels along the east wall formerly supported the ceiling beams. The ceiling now cuts across the two-light cellar window. The central mullion has a bead moulding on the outside and a small chamfer on the inside. It has a groove to hold glazing but may not be the original mullion. The window surround is splayed.

The back lean-to area, now dining area

This is down 2 steps. The back doorway has an ogee moulded surround. Behind the entrance to the cellar stair there is a cupboard with a hole in the north wall which would have lit the cellar stair before the area was enclosed. The door into the cupboard has 3 and a bit planks with beaded edges to the planks. Behind this area to the south there is a privy with a matching privy on the west side for no. 14. It has a 3 plank door with strap hinges and a burn mark.

The sash window to the rear room has, from the inside, a bead/flat/ogee/step moulding. Examples of this have been recorded in Wiltshire from the 1730s and 40s.

Back kitchen or brewhouse

The entrance doorway had a surround with a plain chamfer stopped at the foot. The stop is rather eroded. The door is of 5 planks with beaded edges. The strap hinges have rounded ends, a late 16th

century to early 17th century type so they may be re-used on this door. The iron door latch has leaf-shaped ends, possibly dating from the late 17th to early 18th centuries.



There is a central ceiling beam or bressummer running north/south across the room supporting a half loft at the east end. The beam is somewhat smoke-stained and has a wide chamfer. It was tree-ring dated to 1534-40. In a former use it had been over a stud partition. The joists supporting the loft are also re-used timbers. Double V and butterfly protection marks have been found. The fireplace in the east wall is very altered but retains incurving side walls.

The building is hipped to the south and west with gables to the north and east. To facilitate the north gable an extended collar truss was provided. This is a Cotswold type found extensively in Gloucestershire but also for a short period popular in north-west Wiltshire. In the variation here the timber acting as a collar at the south end acts as a tiebeam at the north end. The principal rafter on the south side, acting like a knee principal, has a curved foot and is a re-used cruck blade cut off just below the elbow. It is chamfered on both sides of the inner face and has a mortice for a former high collar. There is a mortice in the outer face at the elbow. The foot of this principal rests on the ceiling beam which is supported by a cast-iron pillar. This has been inserted at some date to replace the side wall, removed here to create a larger window. The extended collar is lapped onto the cruck blade and is tapered towards the north end. It is chamfered on the lower east soffit. It is also re-used and could be part of another cruck blade above the elbow. The short north principal is a re-used principal rafter as it has an old purlin joint in it with off-set pegholes. It also has a mortice which may be the former apex joint. The purlins in the roof are cut back at the principal rafters in the typical late 17th and 18th century way.

There is a timber window in the north gable lighting the loft. It looks onto the site of the malthouse. It is very weather-worn and is probably reassembled. It has a plain chamfered lintel, mitred at the ends. The top half of the central mullion is chamfered.



Extended collar looking east



Cruck on ceiling beam



Cruck and lapped collar



Old purlin joint in the north principal rafter



Beam and joists



Butterfly mark



Timber window

First floor

Front room

The room has dado panelling with a dado rail. The fireplace in the north-east corner has a beaded stone surround with a moulded timber surround outside. The flat lintel has curved corners. (A similar fireplace in Surrey has been dated to 1734.) It has a later hob grate. There is a mantel shelf.



Dado



Front room



Front room fireplace

First floor rear room

This has a similar but smaller fireplace with beaded surround. It also has a hob grate inside.



Rear room fireplace

Front attic

A two-panelled door leads into the room. The attic floor is below eaves level. The attic is lighted by a dormer window within the roof. The roof is very well carpentered and designed as a work room. The collar truss at the centre has truncated tiebeams supported on posts thus providing working space in the middle of the room. The timbers are chamfered. There are small chiselled carpenter's marks; an x and a matching 1 on the other side of the roof. Some of the purlins are re-used and some are waney. The south-east purlin was observed by Robert Howard during dendro sampling to have an unusual inscribed pattern, likely to be a protection mark; three concentric half circles with two small circles enclosed in the rings, another single half circle overlapping and a pointed spike from the concentric circles. Close to this there is a taper burn mark.

The collar is lapped on to the principal rafters. The butt purlins have offset pegholes.



Attic door



Truncated tiebeam



Lapped collar



Carpenter's marks



Protection marks, enhanced by Tony Hack

Rear attic room

Another two-panel door leads in. There is a roof truss at the doorway. A collar in the south principal rafter has been cut off to allow entry. A single row of purlins is visible in the room. There is an iron ring in the north purlin. The south purlin is chamfered.

Interpretation

This is very tentative. It suggests the house developed during the 18th century similarly to no. 16.

1. It seems likely that the re-used timbers dated 1534-1540 are from a house built on the footprint of the front ranges of nos. 12 and 14, parallel to the road. A number of the timbers have a degree of blackening but not soot encrusting which suggests some leakage of smoke in an early period, perhaps from a smoke bay rather than a fireplace. At that period the house could have been of timber or of stone. The re-used beam in the rear building (brewhouse) was previously a ceiling beam over a stud partition but in the 16th century stone houses often had timber partition walls. The plan of the 16th century house may have comprised a kitchen at the east end (with the fireplace perhaps surviving in the rebuild) and a parlour at the west end (suggested by an existing front cellar underneath no. 14). There would have been a hall (principal room) between and an entrance passage.

2. The rear outbuilding probably dates from the late 17th or early 18th century though this is likely to have been a rebuilding of an earlier, lower building suggested by a hint of a lower gable in the east wall. The roof truss is an 'extended collar truss' of c.1700. The roof includes a number of re-used timbers. The south principal rafter has a curved foot. It was evidently judged not to have sufficient rings for tree-ring dating but the chamfering and redundant mortices suggest it is medieval and, since it is not smoke-blackened, probably came from an outbuilding. The door into the building has earlier hinges and a latch of late 17th century type. The stack and fireplace opening at the east end of the building suggest it was a brewhouse/wash-house or back kitchen.
3. No. 12 (with the adjoining no. 14) probably dates from the early to mid 18th century, perhaps the 1730s. The two must have been in one ownership at the time. It is likely to have been the house of an artisan, probably in the woollen trade and part of a small community of cloth workers. The front room fireplace is likely to have been a cooking fireplace with a bread oven. The rear range provided a parlour with a cellar underneath.
4. The house seems to have had a refit around 1780 to make it more genteel. Earlier windows were perhaps then replaced by double sashes. A cornice was added to the front room ceiling and an arched alcove to the right of the fireplace. The front room fireplace was given a new surround with moulding similar to that of the architraves around the sash windows. The bread oven area in the fireplace was made into a cupboard. These changes made the room into a parlour rather than a living room. The existing stair was provided with new balusters and a stair arch was installed in the hallway. The rear ground floor room became more of a living room than a parlour. The cellar ceiling was lowered to provide more height in the room. The main reception room with a panelled dado was on the first floor.
5. The front windows of 12 and 14 were reinserted at a higher level, perhaps in the 19th century as ashlar stone was used. In the 19th century hob grates were added to several of the fireplaces.

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Postscript: report commissioned by John Maloney