

The Red House, Worlingworth, Suffolk

Heritage Asset Assessment



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Content

Page

1	Summary
2	Documentary History, Map Regression & Photographs
11	Building Analysis
	Ground plan highlighting the building phases in colour
12	Introduction and Listing Entry
13	The Early-16th Century House
	Proportions and Layout
	Hall and service bays
14	Existing ground and first-floor plans
	Chimney bay and parlour
15	The upper storey
16	Structure and Date
16	The Georgian House
	Date
17	Layout
	The Farm Outbuilding
	Historic Significance
19	Illustrations
36	Appendix 1: The Standard Plan of Medieval and Tudor Houses
38-42	Appendix 2: The History of the Red House from Documentary Sources

The Red House, Shop Street, Worlingworth, Suffolk

Heritage Asset Assessment

This report provides an historic analysis at Historic England (2016) Level 2 of a grade II-listed building at TM 22175 68546, and is intended to inform and accompany an application for Listed Building Consent. The site was inspected on 17th January 2022.

Summary

The Red House is of special importance as its ownership is exceptionally well documented from the Middle Ages and it combines two generally well preserved historic structures in one: its current ‘double-pile’ arrangement comprises a complete early-16th century timber-framed house to the rear and a fine Georgian red brick house at the front. The moated property is known to have been occupied for three centuries by a junior branch of the local Rous family, and the surviving Tudor building was probably built by William Rous who inherited in or shortly before 1526. It was then known as Burtons or Buttons after a previous owner, but is recorded by its current name in the 1788 will of William Ray whose family built and operated a maltings alongside. This new name may derive from the Georgian brickwork, which was probably added shortly before, or may commemorate the Rous family (from the Norman French for red or red-headed). The timber-framed house contained three cells in the standard manner, with a central hall between a high-end chimney bay and a parlour to the right (east) and a service bay to the left. Fine manuscript maps of 1606 and 1743 depict this building with a large porch projecting from its cross-passage and a front ‘base’ courtyard in the medieval tradition flanked on the east by a heated outbuilding. The latter may explain the unusual additional arched doorway that still remains in the front wall of the adjacent parlour. The interior retains many points of interest including a roll-moulded and foliate-carved binding joist in the hall, unusually chamfered window mullions, evidence of a first-floor garderobe and an impressive early example of a wind-braced butt-purlin roof with arch-braces to its collars. It appears to have contained a single fireplace initially, with no ceilings on its upper storey, and illustrates a significant transitional stage in the development of local domestic housing. Despite its high quality, the building lacked the ostentatious external features associated with contemporary merchants’ houses such as jetties and exposed framing. The character of its rear elevation was affected by the insertion of modern windows in the late-20th century. A number of Georgian-style cornices and fire surrounds were inserted into the front range around the same time, but this too remains of special interest with a fine ‘stick’ baluster staircase rising to its attic storey and unaltered facades to the south and west – the latter effectively disguising the existence of the earlier structure when viewed from the maltings.



Figure 1. Location map highlighting the house to the north of the bend in Shop Street.

Documentary History, Map Regression & Photographs



Figure 2. A current site plan highlighting the house in red with linear ponds to the north and east. The now converted maltings lies to the west.

The Red House lies to the north of Shop Street in Worlingworth, approximately 1 km west of St Mary's Church and immediately to the east of a now converted 18th century maltings that was the subject of a separate report by the same author in August 2008. Worlingworth is among the best documented parishes in Suffolk, and a detailed history of the house in the possession of the owner is attached as Appendix 2. The property was formerly known as Burtons or Buttons, having been owned at the beginning of the 15th century by John Burton of Framlingham, but in 1438 was acquired by a junior branch of the Rous or Rowse family of nearby Dennington (later Earls of Stradbroke). The present house dates from *circa* 1520/30, and was probably built by William Rous who superseded Humphrey Rous in 1526 'at the latest'. As a well-connected member of the minor gentry, William would have required a residence of quality, but perhaps without the elaborate external decoration seen in contemporary houses of newly wealthy merchants. This may explain the lack of jetties and externally exposed framing. An inventory of the building's contents which survives from 1705 refers to the chamber over the large porch depicted on a map of 1743 (figure 4). In *circa* 1720 the house was acquired from Simon Rous by Samuel Ray, and subsequently by his son William, a grocer and draper, who appears to have built the adjacent maltings which was mentioned in his will of 1764. The will makes no mention of his residence and he appears to have been too wealthy to have occupied the Red House, with his various properties in Worlingworth described as leased. His 'merchant' son, another William, is more likely to have built the red-brick front range as he specifically refers to 'the Red House' as his dwelling in his own will which is dated 1788. This appears to be the earliest use of the name, which may derive from its new facade or possibly its long association with the Rous family (Rous meaning 'red' in Norman French and suggesting the founders of the dynasty had red hair). After William's death in 1790 the property was occupied by his widow until her own death in 1813 when it passed to his son Samuel who was declared bankrupt in 1815. At the time of the parish tithe survey in 1837 it formed a small farm and malting business with 43 acres owned and operated by James Adams who in 1841 lived at the Red House with his wife Mary, 25-year-old daughter Harriet, and a single servant, Mary, who was the same age. A 60-year-old woman of independent means was also in residence when the census was taken, and James was recorded as a farmer and maltster in White's Directory for 1844. The changing appearance and outline of the house since 1606 is described in the figures below.



Figure 3. The property called ‘Burtonns’ as depicted on ‘The old mapp of the manor of Worlingworth’ dated to *circa* 1606 by local historian John Ridgard on the basis of internal evidence. (Suffolk Record Office HD 417/33). The buildings on the map are stylised, with most depicted as cross-wing houses, but their general arrangement is likely to be reasonably accurate. The house faced a front yard or ‘base court’ in the medieval tradition, with outbuildings that probably included a barn and stable to the east and west and a possible gatehouse on the street to the south. A small shed lay to the rear.



Figure 4. A copy of a map of 1743 kindly supplied by Geoffrey Robinson (SRO HD 89/13). This may be the same as the map of a ‘farm called Button’ in Worlingworth lately belonging to Dunston but now to Richard Marryot Esquire and leased to John Blaxell, SRO HD 417/34. The new maltings is shown to the west, along with a new threshing barn and adjoining stable to the north of a moat behind the house (within which archaeological evidence of a medieval house may survive). Water features were ignored by the 1606 map. This is likely to be an accurate depiction of the house with a large possibly brick porch adjoining the cross-passage and a high-end chimney. Only the outbuilding to the east of the base court survived at this date, with a central door and chimney. It may have been a bake-house or a domestic annex – or both. Its presence could explain the original parlour door.



Figure 5. Hodkinson's map of Suffolk published in 1783 showing the medieval extent of Worlingworth and Southold Greens before their enclosure to create new farmland early in the 19th century. The Red House lies at the end of their collective eastern arm.



Figure 6. Bryant's map of Suffolk published in 1826 which labels the Red House and the maltings by name. William Ray (1705-68) also owned the Swan Inn and mentioned its bowling green, bowls and brewing utensils in his will of 1764 (PROB 11/938/268) .

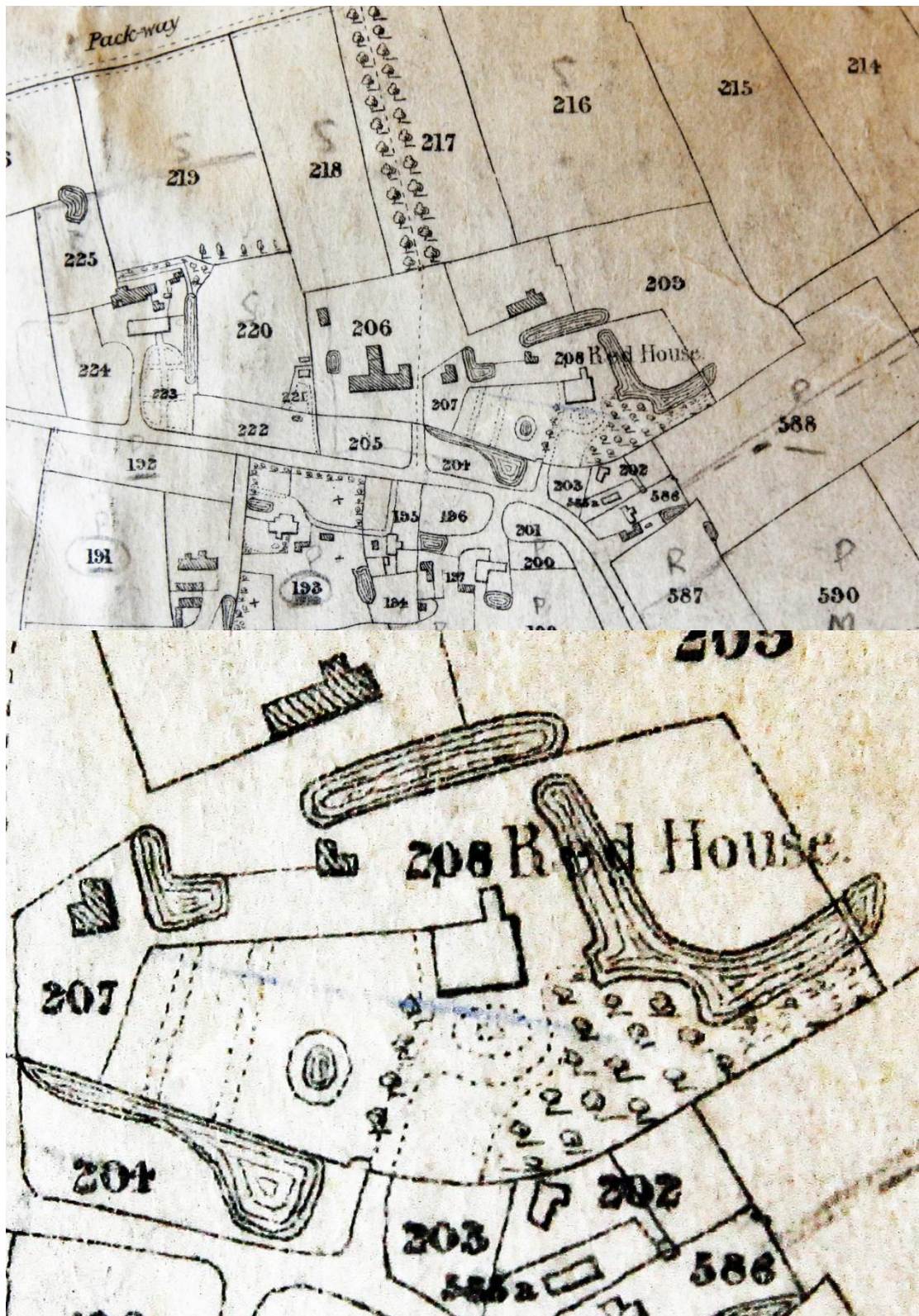


Figure 7. The area on the 1837 tithe map, with a detail below. The 43 acre farm included the ‘Malt Office and Pightle’ (paddock) at plot 206 along with the pasture called ‘Walk Field’ containing a curious tree-lined avenue leading to a ‘pack way’ on the north. Plot 209 was ‘Orchard Pightle’, 207 ‘Cottage’ and 208 the ‘Homestead’ amounting to 2.75 acres. Plot 203 to the south of the gate was a ‘Lawn’ with an adjoining ‘Cottage’ (202). The outline of the house was much it remains today, with a smaller service wing projecting to the north.

