



Looking S in the Cross-wing Back Bedroom 5.



Looking NE in the Cross-wing Back Bedroom 5.

Cross-wing Back Bedroom 5

The timber-frame is exposed in the south outer wall and has a curved down-brace from the window frame set in the corner which has a mullioned window reduced in size. There is a 1930's style brick slab fireplace and it likely the room was done up between the 1930's and the 1950's as the four panel doors and canted partition with high level lights is typical of that era. The floor is covered with hardboard over wide (10-14in) pine and oak floorboards which can be seen inside the closet.



Looking N at the built in 1950's style closet.



The Landing closet with C19th door.

There is a built in closet of 1950's style but there is also a C19th linen closet accessed from the Landing. This has a machine made edge-moulded vertically boarded door with four ledgers and is hung on flat-strap hinges all screwed in place. The arrangement of a linen cupboard at the top of the stairs is a very common LC19th feature in older houses.



The Middle Back Bedroom 4 looking NW.



Looking SE in the Middle Back Bedroom 4.

Middle Back Bedroom 4

This room displays no historic fabric and is part of the C19th extension.



Looking NE in the Central Bedroom 2 from the main staircase.



Looking SE in Central Bedroom 2 .

Central Bedroom 2

The timber frame is exposed in the eastern outer wall with a corner window frame and the storey posts are visible in the partition north wall. The ceiling is inserted a foot above the tie-beams and hides a crown post roof above. There is a smaller brick fireplace with flat Tudor segmental arch under a thin timber strake for applying wall panels. The floor has wide 10-14in oak boards.



Closet with EC19th door.



The cross-wing frame has been sawn off to insert the firestack.

There is a small closet with EC19th vertically boarded door to the east of the firestack. Inside it can be seen that the top-pate for the cross-wing has been sawn off to insert the firestack. This would also indicate that the hall frame and the cross-wing are separate frames. A c.1800 wrought iron strap has been attached to the hall storey post.



Redundant mortices in the tie-beam and storey post.



The first floor frame by the storey post.

The storey post in the north partition wall has a redundant mortice as though for bracket and the cambered tie-beam has a an empty mortice for an axial main joist. This would indicate an older ceiling has been removed and the current one put in at a higher more comfortable height. The first floor frame can be seen correctly pegged with 6in flat joists. The oak boards have riven laths applied with a thick lime mortar between the joists.



Looking NE in the North Bedroom 1.



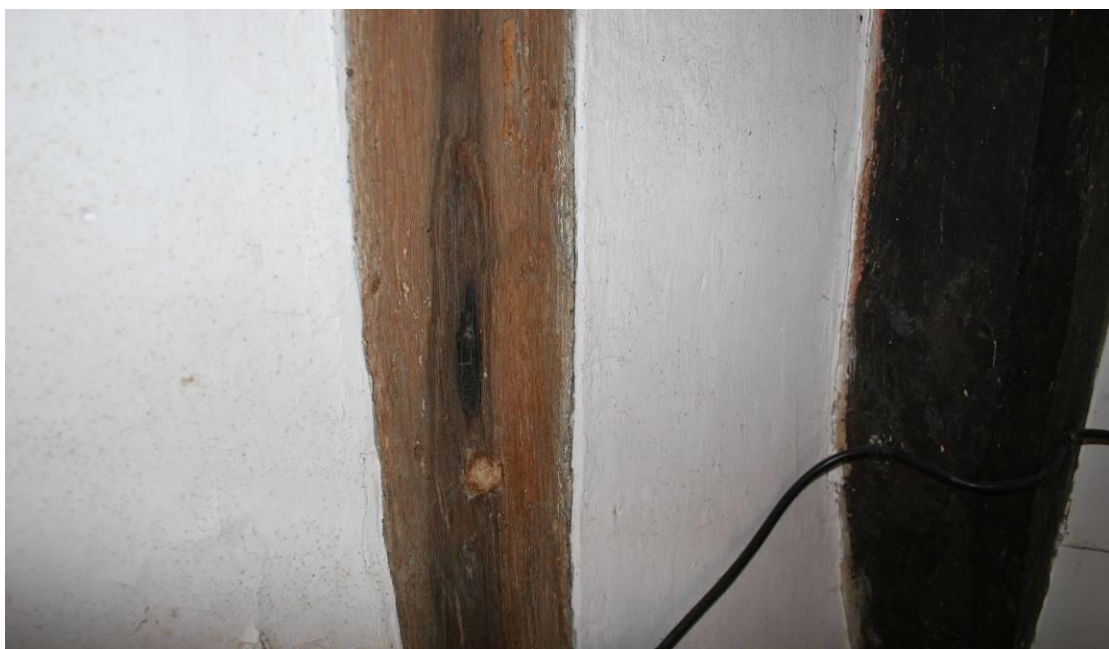
Looking SE at the partition wall in North Bedroom 1

North Bedroom 1

The frame is exposed in the north and south walls and in the attic floor above. Only studs are present because the braces are trenced to the outside as shown on aerial photogtaphy.



Fixture holes and multiple taper burns.



A single large taper burn by the NE storey post.

