

HISTORICAL APPRAISAL



FOR:

**MUSGROVE FARM HOUSE
DUNKESWELL,
HONITON
DEVON
EX14 4RR**

PREPARED BY:

Dr H Keith Farmer *PhD. MRICS MCIOB ABEng*
Keith Farmer Building Services Ltd
Old Barn Court, Wrangway,
Wellington Somerset, TA21 9QG

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report is prepared by Dr Henry K Farmer, PHd, MSc, MRICS, MCIQB, ABeng.
Old Barn Court, Wrangway, Wellington, Somerset, TA231 9QG
- 1.2 I have extensive experience in maintenance, alteration and conversion to alternative use of buildings ranging from National Monument status, Grade II and Grade II* Listed Buildings through to domestic structures and unscheduled traditional and ethnic architecture.
- 1.3 I am a Chartered Surveyor (MRICS) and Chartered Project Manager (MCIQB) with MSc degree (Bath University School of Architecture) and PhD (Loughborough University). I specialise in maintenance and alterations to historic buildings with experience ranging from large nationally important structures (Dover Castle) through to Domestic buildings (The Old House, Milverton). I have worked closely with Historic England on various projects and act as Expert Witness on historical and Heritage planning disputes. I am 79 years old and semi-retired since November 2020.
- 1.4 This report is specific to Musgrove Farm only and no information contained in here should be taken as applicable to any other building or structure unless specifically stated in here.
- 1.5 This Heritage Impact Statement is prepared in support of a Planning Application to make repairs and alterations to the interior of Musgrove Farm House.

2.0 PROPOSAL RATIONAL

- 2.1 The planning application forming part of this submission proposes a general refurbishment of the interior of Musgrove Farm House in order to bring the domestic accommodation to acceptable standards of safety and comfort. There are no external alterations anticipated.

3.0 HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Building is Listed (1988) and the Information is reproduced below.

Farmhouse. Late C17-early C18. Mid-late C19 modernisation and extension.

Plastered local stone rubble with some cob; stone rubble stacks topped with C20 brick; bitumen sheet roof over the original thatch.

Plan: 4-room plan farmhouse facing south-east. At the right (north-east) end there is a small unheated room, probably the dairy or buttery originally. Next is the kitchen with a rear lateral stack. Left of centre is a parlour/dining room with a front doorway and an axial stack backing onto a parlour at the left end which has a gable end stack. The left end parlour is probably a C19 extension. The rest of the house appears to be a single phase late C17-early C18 extension. 2 Storeys. Exterior : irregular 3-window front of circa 1981 replacement casements with glazing bars. The main front doorway is roughly central and it contains a C19 1-panel door behind a contemporary gabled and slate roofed porch. At the right end there is a secondary doorway with side lights in to the former dairy/buttery. The roof is halfhipped to the right and gable-ended to the left. It steps up from the main house to the left end extension.

Interior; is largely the result of the mid-late C19 modernisation. In the left end section no carpentry or early features are showing and , as far as can be seen, this is wholly C19 in date. Although there is C19 joinery detail throughout the rest the basic structure is late C17- early C18 and the C19 modernisation appears to have been superficial here. The Kitchen and the dairy/buttery have roughly finished crossbeams and the kitchen fireplace is blocked by a C20 grate, its original oak-framed front is exposed. The roof space is inaccessible but the bases of some straight principals show on the first floor, their scantling large enough to suggest that they are from original A-frame roof trusses.

Listing NGR: ST1417811041

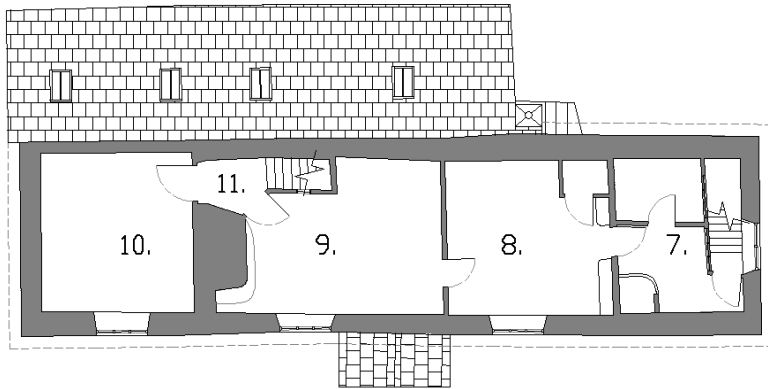
3.2 The information contained in the Listing is generally accurate but a new roof structure has been constructed above and independent of the original trusses and much of the original structural timbers remain.