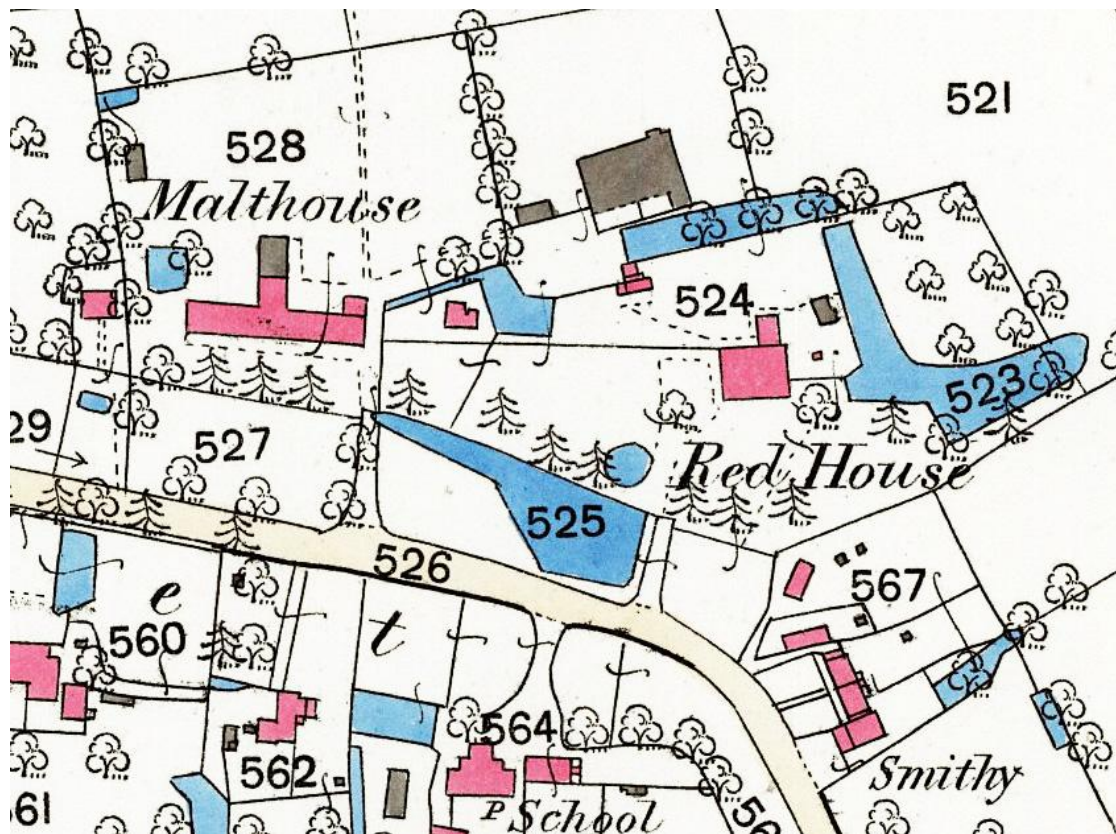


Figure 8. The First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1884, showing little change since 1837, although the small outbuilding that still survives to the west of the threshing barn had been built since 1837 (green in figure 2).

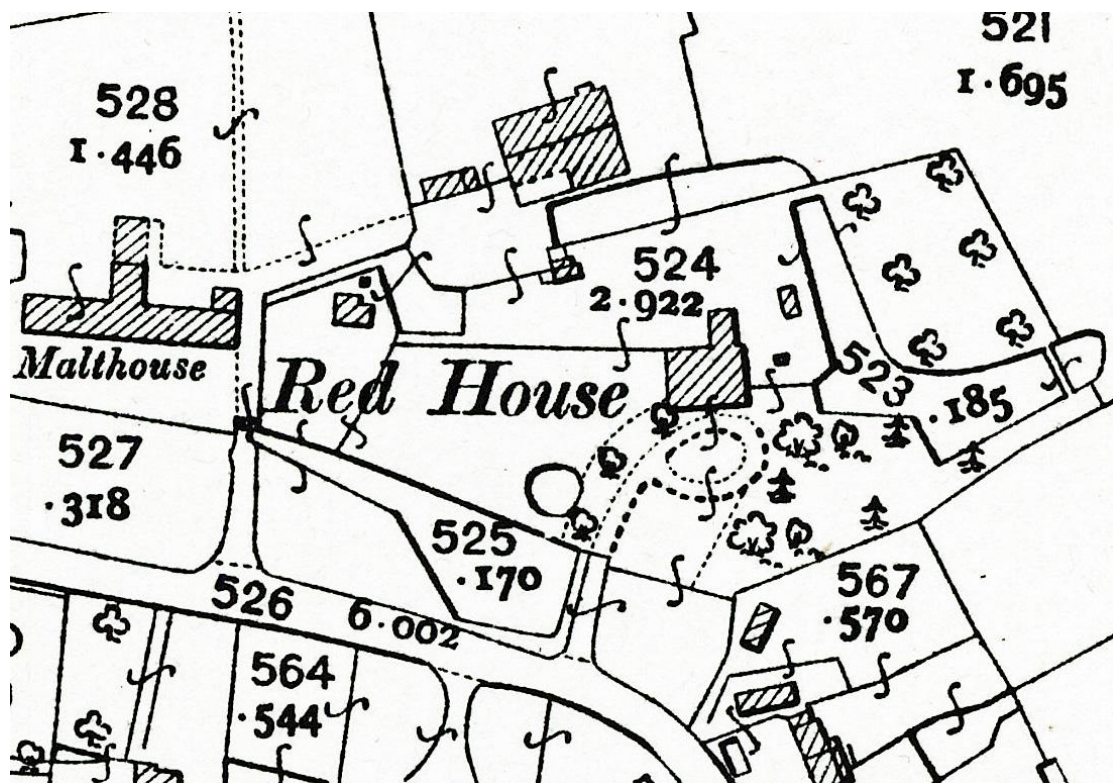


Figure 9. The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1903.

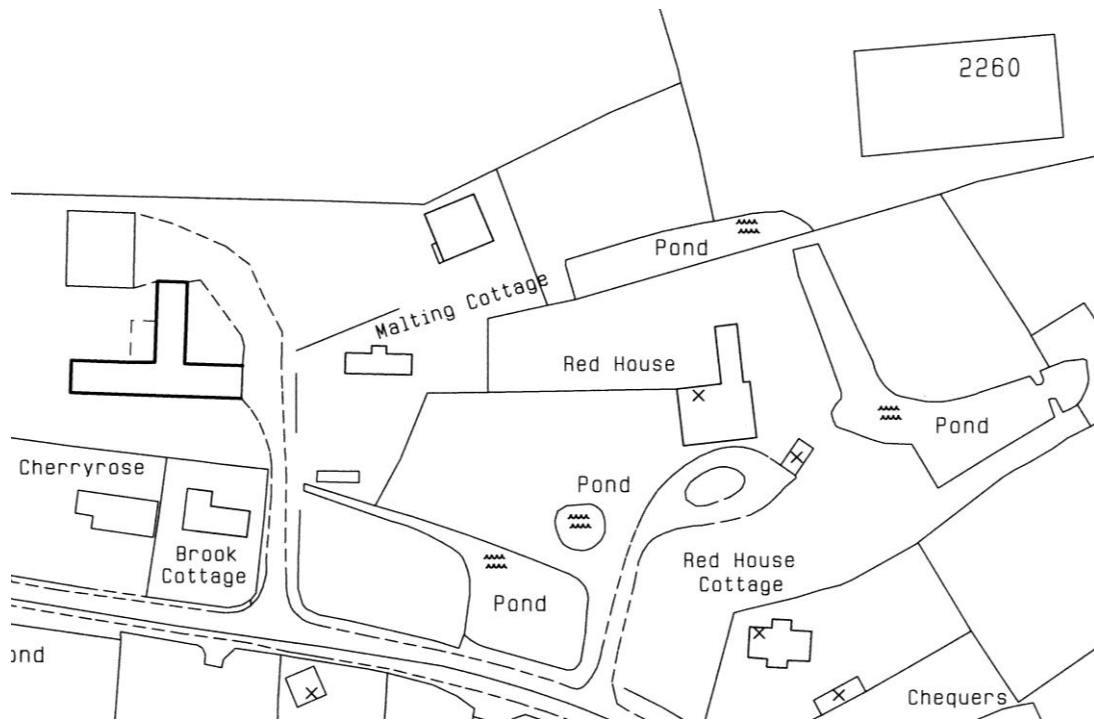


Figure 10. A site plan of *circa* 1980 showing the extended single-storied rear service wing before the construction of the two swimming pools. The barn to the north had been demolished since 1903 and the small probable stable to the north-east of Malting Cottage extended with a lean-to on the north (green in figure 2).



Figure 11. The house in 1949 (Historic England archive). The contrast between the small-paned casement windows of the attic dormers and the sashes below is almost certainly an original feature of the building, although some of the former had been replaced with larger panes at this date. They have since been reinstated.