Both walls have a series of 1.25in diameter fixture holes at two levels. These could be for benches, desk, shelves or other furniture. The partition wall has multiple taper burns concentrated in two places and this usually indicates that someone has repeatedly read by candlelight at a desk. The north wall has a single taper burn mark and these are usually considered as apotropaic.



Looking W in the North Bedroom 1.



Detail of the attic floor frame.

There is a c.1800 brick firestack that rises from the Kitchen (where it serves the Aga) with a very small fireplace for a cast iron insert or even a stove. The Kitchen staircase rises beside it in a precarious way such that it would be easy to fall down it. Another staircase rises to the Attic Room above and passes behind the firestack. The attic floor is exposed and has near square common joists set on edge in a deep main joist with a rough chamfer and sharp cut stops. The floor appears inserted in the C17th.



Looking N in the Bathroom. The door leads to the Attic Room.



The exposed frame in the attic staircase. Looking NE.

Bathroom En Suite

The Bathroom is within the C18th extension and the exposed frame is of scantling with wattle and daub infill panels reinforced later with riven lath and plaster.



The attic staircase.



Looking down the attic staircase.

The attic staircase is of the same construction details as the Kitchen staircase with machined treads and risers of a carcass of pitsawn timbers with wattle and daub and lath and plaster panels.



Looking N in the Attic Room.



Looking S in the Attic Room. Note the crown post roof.

Attic Room

The Attic Room was made habitable in the EC19th c.1800 by plastering the walls and skelings and creating a ceiling on the soffits of the collars to a crown post roof. One brace was left in place while the other by the north wall was removed. There are now serious structural issues with the north wall which is falling outwards.



Historic repairs to the north wall.



Detail of the crown post and the door into the main roof.

The door into the roof appears C17th in style and fabric. It is a nailed and clenched vertically boarded door that has been extended upwards to fit the doorway. It is hung on two different pintle hinges and has a distinctive C17th wooden door handle nailed in place. There are four blocked keyholes to attest to its age.

Roof Structures



The remnants of the crown post roof looking S over the hall.



Looking S over the collar purlins. The upright is part of a hipped reinforcement.

There is the remnants of a crown post collar purlin roof over the central hall and over the Attic Room (where it is hidden by Rockwool insulation).



Detail of one of the side lapped collar purlins.



Original flat rafters with C20th gable beyond.

The original flat rafters are paired with side lapped collars resting on the collar purlin which has broken its back historically and has several ad hoc repairs. The rafters are blackened as would be seen in an open hall. The roof space has been crowded by C18th, C19th and C20th ad hoc repairs and insertions including EC20th side nailed plank collars. The collar purlin has been cut short and hipped struts inserted to prevent it rotating. These look Georgian but are also reinforced with E-MC20th machined struts. The two gables on the eastern elevation are M-LC20th structures made from machined softwood and rendered with EML. They replace Victorian additions of which only a few timbers remain.



Looking NE in the Cross-wing over Bedroom 5.



Looking NE in the Cross-wing over Bedroom 3. Above the collars.

The cross-wing has a clasped side purlin roof with heavy, slightly cambered collars and deep section purlins with simple scarves that have split apart. The paired rafters are numbered in sequence and there are several hand hewn blocks nailed in as gussets with heavy C18th style clout nails. The rafters are set on edge which would suggest they are C17th or later.



Looking SW in Cross-wing over Bedroom 3. Note the fall of the frame.



Two reused main beams have been used to make up the ceiling frame.

Two reused main beams have been inserted to make up the frames for the ceilings above the cross-wing rooms. One has a central mortice for a crown post with two pegs. The other is morticed on both sides for common joists. The ceiling itself has scantling common joists and must be C18th or later.



Bolt headed pegs in the purlin.



Detail of a bolt headed peg.

There are some bolt headed pegs in the purlins of varying patterns which must be part of later repairs. Bolt headed pegs are normally seen in frames of the C15th or older.



Looking W in the roof over the Rear Cross-wing Bedroom 5.



Looking E in the roof over the Rear Cross-wing Bedroom 5.

There is a fully framed partition between the east and west bays of the cross-wing. Parts of the frame were removed to add the chimney which cants over to the ridge in C19th style. The gable end has been rebuilt with side nailed studs in Georgian style and the exterior finished with hard render on EML.



Looking W in the roof over the central extension.



The collars have a title chalked on them.

The roof over the central extension is LC19th and made of machined timbers with narrow section rafters on edge and nailed to a ridgepiece. The roof is a simple clasped side purlin design with two plank collars each marked in chalk 'Collarbeam'. Most of the rafters are recent 2x4in machined softwood. The ceiling beam is support by a hand cut hanger side nailed in place.

Historic Photography



1960's (undated). Ancells and Summerhouse from the SW.



1960's (undated). Ancells, Barn and Garage from the SW.

Date estimated by the television aerial and white lines on the road.



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1960's (undated). Ancells and Summerhouse from the south.



1960's (undated). Ancells and Summerhouse from the south.



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1970's (undated). Ancells from the west in the garden.



