

Harpers, Green Street, High Easter, Essex. CM3 1HU.
Historic building recording and analysis of the House. Recorded 18 09 2023.



2023 Google earth. Location of the site.



2023 Google earth. Detail of the site showing the building under study.

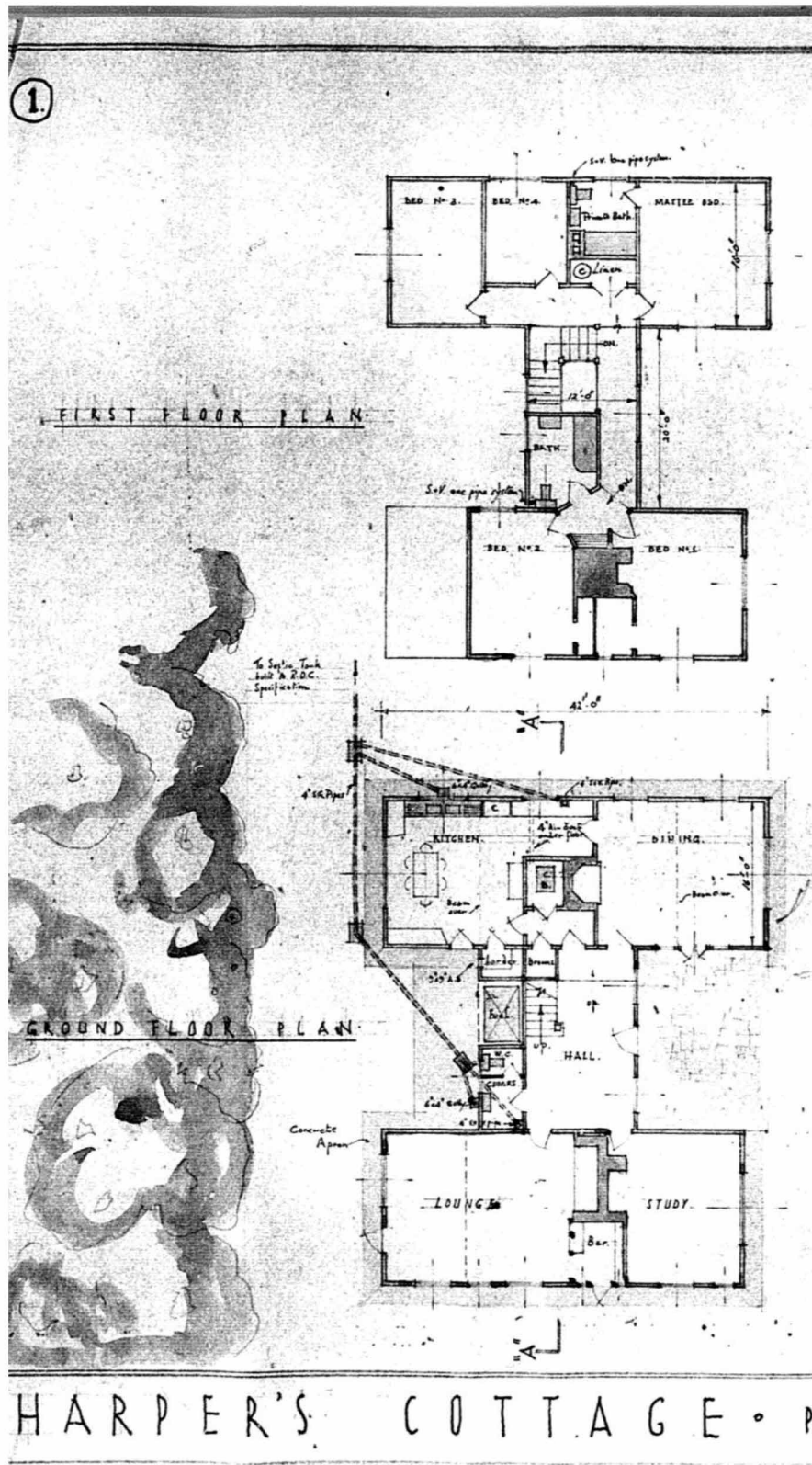
Location

Harpers, Green Street, High Easter, Essex. CM3 1HU. The House is situated 30m north of the lane (known as Shooters Hatch Road).. The original timber-framed house is centred on TL 63853 16788 and the 1964 extension is centred on TL 63860 16798.