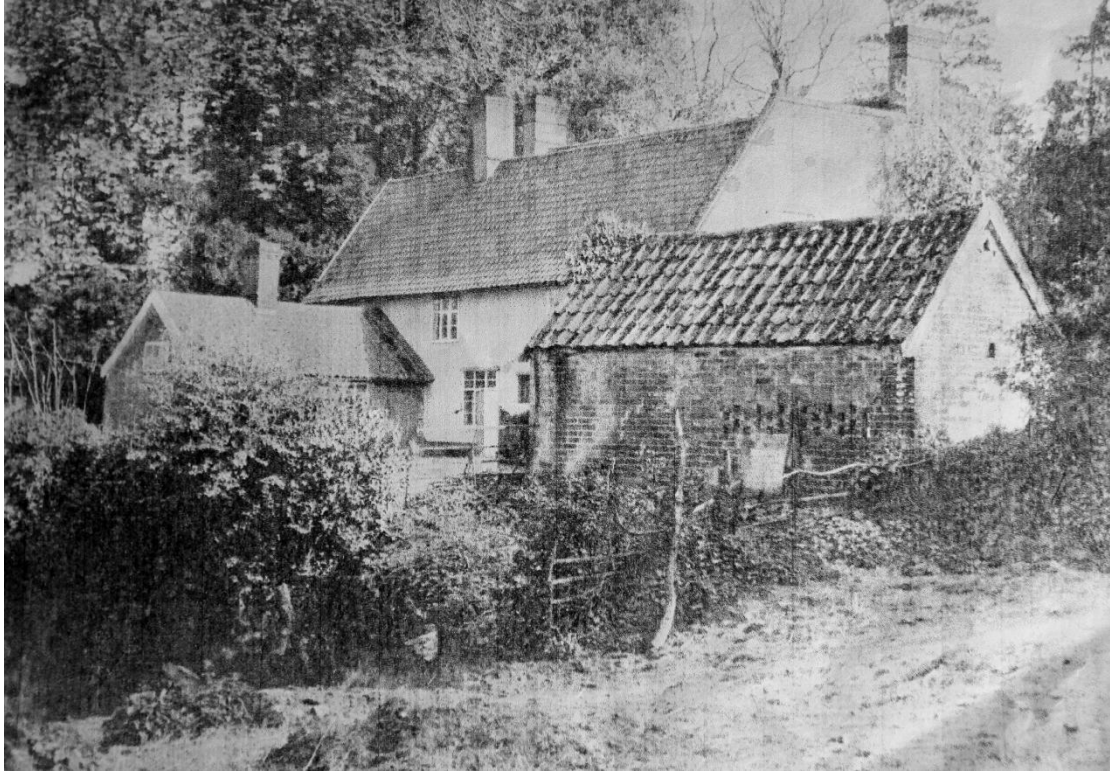


Figure 12. A copy of a mid-20th century photograph in the owners' possession showing the house from the rear with the adjoining single-storied service wing prior to its extension on the left. The brick pantiled outbuilding adjoined the moat on the left as shown in figure 8 – although a small additional shed depicted on the map has been removed from its northern wall.



Figure 13. The house from the north-east in 2011 showing the extended service wing before the addition of the present swimming pool in 2011. The previous covered pool of *circa* 2000 is visible behind the house to the right (see figure 13).

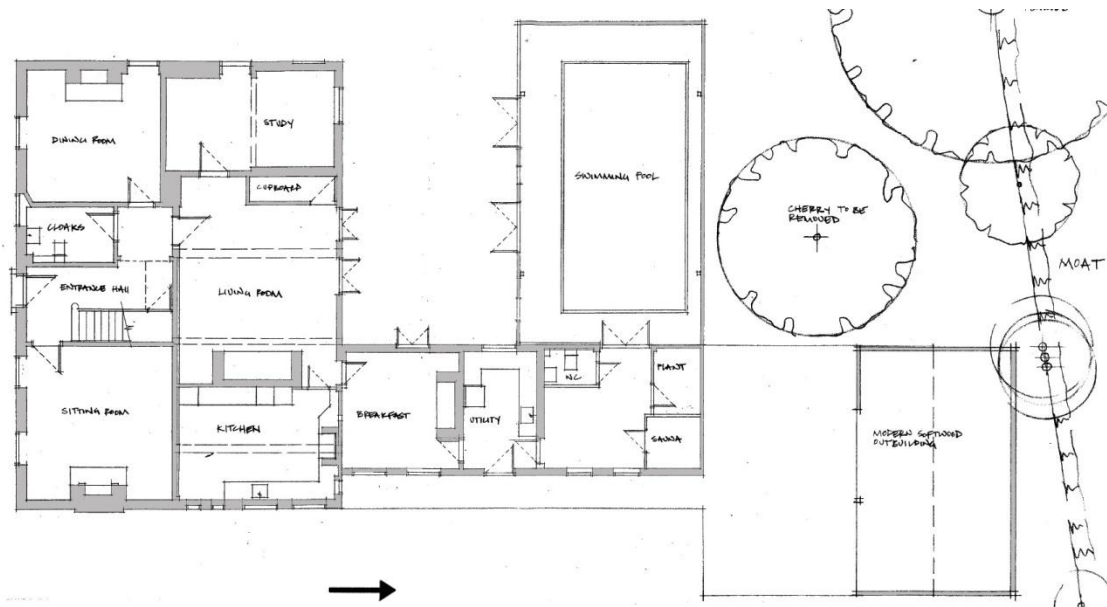


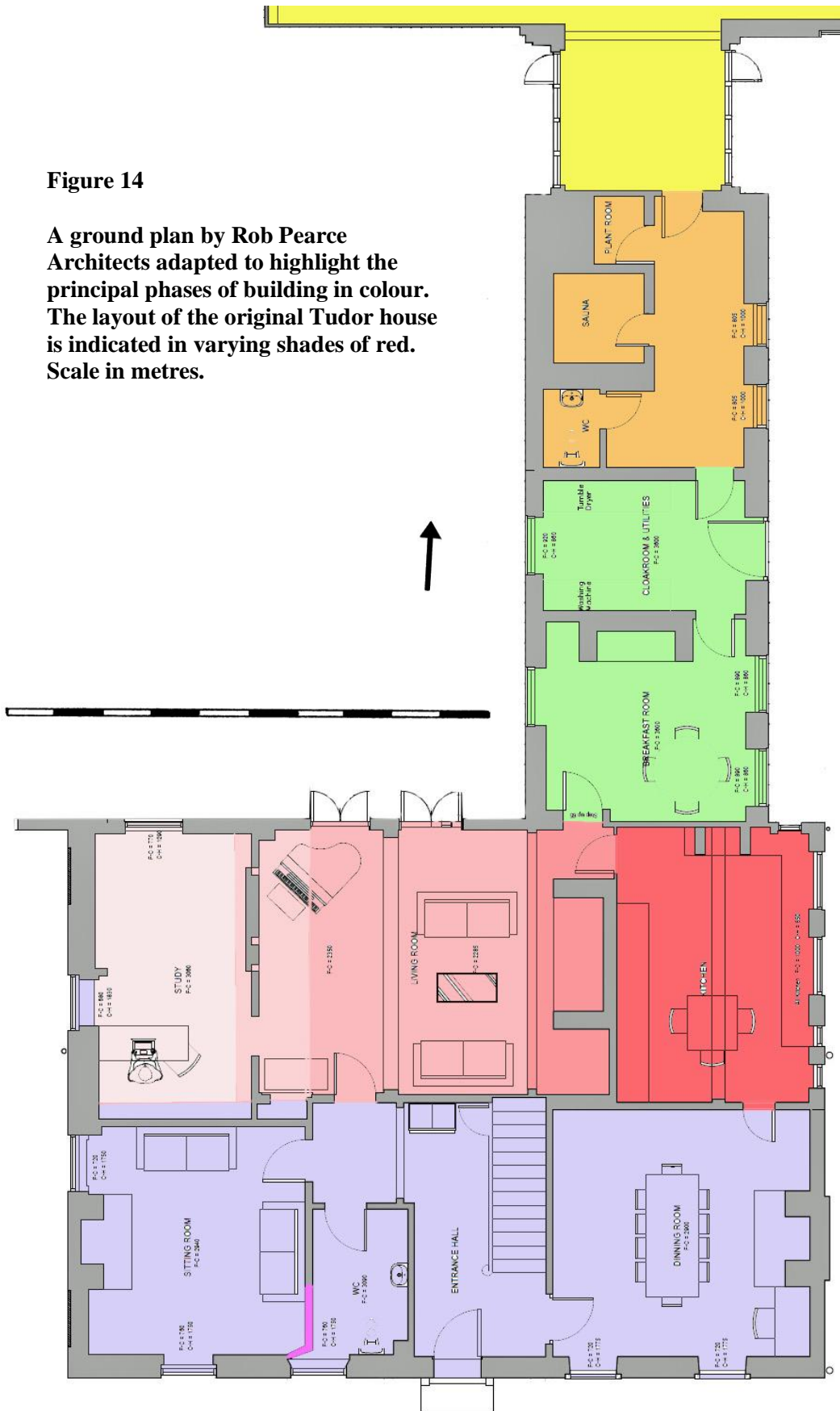
Figure 13

A ground plan of 2011 by Gorniak & McKechnie Architects showing the large covered swimming pool resembling a glazed orangery that projected from the western wall of the single-storied brick service range (illus. 13). This was granted retrospective consent in 2003 having been built without consent by the previous owner, C J Robinson, some years before (MDC 111/03 and LB/17/03). This plan accompanied the application for the existing swimming pool which was built in or about the same year, replacing its predecessor (MDC 1606/11).

Building Analysis

Figure 14

A ground plan by Rob Pearce Architects adapted to highlight the principal phases of building in colour. The layout of the original Tudor house is indicated in varying shades of red. Scale in metres.



Key to Figure 14

Red

The original timber-framed house of *circa* 1520/30 which reflected the standard three-cell layout illustrated in Appendix 1. The five shades indicate from east to west the two-bay parlour, the narrow chimney bay, the two-bay hall with a cross-passage (bisected by the existing partition) and the service bay which is likely to have been divided into a buttery and pantry. The ceiling in the service bay (i.e. the present study) has been raised in height to match those of the Georgian front range and to accommodate a matching sash window in the western gable.

Blue

A red-brick addition of the mid- to late-18th century, effectively forming a complete new house with a typical Georgian layout and forming a 'double-pile' structure along with the old house to the rear.

Purple

This highlights a section of ostensibly late-20th century plasterboard wall that obstructs an original window in the southern facade. The rear (northern) section of the same wall appears older but in the absence of opening-up it is impossible to establish whether or not it survives from the 18th century building.

Green

A single-storied brick rear service range containing a rebuilt late-20th century brick fireplace in the early-19th century style facing the modern breakfast room to the south. This structure was present in 1837 and may be contemporary with the Georgian house.

Brown

A mid- to late-20th century matching extension to the service range not shown in the earlier photograph in figure 12.

Yellow

A large covered swimming pool and single-storied link constructed in 2011 to replace an earlier predecessor to the west of the service range as shown in figure 13.