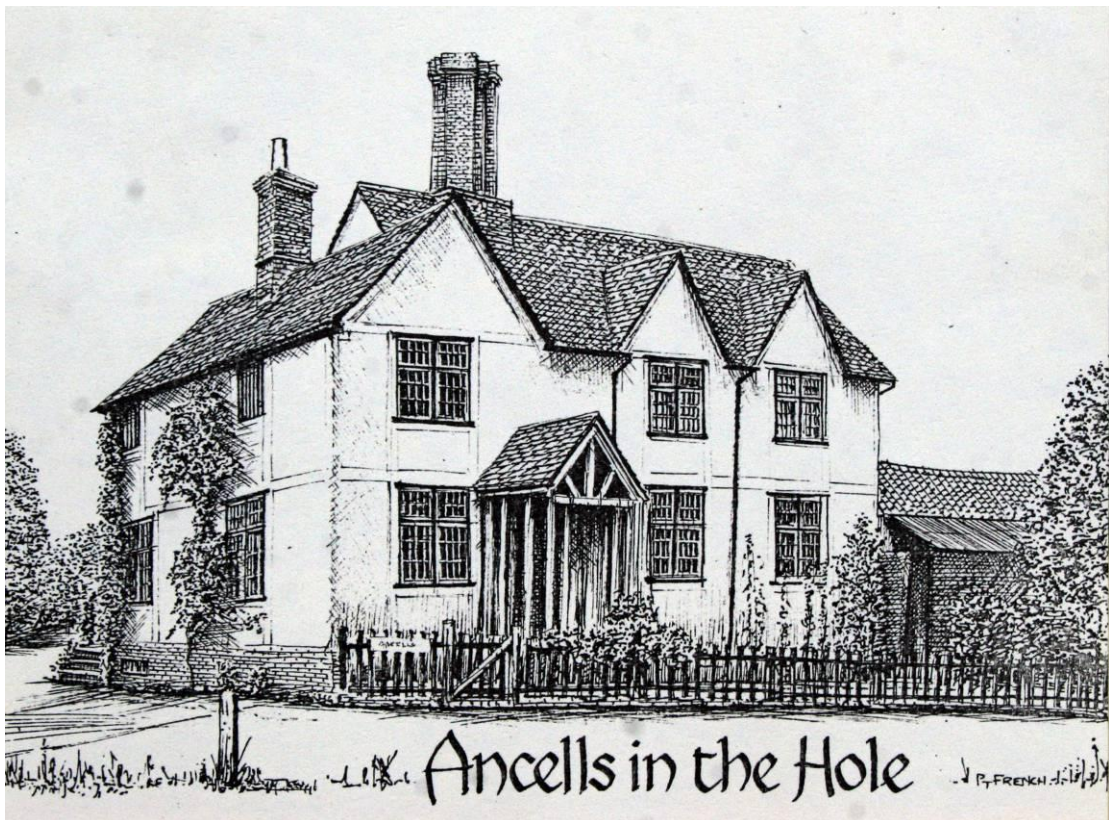
1970's (undated). Ancells from the south. The Store has a new roof.



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1970's (undated). Ancells from the east.



1980's (undated). Ancells by PT French showing rendered walls and porch.



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2000's (undated). Ancells from the SW. A new barn is being erected.



2000's (undated). Ancells from the SW. Photograph under glass.



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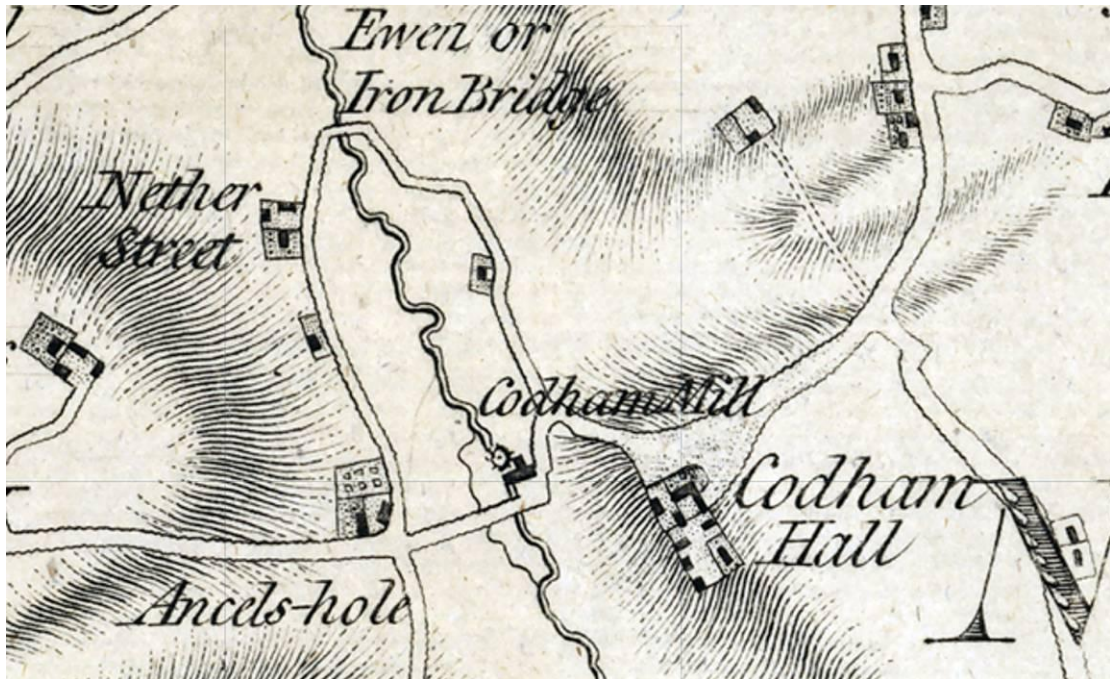