4.0 INTERNAL INSPECTION

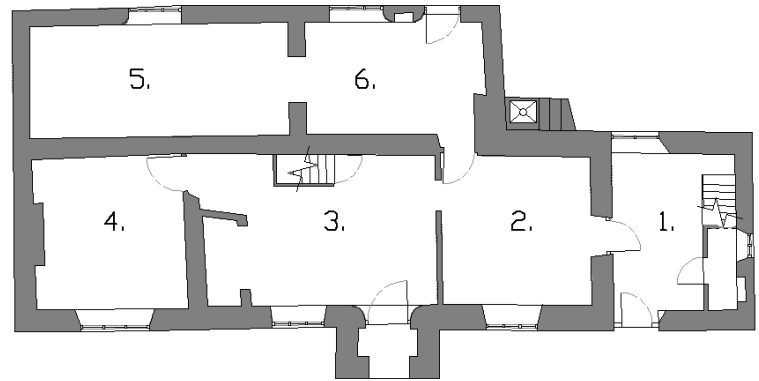
4.1 The general arrangement of rooms is shown on 4.2 below. The rooms are numbered for identification only and the sequence of numbering starts at the back door (Old Dairy?) and follows from room to room.

4.2 Labelled Existing floor plans:

- Ground Floor Plan:



- First Floor Plan:



4.3 Room 1,

Possibly a Dairy originally, Central rough beam. 19th C Raised concrete floor with tile finish, single and unequal steps at entrance. 19th C addition of partition to enclose stairs and form WC under. This partitioning spoils the proportion of the room and the steps present a trip hazard if unfamiliar with the property. Ceiling height is low (1969mm) generally and 1909mm under central beam. It is clear that the floor is now higher than the original level and has been raised to obtain a level surface as evidenced by the step (124mm) inside the entrance door. The 19thC enclosed stair is narrow and steep.

4.4 Room 2, Kitchen.

Accessed from Room 1, through a low doorway incorporating a dangerous 42mm step up. The ceiling height is 1910mm generally and restricted to 1760 under a central rough beam. The central beam is broken near the rear wall and a metal strap (possibly fashioned from a wheel rim from a wooded wheel?) is fitted as a repair. The floor has been raised and concreted with a tiled floor finish, and a modern 20th C kitchen fitted. Window and door are 19th C. The rear wall probably contains a fireplace currently concealed behind kitchen cupboards and this requires further investigation.

4.5 Room 3, Living room.

Accessed from Room 2 (kitchen) via a low doorway incorporating a 63mm step up onto a carpeted concrete floor under a low (1964mm) ceiling with central rough beam restricting height to 1873mm. A 'Front door' opens into this room although one would have to stoop to enter and it appears that this door has not been in general use for some years. A modernised Inglenook type fireplace contains a wood burning stove and the flue above is closed over. A portion of smoke blackened timber is visible on the left hand side, possible originally having hooks for smoking meats etc. The right hand side may have contained a traditional 'Bread oven', with the stairs to the first floor winding over, (a common arrangement in this locality) but if so, all traces of such were removed when the later addition of Room 4 was added. (C1850?) - (For photo of Inglenook fireplace see image 1.0 within Appendix 8.0)

4.6 Room 4, Parlour.

Carpeted floor over concrete and with brick build 'feature' fireplace, this room is entered from Room 3 via a low doorway. A triple sash 20th C window provides daylight into a fairly square and featureless room with a ceiling height of 2201mm generally.

4.7 Rooms 5 and 6. Rear single storey spaces.

Accessed via a low door (1727mm) from Room 2 (Kitchen) these spaces are under a new slated and insulated roof extended down from the eaves of the main house roof. The roof structure is new and exposed internally without a ceiling lining. The walls are generally stone with some concrete block and a central exposed steel joist supporting the wall above the central opening. Part of the floor (space 5) is concreted level and the remainder is roughly concreted to form a sloping floor to a disused drain. A central inspection chamber in the floor covers a stone lined well approximately 7M deep. This well is disused but in restorable condition.
- (For photo of Stone lined well see image 2.0 + 2.1 within Appendix 8.0)

- 4.8 Room 7 (over room 1). 20thC gable double casement window currently separated from bathroom by 20th C partition to form stair box. Stairs are narrow and steep and not in compliance with current building regulations. The floor is uneven and a 20th C partition forms a separate bathroom with basin and WC. A shower cabinet is located on the remainder of the floor space.
- 4.9 Room 8 (Over room 2) The lath and plaster ceiling has collapsed and the underside of the roof structure is exposed. The floor is uneven and unsafe as the beam under is broken. Window is 20th C timber triple casement. There is a straggle of plumbing / heating piping exposed and a small cylinder cupboard for storage of hot water heated by the Rayburn cooker on the floor below.
- 4.10 Room 9 (over room 3)
19th C door from Room 8 with step up at threshold. Uneven and bouncy floor requires some treatment to improve rigidity. Ceiling has collapsed exposing the roof structure above. Wall gathering of fireplace below evident and flaking wall plaster. Door and lining 19th C possibly installed circa 1850 when end room added. Triple casement 20th C window.
- (For photo of Collapsed ceiling see image 3.0 within Appendix 8.0)
- (Photo of First floor fire place see image 4.0 within Appendix 8.0)
- 4.11 Room 10 (Over room 4)
Accessed via a low doorway from landing outside room 9 at top of stairs and with single step trip hazard. 19th C cast iron fireplace and 20th C triple casement window. Some bounce in floor and strengthening required.
- (Photo of Cast iron fireplace see image 5.0 within Appendix 8.0)