Introduction and Listing Entry

The Red House was built in two principal phases as highlighted in figure 14. Each of these is discussed in turn, but the much altered single-storied service wing and its various additions are not described further. The text is intended to be read in conjunction with the account of medieval houses in Appendix 1 on page 36 and the captions to the various illustrations and figures, which form part of the description. The property is listed by Historic England at grade II and its entry in the schedule is reproduced below (no. 1352443). The house was first listed in 1955 but the entry was revised by Mark Barnard in the mid 1980s:

Red House, Shop Street

House. Early C16 to rear, late C18 front block. Double-pile form. Red brick with wooden modillion eaves cornice; roof has C20 plaintiles to front and glazed black pantiles to rear. Older work timber framed and plastered under a pantiled roof. 2 storeys and attics. 5-bay facade: flush-frame sashes with glazing bars under flat rubbed brick arches. Doorcase has pilasters with dosserets, an open pediment and panelled reveals; 6-panel raised and fielded door, semi-circular fanlight with radiating glazing bars. 3 pedimented dormers with 2-light small-paned windows. Gable stacks. The left gable end has various sash windows and blind panels; this wall screens the earlier work by means of a flat parapet before sloping steeply down at the rear. Internally the earlier range has some good exposed framing. Hall has close studding and a moulded bridging beam with a band of running leaf carving on the soffit. In the side wall of the parlour, close to the gable end, is a blocked C16 doorway with 4-centre arched head. At the service end the C16 structure is only visible on the upper floor. Attic floor has closely-spaced plain joists set flat. Roof has 2 rows of wind-braced butt purlins; over the hall and parlour chambers there are slightly cambered collars with long solid arched braces meeting at the centre. Front range has original well stair with stick balusters, in 2 flights.

This description remains accurate today, although the common joists of the 16th century hall ceiling have since been exposed and a swimming pool added to the rear. The house was visited by the author in 1997 when no swimming pool was present and the hall joists remained concealed by old lath-and-plaster. The late-20th century windows of the timber-framed range were already present in 1997 but the rear fenestration is not mentioned in the listing entry and their exact date is unclear.

The Early-16th Century House

Proportions and Layout

Hall and service bays

The original house to the rear of the current building is a relatively well preserved timber-framed structure of the early-16th century. It respects the usual three-cell layout of the period as illustrated in Appendix 1, with a central hall flanked on the east by a parlour and to the west by a service bay that was extensively remodelled in the Georgian period and is now unrecognisable on the ground floor. The entire two-storied structure extends to 15 m in length on an east-west axis by 5.6 m in total width (49 ft by 18.5 ft), representing a substantial house at the upper end of the social scale at a time when many dwellings with identical layouts were no more than 13 or 14 ft wide and 30 ft long. The hall was originally 5.8 m in length (19 ft) between the fireplace at its 'high' end to the east and the wall adjoining the service rooms to the west, but this included the cross-passage between the front and rear doors that would have been separated by a boarded or panelled screen. The jamb of the original front door still survives, complete with the sawn-off ends of its lintel and arched head, but the western wall has been rebuilt and moved inwards by some 18 inches, enlarging the modern study in the service bay at the expense of the hall. The original hall ceiling also survives, with plain common joists to the west of the carved and moulded binding joist in illustration 11 and neatly chamfered and stopped examples to the east. This differentiation is often seen in early floored halls and was designed to emphasise the status of the 'high' end where the family sat at meal times with their backs to the fireplace in the medieval tradition. This bay was lit by large windows in both walls, with the sill of the front window remaining in place but the position of the back window immediately opposite now occupied by modern French doors (illus. 9 and 10). The thicker, double pegged front window sill is likely to have projected beyond the plane of the external wall to form an oriel like those commonly seen in urban streets, particularly as there is no evidence in the mid-rail above of the pegs for the chamfered

mullions visible elsewhere in the house. The internal floor is likely to have been up to 18 inches lower initially as the present floor overlaps the ostensibly original ground sill beneath.

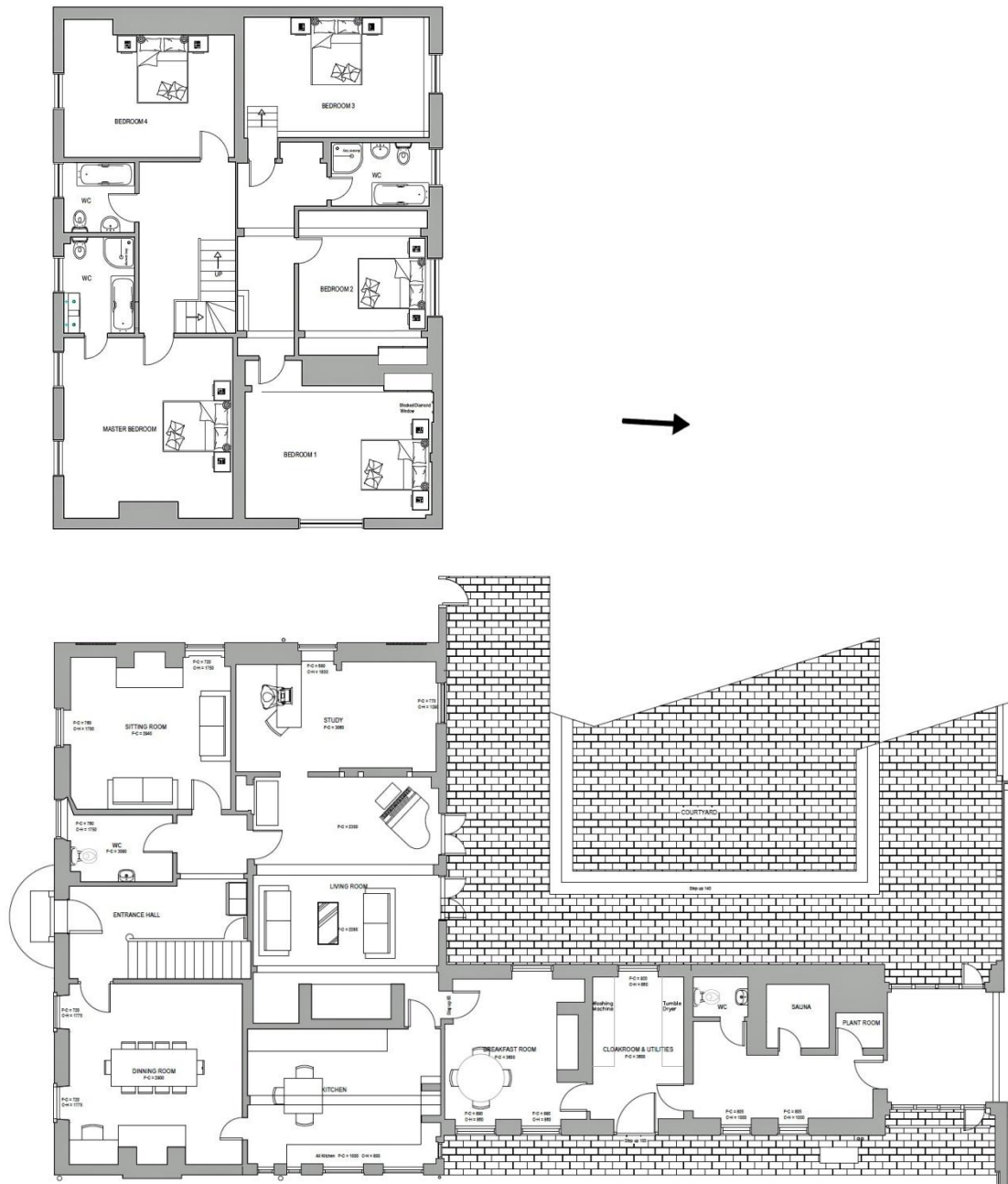


Figure 15

Ground (bottom) and first-floor plans by Rob Pearce Architects showing the building's existing layout and identifying each room with a name. The majority of the covered swimming pool to the north is omitted but the ground plan includes the yard paving.

Chimney bay and parlour

The present fireplace at the high end of the hall in illustration 8 is an 18th century replacement in uniform red-brick that differs sharply in character from the variegated painted brickwork of the 16th century. Its larger predecessor would have filled the dedicated narrow bay for which it was designed, abutting the underside of the principal ceiling joist above. This joist contains

mortices for the jambs of missing doors on each side, and the parlour would have been accessible to the front of the stack (i.e. to the right in illustration 8). The existing kitchen door to the left was blocked by a solid wall as indicated by pegged stud mortices in the ceiling joist above (i.e. to the east of the bay). At 1.4 m or 4.75 ft in length the chimney bay probably contained only a single fireplace facing the hall, leaving the parlour unheated. Dedicated bays for chimneys with back-to-back fireplaces are usually 6 ft or more in length, although it remains possible that a shallow fireplace may have faced the parlour – particularly as any mortice pegs for a solid wall in this position are currently hidden by kitchen cupboards. The parlour itself consists of two short bays and extends to 3.7 m or 12 ft in length. Its common ceiling joists are chamfered like those in the high-end bay of the hall, although those of the eastern bay are currently hidden by modern plaster like the ground-floor gable (illus. 12). Unusually, its southern facade contains an original arched door of 0.7 m in width (27 ins), with carved external spandrels as shown in illustration 13. Additional parlour entrances of this kind became common in rural Suffolk during the late-16th and early-17th centuries as these rooms were used increasingly for entertainment in addition to sleeping, but they are rarely seen at the period of the Red House. The close proximity of what appears to have been a heated kitchen/bake-house with its own chimney may offer some explanation (as shown on the early maps), especially as detached buildings of this kind often contained additional domestic accommodation.

The upper storey

The upper floor was arranged in the same way as the lower, but was unheated and entirely open to the roof structure. By the end of the 16th century a house of this quality would have been provided with a fireplace in its parlour chamber, as well as its hall and parlour, but first-floor fireplaces were ineffective in the absence of first-floor ceilings and were neither common at the beginning of the century. The western wall of the parlour chamber in illustration 22 retains its original tie-beam with a series of pegged mortices for a partly solid and partly open wall beneath, demonstrating the absence of a brick fireplace at this level. Interpreting these mortices is challenging, but the wall appears to have possessed an arched doorway to the left (south) with solid studwork in the centre and a wider arched aperture to the right through which the brick flue of the chimney would have been visible – possibly alongside a newel stair. The chamber was well lit with windows on all three sides and boasted a narrow garderobe in the southern corner of its gable (illustration 19). This cupboard-like structure would have projected by approximately 1 m and the mortice in the adjacent stud to the left is likely to have secured its northern wall. High-status houses often contained features of this kind, although at little more than 12 inches the entrance to this example is unusually narrow. It may well have extended to the ground with a separate entrance from the parlour beneath where any remaining wall framing is hidden by modern dry-lining. It is possible that a stair rose from the north-eastern corner of the parlour in the direction of the first-floor garderobe, but any evidence in the ceiling joists is similarly concealed. A second stair is likely to have existed at the back of the cross-passage as indicated in Appendix 1. The central hall chamber was spanned by an arch-braced tie-beam to the left in illustration 17, with another against the chimney to the right, but any restriction of this kind was omitted from the parlour chamber which contained an ‘A-frame’ roof structure above its central wall posts without a low tie-beam. Such a feature would have been inconvenient in a space that operated as a second bedchamber, but not in the storage area above the hall. The difference in the social status of the two rooms is further emphasised by the presence of decoratively chamfered window mullions in the former but plain, utilitarian diamond mullions in the latter (illustrations 21 and 18 respectively). It is interesting to note that internal appearances took precedence over external, at least in the rear wall. The original studwork of the eastern roof gable in illustration 25 contains evidence of a small window of diamond mullions with a housed sill in the manner of the late-16th century that was almost certainly inserted along with the ceiling in the parlour chamber – and probably a fireplace. In contrast, the upper edge of the tie-beam and collar of the western gable lack stud mortices altogether, although they are visible in the former’s underside. This gable was more exposed to passers-by, as demonstrated by its

Georgian disguise, and it presumably possessed a projecting upper gable resembling a jetty in a manner that became common later in the century.