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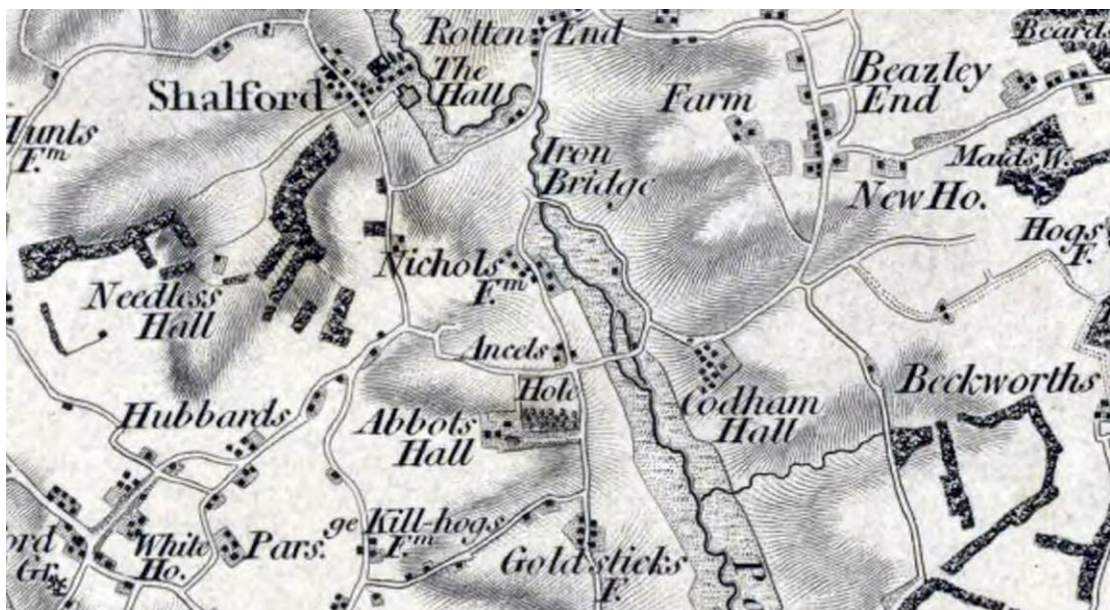
2000's (undated). Ancells from the east.

In the aerial photographs the thatched roof of the former barn has been removed.