4.12 Stair and landing lobby.

No window or ventilation. Step up to Bedroom 10 is dangerous. Stairs are steep and narrow and not in compliance with current building regulations. Small borrowed light to stairs from bedroom with leaded light.

4.13 General over all condition.

Electrical services require complete renewal. There is old brittle rubber insulated cables and old Bakelite unearthed toggle switches evident, and use of extension leads through door openings etc. all presenting a dangerous situation. There is no heating system except two steel panel radiators running from the hot-water system via the Rayburn cooker. Ceilings and floors throughout the first floor require much repair/replacement and strengthening and levelling, and between room trip-hazards negated. On the ground floor the ceiling heights are uncomfortably low, especially under main timber beams, caused in part by the raising and concreting of the ground floor.

5.0 Recommendations.

- 5.1 The building must be made safe to live in as absolute priority.
- 5.1 Electrical installation must be totally renewed and installed to current standards with appropriate circuit breakers etc. and adequate lighting and power provided to each room. All obsolete wiring and fitting to be removed.
- 5.2 Consideration should be given to installing a concealed form of background heating to avoid unsightly radiators as currently exist and appear incongruous in a listed building.
- 5.3 First floor ceilings that remain must be examined to ascertain their stability. Old lath and plaster ceilings should be preserved wherever possible but these ceilings are heavy and are prone to sudden and unexpected collapse, sometimes bringing large support timbers down with the plaster, as the fixings between ceiling joists and rafters have decayed over time. There is evidence that this is happening already with the two rooms already identified.
- 5.4 Where ceilings have already collapsed consideration should be given to the possibility of leaving exposed some of the original hewn timber original roof structure, such that the construction can be seen from below. Ceiling lining could be affixed to the underside of the

rafters forming the new structural roof above the original such, that much of the original is exposed. (This is a time consuming process and may be excluded by overall budget considerations.)

- 5.5 First floor structure must be made safe. There is considerable 'bounce' in the upper floors and evidence of timber decay and beetle infestation. Floor boards need to be carefully lifted, joists examined and strengthened and boards re-laid and with additional matching timber boards where necessary. The steps and changes of level forming trip hazards between rooms should be eliminated where possible and door openings adjusted to suit.
- 5.6 Where changes of level cannot be eliminated, an alternative position for any step should be provide in the form of a platform within the lower of the two rooms such that one can pass through the door before stepping down into the room. Alternatively the whole existing level of the lower room can be raised to the level of the higher room, by overlaying the existing floors such that they are preserved.
- 5.7 Ground floor levels have been raised by the addition of concrete laid over the original floor level such that even the entry door requires a deep recess, within the room, to allow the door to open. There are single and unequal steps between virtually every room and the raised floors have resulted in low door heights. The concrete floors should be carefully removed down to the original level with care taken to ascertain if any 'flag-stone' floors remain. (Some houses in this area were improved with materials taken from the nearby Abbey when the Abbey fell into ruin circa 1750).

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 There are no notable features worthy of specific preservation except as listed below:
- A Large fireplace and masonry gathering over in room 3 and 9.
 - B Small cast iron fireplace in bedroom Room 10
 - C Possible fireplace in rear wall of kitchen Room 2, currently built over.
 - D Well below space 6
 - E Structural timbers to original roof and first floor to be preserved where possible.

7.0 OPINION

- 7.1 This report forms my professional opinion based on the facts available during inspection, no destructive investigation was carried out (apart from cutting open the Well cover), as none was considered necessary.
- 7.2 It is rare to find a building of this age with virtually no period detailing remaining in the form of joinery etc.
- 7.3 A major refurbishment is required to preserve this building and adapt the existing lineal layout to provide a usable dwelling.
- 7.4 A proposal for necessary works should be prepared and Listed Building Consent negotiated for the proposed internal works. There are no external works required.

8.0 APPENDIX – Site Photographs

Inglenook fireplace: image 1.0



Stone lined well: image 2.0



Stone lined well: image 2.1



Collapsed ceiling: image 3.0



First floor fire place: image 4.0



Cast iron fireplace: image 5.0



Signed: Dr H. Keith Farmer. PhD, MSc, MRICS, MCIQB.
Chartered building Surveyor