Structure and Date

Although clearly a high-status house, known to have been built as the principal residence of members of the minor gentry, the structure lacks the ostentatious external display features associated with contemporary merchants. An urban dwelling of this quality is likely to have possessed a jettied front wall, for example, with its framing exposed to view. While the hall and parlour were decorated with expensive close-studding, including some exceptionally wide timbers in the former's back wall, the frame was rendered externally from the outset and possibly embellished with pargeting. The first-floor wall studs were far more widely spaced, even in the parlour chamber, and would have created a very odd appearance had they been visible in conjunction with the narrow spacing beneath. The section of external wall exposed in the brick rear extension contained unweathered studs that retain their original saw marks and were protected by a thick layer of clay daub through which the weathered sills of the two windows alone projected (illustration 15). The mullions of these windows are pegged at both ends and deeply chamfered to all four corners in an unusual style that may reflect the plain square as opposed to diamond mullions sometimes seen in the Debenham area. Most high-quality mullions of the same period are hollow-moulded in contrast. All the windows are associated with grooves for sliding shutters and there is no evidence of glazing, or of the shallow 'clerestorey' or slide-light windows of fashionable urban houses. Many such urban houses also possessed roll-moulded mullions with matching ceiling joists identical to the binding joist in the hall, and although this is the only timber at the Red House to display such moulding it is fully integral to the structure and undoubtedly contemporary. Ironically the side-purlin roof in illustration 24 is one of the few features at the vanguard of change in the early-16th century, with most rural roofs in this part of Suffolk retaining traditional medieval crown or queen-posts well into the Tudor era. The heavy, cranked wind-braces which survive throughout this highly impressive structure are similar to those of Lavenham's famous Guildhall of Corpus Christi built in or about 1530, albeit with butt-purlins instead of clasped-purlins, and the two buildings are certainly of much the same date. The Guildhall roof was hidden above a first-floor ceiling, and the structure of the Red House – imposing as it appears today – was also regarded as a utilitarian feature visible only from the relatively low status rooms on the first floor.

The Georgian House

Date

In the mid- to late-18th century a red-brick parallel range of almost identical length and width was added to the front of the Tudor building, creating a 'double-pile' house that effectively demoted the older structure to a service wing. The timber-framed walls were no doubt disguised with lath-and-plaster, at least on the ground floor where lath nails and scars remain visible on the studs and joists. Most remarkably, the existence of the slightly lower, old-fashioned range was disguised from the site of the road and maltings to the west by a false facade with blind windows that even masked the valley between the two roofs (illus. 2). The work was probably funded in the 1770s or 80s by the second of the two William Rays to have owned the property in the 18th century, but accurate dating is hampered by the extent to which the internal decorative features such as cornices and fire surrounds have been replaced in recent years, and a slightly later origin cannot be ruled out. While the elaborate Greek-Revival cornices and Adam-style fireplaces are clearly modern reproductions, the pegged window shutters and the impressive main staircase in illustrations 26-33 are undoubtedly original – but could possibly be as late as *circa* 1815 when Samuel Ray is known to have been declared bankrupt. Extravagant rebuilding was a common cause of financial ruin.

Layout

The new building reflected the normal layout of the 18th and 19th century with a ‘central stair passage’ flanked by drawing and dining rooms, and could have formed a complete and perfectly respectable house in its own right. Under normal circumstances the dining room would have been more highly decorated than the drawing room (and as far from the noisy and aromatic kitchen as possible), but it is currently difficult to distinguish the two as the reproduction fixtures and fittings of the modern rooms are identical. The central passage is wider than many of the same date and quality, but its layout is unusual in one key respect: instead of the entrance door to the left-hand (western) room opening directly from the entrance lobby as would normally be expected, it lies in a separate arched lobby to the rear (illustration 28). This was presumably necessary in order to provide a convenient access to the Tudor hall and the adjacent study in the service bay which was provided with a sash window in the new gable and a heightened ceiling to match. In most cases the rear service range would have been reached by a door immediately behind the central stair passage, but such an arrangement here would have required cutting the old wall studs (which remain intact) and isolating the new study. The arched lobby could also be regarded as replicating the earlier porch, although there is nothing to suggest any of its fabric survives. It is unclear whether the present WC to the left in illustration 28 occupies part of an original feature or represents a 20th century insertion. Its western wall obstructs a sash window, and is slightly angled to the south in order to avoid overlapping it. Such an anomaly would never have been permitted in the past, and the majority of this partition evidently consists of modern plasterboard (coloured purple in figure 14). The present sitting room was previously L-shaped, but the northern section of the same partition is older and may possibly survive from a smaller cupboard-like room reached from the arched lobby that may have served as a butler’s pantry. This question is difficult to answer without exposing the wall fabric. It is even possible that prior to the insertion of the WC – or its smaller predecessor – the sitting room was reached directly from the entrance hall as usual and the arched rear lobby opened only into the Tudor hall and the study. Once again, only the exposure of the wall studs will establish the exact subtleties of the original layout in this part of the house.

The Farm Outbuilding

A small timber-framed outbuilding lies approximately 50 m to the north-west of the house and is coloured green in figure 14. This building has been extensively altered but retains part of a mid-19th century structure to the south along with sections of tarred weatherboarding. The narrow studs interrupted by diagonal primary braces are typical of the third quarter of the century and consistent with the building’s absence from the 1837 tithe map and its appearance on the 1884 Ordnance Survey (figures 7 and 8). It originally lay in close proximity to a large threshing barn on the east, as depicted in the 1743 map, and was probably a small stable with a hay loft, although any precise interpretation is hampered by the extent of its alterations in the 20th century when a corrugated iron lean-to was added to the rear (north). The structure is not of sufficient age or completeness to warrant separate listing, but lies within the historic curtilage of the house and may be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset for planning purposes.

Historic Significance

The Red House is of special historic interest as it combines two exceptional houses in one: a fine and largely unaltered Georgian brick mansion and a complete early-16th century timber-framed building with a number of rare features. The two structures are complemented by their equally exceptional documentary record, linking the property to a well-known Suffolk gentry

family and including rare early depictions on maps of the 17th and 18th centuries. The Tudor house of *circa* 1520/30 illustrates a transitional stage in the development of local domestic housing between the open halls of the 15th century and those with multiple fireplaces and glazed windows of the late-16th. Its narrow high-end stack bay suggests that only its hall was heated initially, and its upper storey was open to its roof which represents an early example of a side purlin structure. Although an impressive and decorative structure to modern historians this roof appears to have been regarded as purely utilitarian since it was visible both from the higher status parlour chamber with chamfered mullions and the low status hall chamber with plain diamond mullions. The arched door in the front wall of the parlour is a rare feature that may be explained with reference to the nearby heated outbuilding in the front 'base court' shown on the early maps. The absence of jetties and exposed framing is also of historic interest, suggesting that gentry families felt able to eschew the external ostentation of contemporary merchants. Despite the recent renewal of many internal fixtures and fittings the Georgian range is also generally well preserved with impressive and unaltered facades to both the south and west along with a particularly fine 'stick' baluster staircase rising to its attic storey.

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Illustrations (pp. 19-35)



Illus. 1. The handsome, symmetrical late-Georgian southern facade, which remains unaltered since it was built – probably by William Ray the Younger who owned the property between 1768 and his death in 1790.



Illus. 2. The remarkable Georgian western gable which disguises the earlier timber-framed structure to the left. Its blind windows were designed as such, and were intended to relieve the considerable expanse of brickwork. They bear no relationship to the Tudor building, and it was necessary to raise the ceiling in the latter's service bay in order to accommodate the ground-floor window to the left. Both first-floor windows to the left of the drain pipe are obstructed by the original tie-beam in illustration 23.



Illus. 3. The eastern gable was not visible from either the maltings or the road and was not disguised in the manner of its counterpart to the west. The rafters of the Georgian front range over lap those of the lower Tudor building giving the earlier gable a false appearance of asymmetry.



Illus. 4. The house from the north-east showing the covered swimming pool adjoining the single-storied rear service wing adjoining the moat. This was built with planning permission in or about 2011 (MDC 1606/11), replacing an earlier example immediately behind the house that was built without consent in *circa* 2000 by a previous owner, C J Robinson – although retrospective consent was granted in 2003 (MDC 111/03 and LB/17/03).



Illus. 5. The brick rear service range from the west with the Tudor house on the right and the addition of 2011 which forms part of the covered swimming pool on the left. The chimney was roughly central to the original structure as shown in figure 12, but it had been extended to its present length by the 1970s. The swimming pool of *circa* 2000 extended from the clock to the northern gable on the left and the new brickwork that filled the wide connecting door is visible to the left of the bench. This rear yard lies in the expected position of the medieval house at the centre of the moat.



Illus. 6. The rear (northern) elevation of the early-16th century house with the brick western gable in illustration 2 on the right. The windows date from a major late-20th century refurbishment which occurred prior to 1997. Figure 12 shows small-paned casements that may have survived from the Georgian remodelling.



Illus. 7. The rear courtyard from the south showing the covered swimming pool of 2011 adjoining the single-storied service range.



Illus. 8. The early-16th century hall (the living room in figure 15) looking east towards the narrow high-end chimney bay of 1.4 m (4.75 ft) that was probably designed for a single, large fireplace heating the hall but not the parlour. The present fireplace is a reconstruction of the 18th century, and the original brickwork would have adjoined the jambs of doors to the right and left that opened into the parlour and either a cupboard or newel stair respectively. The common joists of this room were hidden by lath-and-plaster as recently as 1997.