Topographical Survey from Maps



1777 Chapman and Andre's Map of Essex.

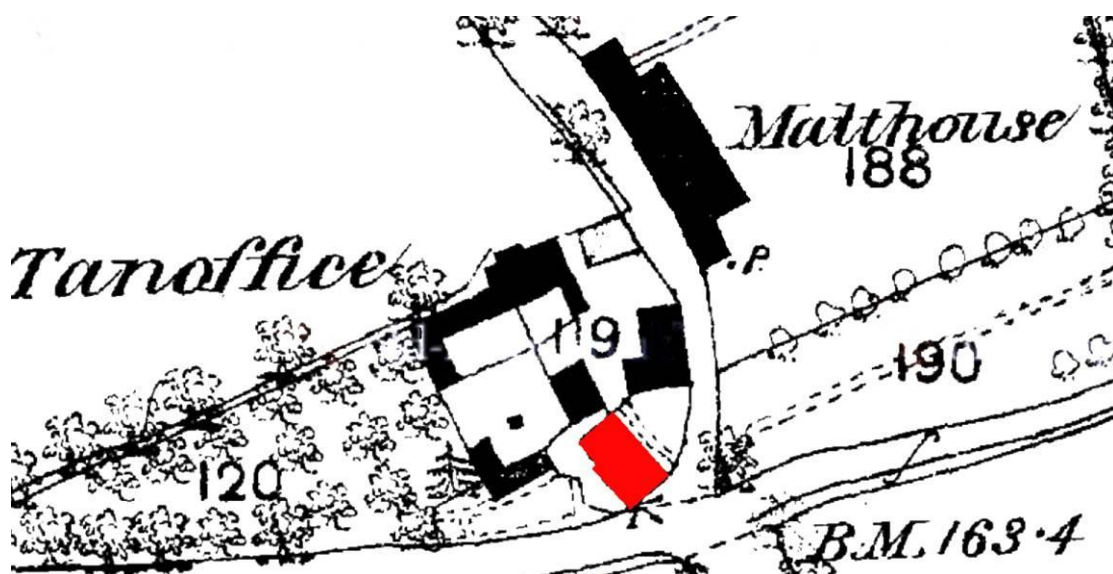


1805 Ordnance Survey.



1846 Tithe Map for Shalford.

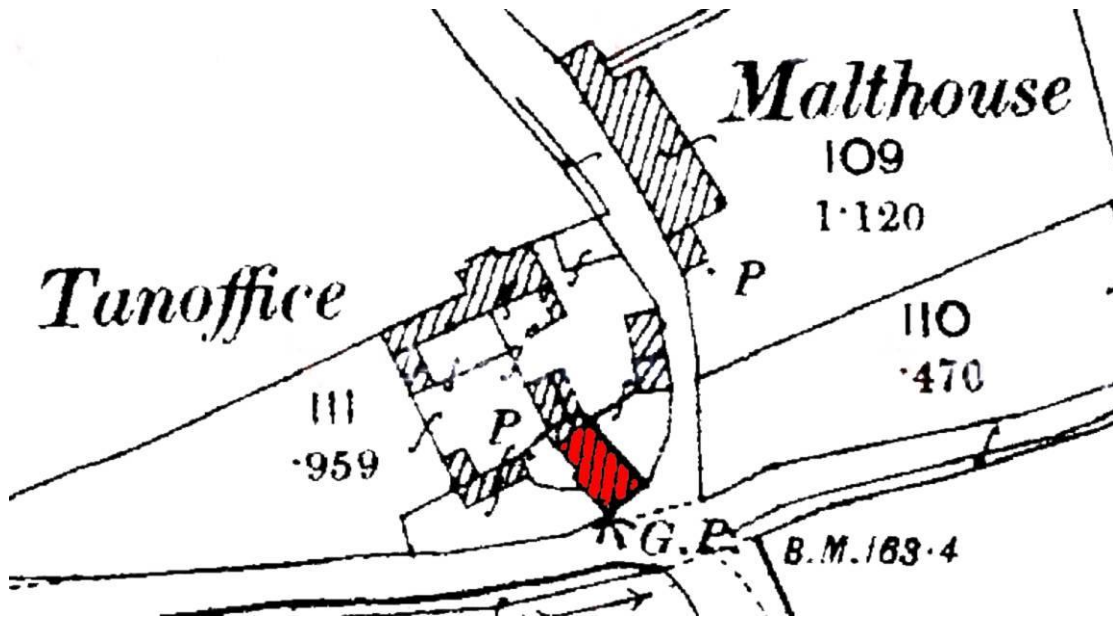
Plot 276 Homestead Tan Office Farm was owned by John Edward Beldham and occupied by Ebenezer Fitch. White's Directory of Essex 1848 has Ebenezer Fitch (maltster), Tan Office. White's Directory of Essex 1863 has Charles Fitch, Tan Office. The PO Directory 1874 has Charles Fitch, maltster and farmer.



1876 Ordnance Survey. The House is highlighted in red.

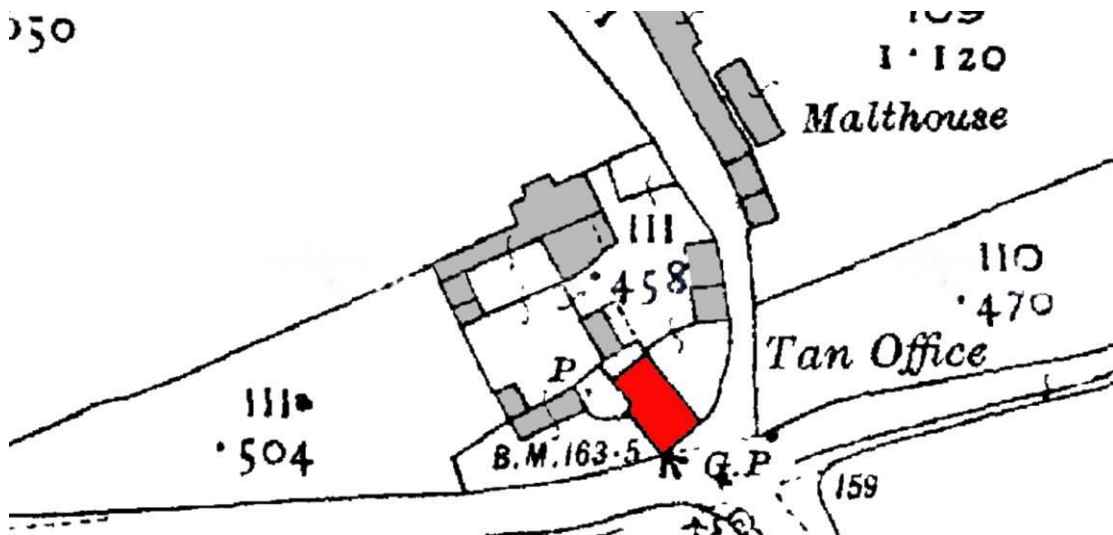


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1897 Ordnance Survey.



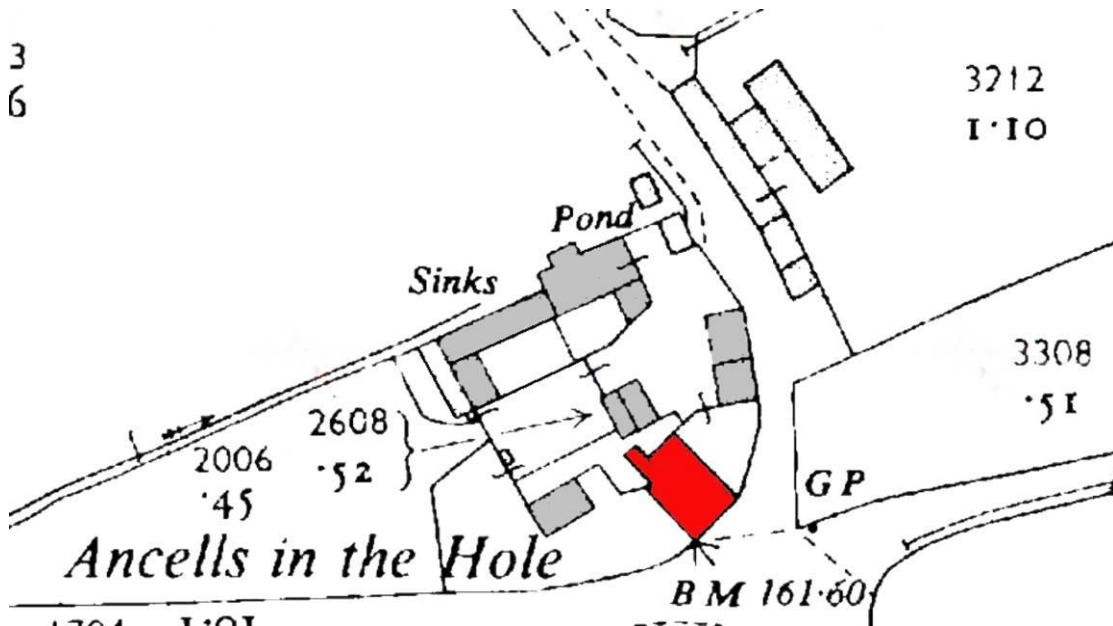
1923 Ordnance Survey.



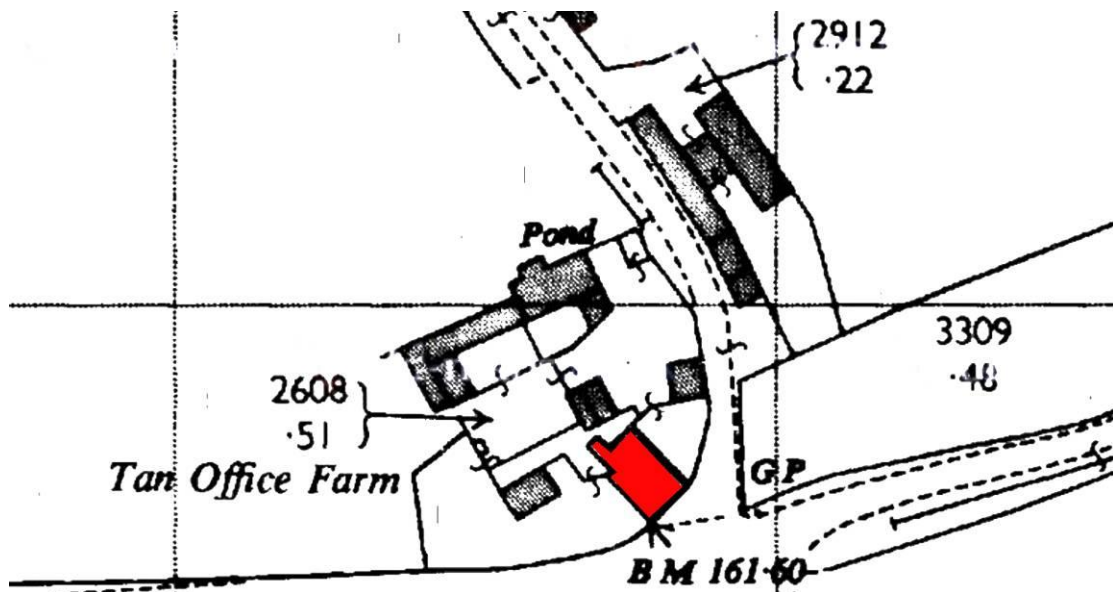
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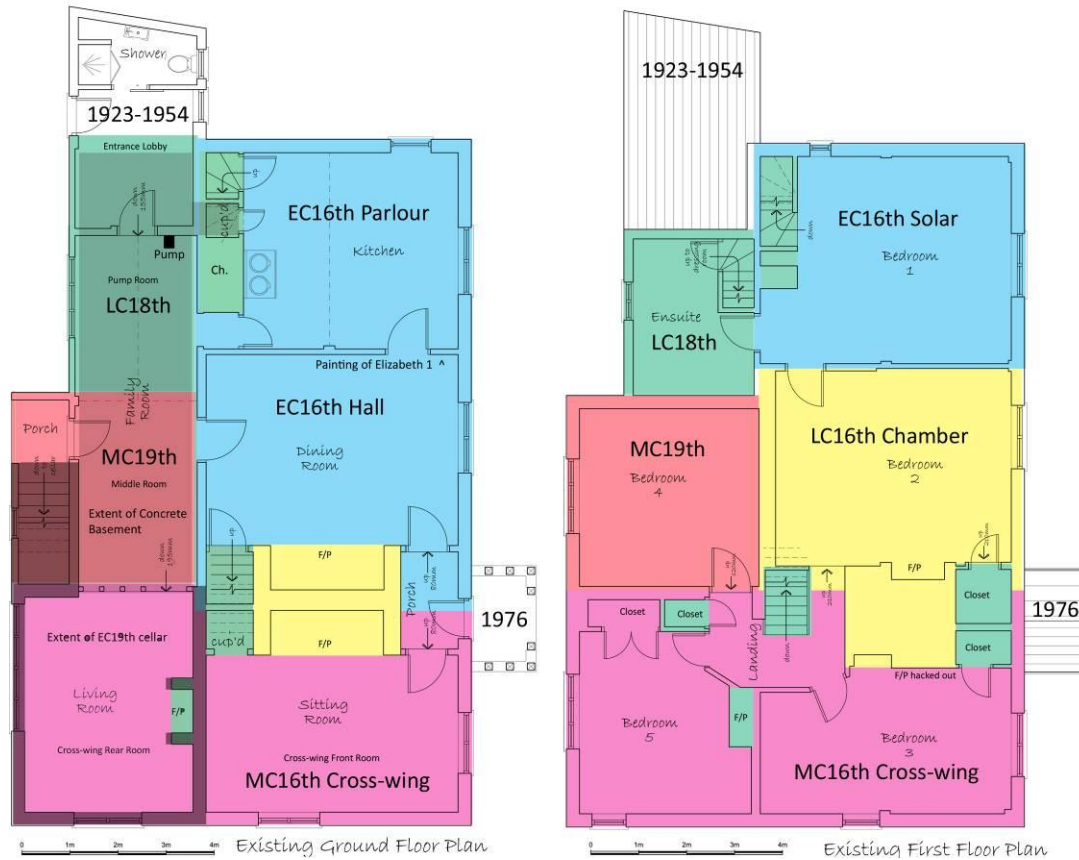