Illus. 9. The front wall of the Tudor hall, which now adjoins the Georgian range. The expensive, closely-spaced studs indicate the building's high status, but those of the upper storey, unseen by visitors, were far less close. This anomaly was originally disguised externally by render. The horizontal timber to the left of the door is the thick sill of a projecting, oriel window. Part of the original arch to the cross-passage entrance survives in the narrow door jamb to the right of the present door, but the hall's corner post has been moved 18 inches to the left of its original position to enlarge the service bay.



Illus. 10. The rear wall of the hall showing exceptionally large studs of some 9 inches in width to the right of the high-end window, which is now occupied by French doors. The common studs of the high-end bay to the right are neatly chamfered and stopped, but those of the low-end bay to the left are entirely plain.



Illus. 11. A detail from the low-end bay of the finely roll-moulded binding joist in the hall, with a foliate-carved scroll to the centre of its soffit. This timber is fully pegged and tenoned to the storey posts and undoubtedly original to the building, although it is unusual to find roll-mouldings of this kind in conjunction with plainly chamfered and unchamfered common joists. The foliate scroll is typical of the 1520s but is crudely carved compared with identical examples found in many merchant houses and churches of the period.



Illus. 12. The front wall of the two-bay parlour (now the kitchen), showing an original arched door to the left and the shutter groove and mullion pegs of a window to the right. Separate parlour entrances became increasingly common as the 16th century progressed but this example is unusually early. It may have been intended to access the adjacent outbuilding shown on early maps.



Illus. 13. The foliate-carved spandrels of the parlour door, seen from the Georgian dining room to the south (i.e. to the left in illustration 31). Traces of old red ochre pigment are visible beneath the later whitewash, giving another possible explanation of the property's name.



Illus. 14. The rear (northern) wall of the parlour with the position of the original window in illustration 15 to the left of the binding joist. The exposed common joists are chamfered like those in the high-end bay of the hall but it is unclear whether they survive above the modern dry-lining which conceals the eastern bay on the right. The gable is also dry-lined with what appears to be plasterboard at this level, and may have been rebuilt.



Illus. 15. The rear wall of the parlour, seen from the ostensibly early-19th century brick service range to the north. The central post lies to the left with a ground-floor window to the right. Four original chamfered and pegged window mullions survive above the nailed lintel of a smaller, later window, and the original weathered sill overlaps the post and jamb beneath the later sill. A similar weathered lintel of the first-floor window in illus. 20-21 is visible at the roof apex. Two original mullions have somehow survived within the smaller window. The walls studs are not weathered, with their saw marks still well preserved, and the disparity between the closely-spaced ground-floor timbers and their widely spaced counterparts above would not have been visible.



Illus. 16. The first-floor corridor to the south of the hall chamber, as seen from the chimney bay to the east, with the Georgian staircase to the left. Note the steps leading to the service chamber in the rear (bedroom 3), which was raised to accommodate the Georgian window of the western gable. The panelling is modern.



Illus. 17. The northern wall of the hall chamber in bedroom 2 showing the central open truss on the left and that adjoining the chimney bay on the right. Both preserve pegged mortices for missing arch-braces with a distinctly Tudor profile. The sloping flue of the original chimney would have been visible from this space initially. The roof-plate above the modern window contains mortices for diamond mullions as shown in illus. 18.



Illus. 18. A detail of the hall chamber's roof-plate in illus. 17 showing empty mortices for diamond window mullions, i.e. square mullions set diagonally in the standard manner of early unglazed windows. These illustrate the utilitarian nature of the space relative to the adjoining parlour chamber which boasts chamfered mullions. Impressive as the roof structure might appear, it was visible from this space and was probably regarded as practical rather than decorative: hall chambers were typically store rooms while parlour chambers were secondary bedrooms.



Illus. 19. The eastern gable of the parlour chamber with late-20th century casements in the position of the central window and the intact lintel of an original garderobe (privy) adjoining the corner post on the right. The back of a mortice for the external cupboard-like projection is visible in the adjacent stud to the left. The lintel is pegged at both ends and is just 12 inches long, but the jambs were probably curved to widen the aperture.



Illus. 20. The northern wall of the parlour chamber (bedroom 1) showing the principal rafter of the A-frame principal roof truss in the centre and an intact original window of chamfered mullions to the left. The truss is shown in illustration 24 and the window in illustration 21.



Illus. 21. A detail of the original chamfered window mullions in the back wall of the parlour chamber (illus. 20). Each mullion is tenoned and pegged to the roof-plate, which contains a groove for a horizontally sliding window shutter. Plainly chamfered mullions of this kind are not common and this feature represents a rare survive. Illus. 15 shows its weathered sill that would have projected through the original external render.



Illus. 22. The tie-beam to the west of the parlour chamber (bedroom 1). This abuts the chimney bay but there is no evidence of a fireplace in this room. The tie contains an unusual variety of pegged mortices, possibly for an arched doorway on the left which provided a link with the hall chamber (lit by the window adjoining the post to the left) and a gap framed by an arch-brace to the right of a central stud that would have exposed the chimney flue.



Illus. 23. The western gable of the 16th century building (bedroom 3). The floor level is higher here than at the eastern gable (illus. 19) as the ground-floor ceiling joists have been raised, apparently to match the Georgian ceilings and accommodate the sash window in illus. 2. The tie-beam contains mortices in its lower surface but not its upper, suggesting the roof gable may have projected slightly in the manner of a jetty.



Illus. 24. The open truss of the fully wind-braced butt-purlin roof above the parlour chamber, with the eastern gable in the rear. An identical truss with an arch-braced, cambered collar survives in the centre of the hall chamber, with a flat, unbraced collar to the west of the chimney bay and another in the closed truss against the service bay. There is no principal truss to the east of the chimney bay. The first-floor ceilings are insertions, and this roof was exposed to the upper storey initially. Impressive as it seems, it may have been regarded as utilitarian given the plain mullions in the hall chamber.



Illus. 25. The framing of the eastern roof gable in illustration 24, with narrow inserted studs between the wider originals which are pegged to the horizontal collar. The collar of the eastern gable is cambered and lacks stud mortices. Two mortices for diamond window mullions are visible to the left of centre, with corresponding pegged and housed sill mortices beneath. The window aperture respects the equal spacing of the studs and it was probably inserted along with the attic floor later in the 16th century.



Illus. 26. The central entrance passage of the Georgian addition which retains its original 'stick' baluster staircase and fanlight. The door is slightly offset as usual to accommodate the foot of the stair, and this arrangement is fully original to the building.



Illus. 27. The Georgian entrance passage from the southern front door, with the arched entrance to the Tudor building on the half landing. The elegant staircase is a fine original feature which rises to the attic storey but is relatively plain with a pine hand rail and no carving to the tread-ends.



Illus. 28. The arched lobby to the west of the Georgian entrance passage, with the door to the 16th century hall on the right. This unusual feature was necessary to reach the approximate position of the Tudor cross-passage and partly replicates the porch shown in figure 4 – although there is nothing to suggest any of its fabric survives. The partition to the left is original and the central door opens into the modern ‘sitting room’. If the left-hand WC door existed initially it may have served a cupboard or butler’s pantry.



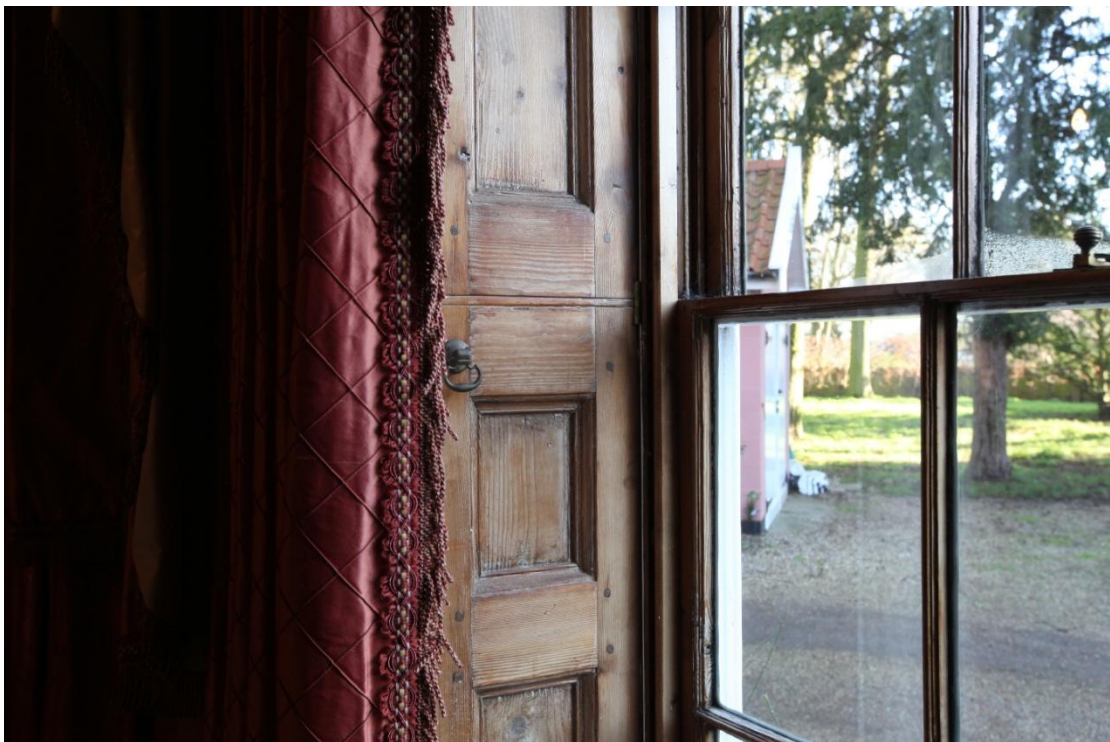
Illus. 29. The fireplace in the western gable of the Georgian ‘sitting room’. The exposed brickwork is modern and the carved fire surround appears to be a copy of an Adam-style original that matches the example in the dining room (illus. 31). The suspiciously sharp cornices of both rooms are also identical, in a way that would not be expected in the 18th century. They are far more elaborate than would be expected in a house of this scale and in conjunction with the relatively plain but clearly original staircase. It would appear that a former owner installed these features as part of a major refurbishment.



Illus. 30. The ‘sitting room’ from the west, showing the angled corner that avoids the original sash window lighting the WC. The right-hand section of this wall consists of plasterboard and represents a modern insertion, but is respected by the cornice.