1954 Ordnance Survey.



1969 Ordnance Survey.

Phasing and Discussion



General phase plan for each floor.

Phase 1. EC16th original hall and in-line cross-wing.

The frame of the central room (Dining Room) is common with the frame of the Kitchen and the Bedroom 1 above. These form the open hall and in-line cross-wing of a mediaeval hall house. The hall was originally open to the apex of the roof where a collar purlin crown post roof was displayed. A large section of the original roof remains with pairs of blackened rafters. The frame is of axe finished oak with curved display braces, swept jowls and cambered tie-beams.

The hall would have had a full height window on both sides which now correspond with the window and doorway. There would have been a cross-passage at the southern end more or less where the front door is now. The partition wall with the Kitchen was the high end of the hall and there are plenty of fixture holes for the dias, bench and canopy. A door at either end led into the parlour and there appear to be no original service rooms.

Above the parlour was the solar and it is most likely it was reached from the hall via the western doorway which is now blocked off. Above the solar was the continuation of the crown post roof which is still in-situ.

The building would have been for a well-to-do landowner who was essentially a feudal lord and sat at the high end presiding over his subjects.



The south elevation of the cross-wing.

The east elevation showing the frame.

Phase 2. MC16th Cross-wing

The cross-wing frame was built separately from the hall frame and has a clasped side purlin roof. The cross-wing frame has internal bracing in contrast to the older frame and retains openings for mullioned windows in the corners of the two rooms. The frame was exposed until 1976 and the contrast in the two phases can be seen in historic photographs as well as in the internal spaces.

Phase 3. LC16th. Insertion of the firestack and the floor over the hall. Raising the frame.

If it were not for the fact that the cross-wing frame has been sawn through to insert the firestack it might have been assumed it was erected at the same time. From around AD1550 new timber-framed buildings were being erected with huge fireplaces sometimes on both floors and in four rooms. Older houses were retrofitted with firestacks, the frames cut to insert them and the hall floored over to create more comfortable accommodation.

Often to achieve this the upper storey was raised and the ridge height of the main range taken above that of the cross-wings - a feature seen at Ancells. At this time the crown post roof would still have been a feature of the upper rooms.

Of great interest is the painting on the ground floor of a woman resembling Elizabeth the First as she would have appeared in the LC16th. Through the extended resources of the Internet no portrait of her was found with the same features, clothing or position of the hands. There were comparatively few portraits that she actually sat for but her palace issued likenesses for artists to paint from. Elizabeth became Queen in 1558 was crowned in 1559 and most of her famous likenesses are from the 1580's and 90's. She died in 1603.

The decoration would have extended over most of the frame in the current central Dining Room and there is also white serpentine decoration in the Kitchen which would have remained as the parlour in the polite part of the house.

Phase 4. C18th extension on the west elevation. Lath and plaster.

The unit containing the Pump Room and the Bathroom with attic stairs has an C18th scantling frame with wattle and daub panels and was built to provide more service rooms as well as a staircase to an inserted room in the roof which had a new fully pegged floor frame. At the same time a tall firestack was inserted for a range in the Kitchen and a small fireplace in the Bedroom 1 above. The stairs from the Kitchen to the Bedroom (solar to parlour) were removed and a new set built within the Kitchen NW corner. The spare door into the hall was blocked up.