Illus. 31. The eastern gable of the Georgian ‘dining room’, with the arched entrance of the Tudor parlour in illustration 13 hidden behind the door on the left. As in the ‘sitting room’, the fireplace, cornice and plaster ceiling rose appear to be late-20th century insertions. The principal drawing and dining rooms of Georgian houses were rarely decorated in the same way, with the better quality ornament reserved for the latter.



Illus. 32. A detail of the ostensibly original window shutters in the ‘dining room’, which match those of the ‘sitting room’. The pegged construction is typical of the late-18th century rather than the early-19th, and like the sash windows these are fine survivals – although they would have been stained or painted initially.



Illus. 33. The first-floor stair landing seen from the west. The flat-faced surrounds of the various doors in the Georgian section of the house are typical of the late-18th century, as are the large-panelled doors, but it is difficult to be certain which are likely to be original and which installed as part of the Georgian-style restoration. The room or rooms adjoining this landing would normally have been designed as linen cupboards.



Illus. 34. The roof of the Georgian range, as seen from the west with the staircase to the left. The staggered butt-purlins are clearly original, respecting the positions of the southern dormer windows, but the collars appear to have been re-used and contain wide plaster-filled mortices in their western edges and smaller joist mortices to the east.

Appendix 1

The Standard Room Plan of Medieval and Tudor Houses

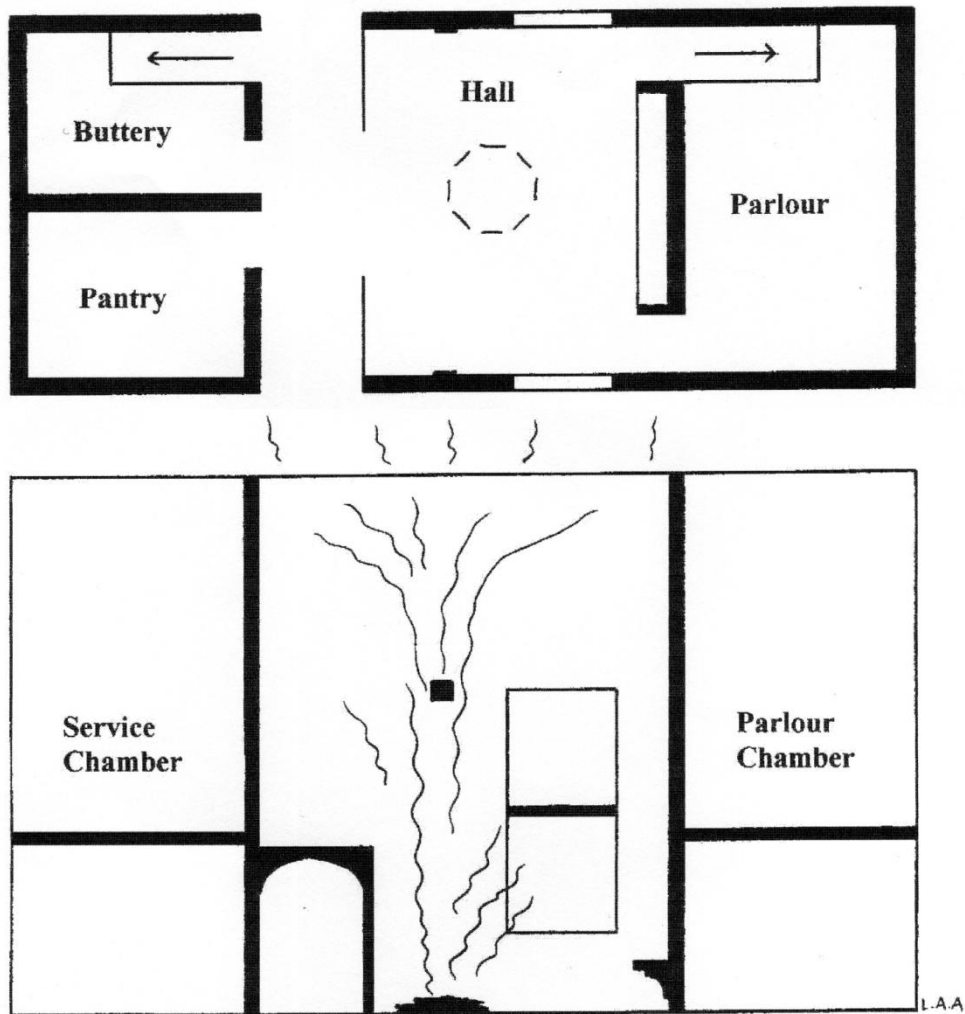
Although identical houses are rare, almost all domestic buildings constructed between the mid-13th and the early-17th centuries reflect the same room layout (see accompanying diagram). Until the opening decades of the 16th century the only heated space in a typical house comprised an open hall with an open hearth akin to a bonfire burning on its floor. In the absence of a chimney the hall, as its name suggests, was open to its roof in the manner of a barn to allow smoke to escape through the roof covering and through tall, unglazed windows which rose from normal sill height to eaves level. The hall was a communal space with little or no fixed furniture, and was used as a dining room, a dormitory for household servants and apprentices, and as a kitchen and general purpose working area at varying times of the day. The hall was also designed to display the wealth and status of its owner, and at meal times was arranged like a modern college dining hall, with the head of the household sitting with his immediate family behind the 'high table' at one end, while his servants and employees were arranged in order of precedence at secondary tables along the side walls. The lower an individual's status in the household, the further he sat from the 'high' end of the hall. The high table was often raised on a platform or dais, but contemporary references to the high and low ends of houses relate rather to social than physical hierarchy. Halls were usually divided into two structural bays, separated by a pair of principal posts carrying a tie-beam that spanned the walls at eaves level, with the great windows in the high-end bay towards the dais. Fixing pegs for the high-end bench, which was often attached to the wall, can sometimes be seen in surviving examples. The front and back doors of the house (which often stood open for ventilation purposes) lay opposite each other at the low end of the hall, forming a cross-passage that was partly screened by boarded partitions to exclude the weather.

The open hall in the middle of the typical medieval house was flanked by additional rooms that were usually floored over. Beyond the high end of the hall lay a single room known as a parlour, that served as the main bedroom for family members and guests and contained at least one bed (perhaps consisting of nothing more than a straw mattress) and perhaps a few pieces of furniture that normally included a storage chest. The parlour was entered by a door to one side of the high-end bench, and sometimes a second door on the opposite side of the bench opened onto a stair to the solar (upper room) above. Medieval living took place primarily on the relatively warm ground-floor, and the two solars of the house were used chiefly for storage purposes. An increasing demand for domestic privacy during the later 16th century saw the provision of additional bedrooms on the first floor, and the 'parlour chamber', as the room over the parlour came to be known, was often provided with its own fireplace. Principal bedrooms, used more and more for sitting and entertaining as well as sleeping, remained downstairs until well into the 17th century.

Beyond the low end of the hall lay two service or storage rooms termed butteries and pantries (or collectively as 'spences', i.e. dispensing rooms). As their names suggest, these were used for storing wet and dry goods respectively, and represent the household larder. The front service rooms of town houses often contained shops, and the buttery sometimes served as a dairy in rural contexts. Two doorways lying side by side in the middle of the low-end wall gave access to these rooms, usually in conjunction with a third door against the back wall that opened onto a stair to the service chamber above. Although the original arches of these doorways have frequently been removed, their position may be revealed by the distribution of peg holes used to secure the mortise and tenon joints of the wall timbers.

The tripartite plan described here is found in both large manor houses and small peasant cottages in the countryside, but is sometimes condensed in towns where houses consisting of only a hall and subdivided parlour (or occasionally a hall with service rooms) may be found. Houses of high status might also possess rear courtyards, containing additional

accommodation or perhaps bake-houses and workshops, but rarely add to the tripartite arrangement in their main ranges. Rectangular houses under a single roof are common, but more ostentatious town houses frequently contain their parlour and service rooms in relatively expensive cross-wings with jettied gables built at right-angles to their halls. From the beginning of the 16th century chimney stacks were inserted into open halls, and new houses built with ceilings throughout, but the standard layout endured. By the end of the same century fireplaces were typically provided in parlours as well as halls, and often the parlour chamber was also heated (but rarely the hall chamber). Not until the second quarter of the 17th century did the cross-passage plan begin to disappear from new houses, to be gradually replaced by a number of different layouts of which the 'lobby-entrance', where the main door opens into a narrow 'lobby' in front of a chimney stack between the hall and parlour, was the most common.



The Standard Medieval House Plan

The Red House closely reflected this arrangement in the early-16th century, albeit with a ceiling throughout and a dedicated narrow bay for a chimney between its central hall and parlour. The 'low-end' wall to the left of the hall has been moved by 18 inches to the right, into the position of the cross-passage, thereby enlarging the study that now occupies the service bay. The provision of an additional door in the front wall of the parlour is a non-standard feature, and the high-end stair either took the form of a narrow newel behind the chimney or lay in the eastern bay of the parlour where the joists are currently concealed.

Appendix 2

History of the Red House from Documentary Sources

Unquestionably the most useful "key" to the history of the Red House in Worlingworth is the Verow Collection in Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich (ref.HO89). This small group of manuscripts consists, for the most part, of 19th century deeds and associated documents, but it includes one very time coloured map of the Red House estate dated 1743 (HO89//13). In 1743, the Red House, with its lands and tenements, was in the possession of a Mr. William Ray. A deed of 1753 in Worlingworth parish records (FC94/L 1//54444) contained references to William Ray the elder of Worlingworth, merchant, and to William Ray the younger, his son, who appears to have inherited his father's estate c.1764. William Ray the younger died in 1790, leaving his property to his widow and then, on her death in 1813, to his eldest son Samuel Ray. Like many other tradesmen and farmers at the end of the Napoleonic War, Samuel's business failed and he was declared bankrupt in 1815. He was described in court a "merchant, maltster, dealer and chapman, then or late of Tannington". An important detail on the map of 1743 is the malthouse in Malthouse Pightle clearly marked as part of the Red House estate. Taken with the evidence of a clay pot in the possession of the author inscribed on the neck "Samuel Ray, brandy merchant, Worlingworth", the history of the Red House in the second half of the 18th century is firmly linked to the brewing and retailing of alcoholic beverages, a tradition which continued throughout the 19th and into the 20th century.

The map of 1743 depicts the Red House as a traditional Suffolk house of three bays but with a two-storey porch projecting on the front from the southern end of the screens passage. It would be no surprise to discover that this substantial porch was incorporated into the main body of the building later in the 18th Century (or early in the 19th) when the "Georgian" front was added. It should also be noted that a smaller building with chimney still existed in 1743 adjacent to but not quite touching the southeast corner of the Red House (see map attached hereto).