Much of the house was repaired using wrought iron ties and layers of lath and plaster applied but the extension had wattle and daub infill panels. This might imply that the unit was early but new buildings were still being put up with wattle and daub walls as late as 1838. The design and manufacture of the staircases and new firestacks indicate a date late in the C18th.

The ceilings over the Bedrooms in the main range and cross-wing were inserted using reused main joists and scantling timbers. There is also evidence that the crown-post roof was lath and plastered on the soffits of the collars probably to create a storage room. In the Attic Room is a C17th door that has been extended to secure the storage room which has at least four keyholes for various locks.

Phase 5. C.1800. Cellar.

Around AD1800 and into the first 20 years of the C19th farming enjoyed a boom economy brought about by grain embargoes placed on France due to the Napoleonic War. Often as a result the wealth of farms increased and they built cellars to store their wine and beer. The Cellar at Ancells is typical of this era and was inserted under the original cross-wing and was originally accessed from outside. Cellars were kept deliberately damp to store wooden barrels which should not dry out. The brick floor is channelled to control the amount of water passing through it.

Phase 6. LC19th west extension.

The central extension on the west side was built between the Cross-wing and the C18th stair-tower extension. It had primary braced scantling studwork and lath and plastered walls. It is intimated in plan on the 1838 Tithe Map but it is unlikely the present structure is older than the LC19th. The roof has been constructed from machined timbers two of which are marked up as Collarbeams in chalk. The unit enclosed the entrance to the Cellar and would have been an extra utility room like a dairy or scullery.

Phase 7. 1923-1954. Entrance Porch with WC.

The Entrance Porch was put up between 1923 and 1954 as shown on the OS maps. It is very likely the fireplace in the Rear Cross-wing Room was put in at this time. There are many inserted timbers in the roof acting as braces and props cut from machined softwood which would have come from this period of austerity. The poor quality stick baluster on the main stairs is also typical of this era. There are several plain Victorian style replica four panel doors with Bakelite fittings that were very popular at the time.

Phase 8. 1976. Large scale renovations. New windows.

In 1976 the house was given as a wedding present to Tim and Wendy Goodchild (owner pers comm) and much of the decor dates from then. Most of the windows were replaced with new units with ginger woodwork and leaded lights. These were poor quality units and the frames have degraded badly. The Cross-wing Bedroom 3 was remodelled by hacking out the fireplace and creating a false wall. The work was rather brutal and amateurish and is dated 1976 AD McShippard.

Phase 9. LC20th. Date unknown. Concrete Basement.

A concrete basement was inserted under the eastern part of the house and the large room equipped with Dexion shelving. The wall was smashed through into the original Cellar and never made good. The basement is very industrial and made of shuttered concrete with an external brick plinth. Apparently the owner was a water sanitation engineer.

Significance

Ancells in the Hole was known for much of its working life as Tan Office and was a farm with an adjacent maltings. Shown on the 1777 Map of Essex as Ancels-hole (where hole means valley) it is situated high up on a cross roads of the main road with the lanes to Codham Mill and Iron Bridge Farm and is a landmark building.

It has the frame of an EC16th open hall with in-line cross-wing both of which contain a contiguous crown post roof. It was extended in the MC16th by the addition of a cross-wing parallel to the road which had its own contained frame. By the LC16th the frame was cut through to insert a large firestack with inglenook fireplaces on both sides on the ground floor and brick fireplaces on the first floor to serve the new room formed by flooring over the open hall.

The building contains a splendid period portrait of Elizabeth the First painted on the plaster and frame which from its stylisation may well be unique. There are also a number of taper burn marks left as apotropaic marks to attest to the occupants fear of witchcraft.

In common with most farmhouses the building was Georgianised by adding a two storey extension containing an upper stair to a new attic room, replacing the older stairs with new pine treads and risers in carcasses of hand-cut scantling. Timbers were hacked back and pecked to apply lath and plaster throughout and new ceilings put in the main upper rooms using reused much older timbers and scantling joists. The windows were widened, presumably for sash windows, and the layout altered by blocking doors and adding in new openings. A brick cellar was inserted under the cross-wing nearest the road.

The building was further extended in the LC19th by adding another two storey unit on the west elevation which gave the house five bedrooms plus a bathroom and built in linen closets. In 1976 the building was given as a wedding present and wholesale renovations, repairs and redecoration was undertaken. Unfortunately this involved smashing out one of the fireplaces and creating a fake timber-framed wall. Nearly all the windows were replaced.



In the LC20th a large concrete basement of an industrial design was inserted under the west part of the house. By then the site was no longer a farm and the farm buildings had declined into storage sheds and makeshift workshops.

Ancells is an important Listed timber-frame building of the EC16th which has undergone the usual series of transformations up to the present day. It also contains a well preserved portrait of the LC16th.

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Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Adrian Parker, the current owner, for engaging me to record the building and to Andrew Stevenson for recommending me and for providing the architect's plans.

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Appendix 1 – Detail of the portrait in the Living Room



Head.



Torso.



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Hands.



Skirt.



Skirt on the post.



Florettes on the midrail.



Serpentine decoration on the midrail in the Kitchen.