A new map of Worlingworth in 1829 very recently discovered (December 1988) recorded that the Red House was owned and occupied in 1714 by Simon Rowse. This turns out to be Simon Rowse the younger, yeoman. In his will, no mention is made of any lands or property in his possession; this is not unusual if he had disposed of his estate, presumably to the Ray family, before his death c.1720. His father, Simon Rowse the elder, gentleman, died in 1705, having made his will two years earlier. A full inventory of the Red House made in 1705 has survived (Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, RE1/5/1000) which, it is interesting to record, confirms the existence of a porch (viz. Porch Chamber) but does not mention the malt house. It is to be assumed therefore, that the Maltings at Worlingworth was a development to the property effected by the Ray family after the demise of the Rowse dynasty.

In order to trace the history of the house backwards from 1714, reference should be made to the map of Worlingworth manor compiled c.1606 (HD417/33). This map recorded that the tenant of the Red House then was Thomas Rowse, who held in free tenure "a messuage with 6 acres of land, tenement Burton's". Rowse was paying 23s.4d. per annum for all the free lands of Tenement Burton's as the Red House was

then called. According to an inscription on the 1606 map, this information could be found in a survey dated 1553-4 it should be noted that the Red House/Burton's did not have a porch in c.1606 (which must therefore date between c.1606 and 1705), but did have two gabled wings projecting southwards from the east and west ends of the house. The out building to the south east existed then, but two other structures disappeared between 1606 and 1743: one of these was a smaller version of the outbuilding (above) which stood a little distance from the south west corner of the house and the chimney stack abutting on the road frontage. Worlingworth is perhaps the best-documented village in Suffolk in terms of medieval and Tudor manuscripts of virtually all categories. The survey of 1553-4 (see above) still exists (S1/2/7.16) but hives its best information in a series of entries added in 1610. This confirms that the tenant was Thomas Rowse (above), but also stated that this property consisted of free lands, which were once held by Elias de Worlingworth and later by John Burton. At least this explains how the Red House came by its earlier name of Burtons. The 1606 survey also recorded that more information could be found in manuscripts dated "the 20th year of Richard 2nd" and "the first and third years of Henry V". These turn out as expected to be entries in manor court rolls and they, also still exist.

Another manorial survey of 1543-4 (S1/2/7.4) also contains particularly useful data for the history of the Red House (fols.25v.-28r.). It describes Tenement Burton's, "formerly held by William Rous", in 14 separate entries. Of these, the first entry consisted of three free tenements called Hotts, Chapells and Parkers: with absolute safety these can be located in the far south west of the parish abutting on the road (now a bridleway) from Debenham market to Worlingworth and are probably of 12th century origin. This should alert the researcher immediately to the fact that Tenement Burton's consisted of a free tenement with orchards and gardens containing two and a half acres; this is the only mention (if somewhat oblique) of a dwelling but clearly refers to the Red House. As in all the entries in this survey, the name of William Rous had been deleted and replaced superscript by Anthony Rous.

It is worth noting that entry 11 of the 1543-4 survey described a plot of land as abutting southwards on the tenement of the said William Rous called "Rous's"; not surprisingly, this reference confirms that the Red House was also sometimes called "Rouses". It was always likely that the Rouse family of Worlingworth was a cadet branch of the Rous family of Dennington and Henham. This is confirmed by reference to the Visitation a Suffolk in 1557 (p. 161). According to the Humfrey Rowse of Worlingworth Suckling's "History and Antiquities of Suffolk" Dennington and adds the probably incorrect information that Humfrey had a manor at Worlingworth. As far as can be ascertained, Worlingworth manor belonged to the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds until the dissolution of the monasteries, when, in 1539, it was acquired by Sir Anthony Rous of Dennington. The Manor was never sub-infeudated (divided), although the behaviour of the 16th century Rouses of Worlingworth as illustrated in the court rolls might have grounds for considering whether they were de facto lords of the manor.

Of the identity of Reginald Rous (above) there is no doubt. He was a leading Suffolk lawyer and M.P who attained the rank of barrister. He lived in a large fortified manor house (now destroyed demolished c.1663) at Dennington Place, was mentioned in the Paston Letters and died in 1464. His will did not mention property in Worlingworth specifically but did refer in the relevant clause to smaller properties" in Laxfield and

other towns". His name crops up in yet another Worlingworth survey dated 1466. An entry in Worlingworth court rolls for March 1438 clearly records that it was then that Reginald Rous bought the Red House estate from John Burton.

Humfrey Rous was clearly resident at Worlingworth from 1480 onwards. His name occurs in several court incidents involving the acquisition and purloining pieces of land in the vicinity of the Red House (Borton Close, for example), but was superseded by William Rowse by, at the latest, 1526. It is distinctly possible that the house portrayed on the 1606 map was Humfrey's work. His efforts seem to have been single-mindedly devoted to carving out a gentleman's estate.

In order to uncover the story of the Red House back from its purchase by Reginald Rous in 1438, searches for evidence have, for the time being, to be concentrated in the court rolls. Indeed, an entry made in a roll of 1417 (S1/2/1.11,anna 5) obligingly recorded that in April that year, John Burton of Framlingham and Robert Wheymond entered the lands formerly held by Elias de Worlingworth by permission of three trustees including Robert Rous; father of Reginald (above). Furthermore, a court of 1415 recorded that these trustees had been acting for the recently deceased Robert de Worlingworth, brother and heir of recently deceased. Rapid developments in a family's arrangements for inheritance are not uncommon in the early 15th century and were frequently caused by epidemic disease.

The problem now arises of tracing Elias de Worlingworth, who owned the land, at least, on which the Red House now stands, before John Burton. The court rolls quickly show that he was born c.1351, immediately after the First Pestilence, the son and heir of John de Worlingworth. In the mid 14th century, the de Worlingworth family held lands scattered all over the parish and acquired yet more as the 14th Century closed, as two surveys of 1400 and 1401 make clear. John de Worlingworth may very well be the Norwich based merchant active and probably also resident in Worlingworth in c.1335. It is by no means impossible that the site of this 14th century wool merchant's house underlies the Red House.

The later history of the Red House, after the after the bankruptcy of Samuel Ray, involves the arrival of another malster to take over the Ray's business interests, Joseph Adams. After this man's death, the Clarke family became tenants of the Maltings at least and it is their name, which occurs on so many of the clay bottles originating in the area, "James Clarke and Son, Worlingworth". In the early 1970's, the Clarkes drinking habits were still remembered as legendary; the business was said to have been kept ticking over by the ability of the Clarkes' horse to find its way back to Worlingworth when those aboard the cart were insensible and the horse itself could not pass for sober. Ref: Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich), FE1/5/100.

(Anonymous article in the possession of the current owner. Possibly by the late John Ridgard, or local historian Geoffrey Robinson.)

William Ray 1705-1768

What do we know of this interesting man and his influential family, who shaped the future commercial prosperity of Shop Street? The earliest records indicate that a Joseph Ray came to Worlingworth in the 1650s with his wife Sarah Sparrow, shortly after their marriage in Depden (near Bury St Edmunds) in 1652. At least five children were baptised in Worlingworth between 1656 and 1662, after which most of the family returned to Joseph's birthplace of Laxfield.

Whilst Joseph Ray spent his final years in Laxfield, his eldest son Samuel Ray settled in Worlingworth and he and his wife Mary represent one of the oldest surviving grave plots in the churchyard. We know from the tomb inscription that Samuel was a grocer; he passed away in 1738 but his legacy, according to a Town Committee book, was to give property to the parish. This was the cottage that used to be a guildhall, opposite to the church, and Samuel Ray expressed the wish that this property be used as a house for the poor of the parish - the Parish Poorhouse.

It was opened in February 1739 - a condition of the agreement was for Samuel's grandson William to approve (or otherwise) the admissions. This wasn't a problem for William Ray because a governor had been appointed to deal with the administration of the Poorhouse. Besides, William had more important business to attend to, namely his many investments.

Samuel Ray had also invested in the Red House, Worlingworth in about 1720, after the previous owner, Simon Rowse, had to dispose of the property. The Red House had its origins in the 14th century and had been in the possession of the Rous (Rowse) family for hundreds of years.

The house was acquired by William Ray and he set about building a malting-house on land to the west of the house. The malting-house structure still stands today (206 on the 1837 Tithe map shown below) though it has now been re-developed as housing. The Ray family established their grocery, drapery and spirits business in a cottage that was given to the parish by William Godbold, another landowning gent. The shop, which was for a middle class clientele, eventually became accommodation for the schoolmaster from 1875.

William Ray also acquired various other properties on Shop Street - we know this because we have a copy of William's will. This is extremely informative and suggests that William Ray was a good businessman and extremely wealthy when he passed away. The Ray family business empire probably reached its zenith towards the middle of the 18th century.

William Ray (d. 1764) owned land in Redenhall, Withersdale, Weybread and near to Harleston. He also owned land in Tannington, property in Worlingworth and, as already mentioned, the Red House and the associated Maltings. He would leave most of his properties and business interests to his eldest son William (d. 1790).

At some stage in William Ray's business life, an investment was made in a plantation in Jamaica. This was most likely to have been a sugar plantation and might have been linked to the brewing and spirits business developing on the Red House estate. It

seems quite remarkable that this remote and sparsely populated parish should house a gentleman who owned part of the West Indies!

As mentioned previously, the Ray family's fortunes were at their height in the middle of the 18th century. By 1815, when Samuel Ray (a grandson of William) was declared bankrupt, the family had truly fallen on hard times, a fate that befell many other respectable businessmen. An indication of the spirits business in the shop is evidenced in the inventory of goods at the time of the bankruptcy - amongst the goods were 40 gallons of peppermint, 60 gallons of Jamaica rum and 340 gallons of gin!

Samuel Ray's bankruptcy came about because he owed ?100 to Jeremiah Smith of Bruisyard Hall. This might not have been a difficult debt to settle if not for a condition of his father's will that he had to meet when his mother died. He had to pay his sister ?500 which probably strained the finances. There are probably other reasons why he had to declare bankruptcy. Business might have collapsed - John Cordy's shop further up the street was popular with most of the population (the cottagers). Taxes on malt and spirits were becoming punitive.

A final humiliation for Samuel came with the closure of his shop and the employment of his son and daughter-in-law Samuel and Phyllis in John Cordy's shop after Cordy retired to Woodbridge. Samuel Ray retired to his farm in Tannington and lived into his 91st year but the influence of this family in Worlingworth was at an end by the 1840s when Phyllis Ray retired to Lowestoft.

(Anonymous article on the Worlingworth Local History Group's website.)