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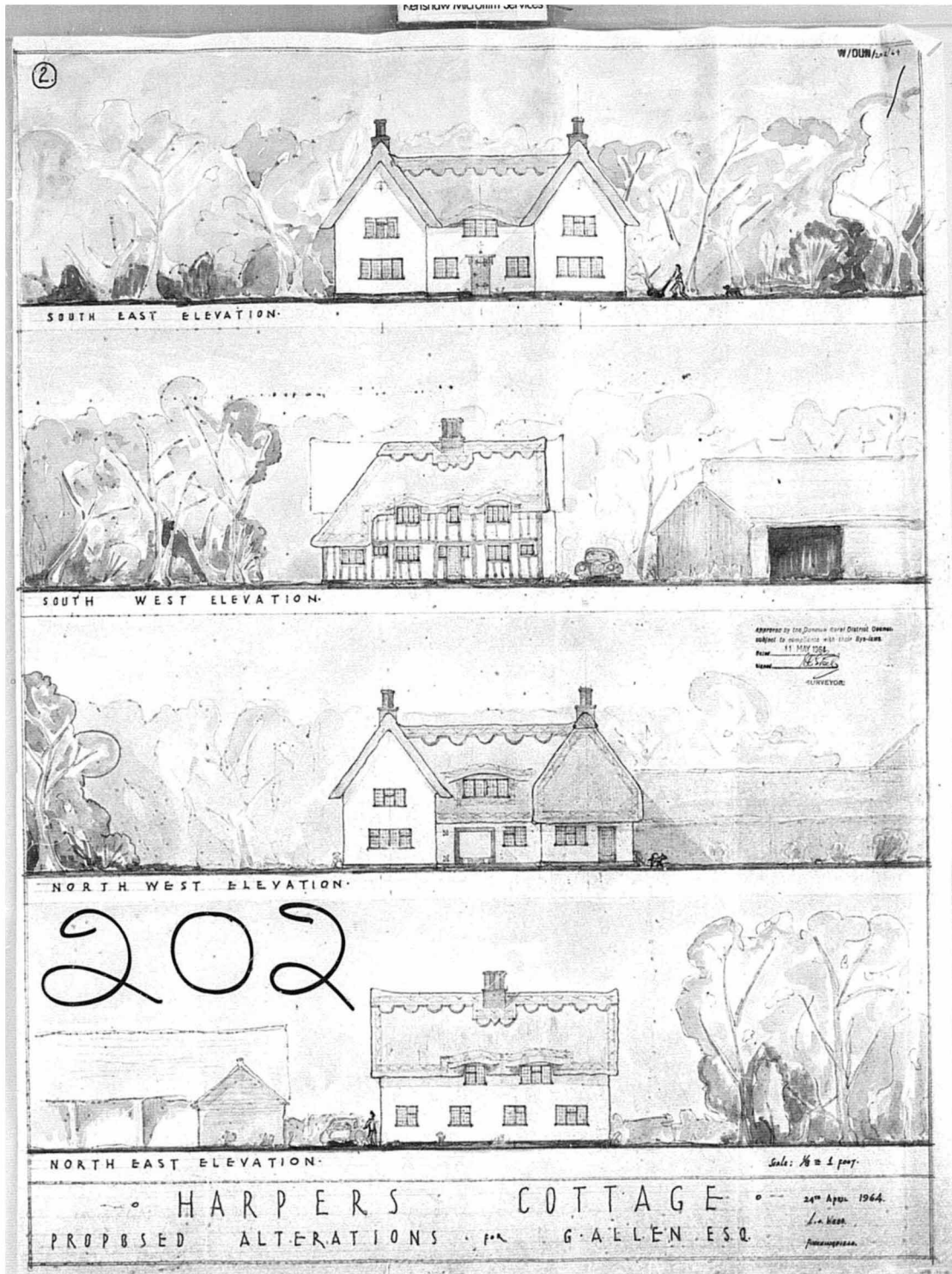
Planning Background



1964. Proposed changes to Harpers Cottage. Floor plans by LO Webb of Finchingfield.



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1964. Proposed changes to Harpers Cottage. Elevations by LO Webb of Finchingfield.

Planning permission as given in May 1964 by Dunmow Rural District Council to extend the original cottage with a new hall and north range. No obvious changes in plan or elevation of the original cottage are noted. The most substantial difference is that the present house has a tiled roof and not a thatched one. All the windows were replaced to match the new.



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ne elevation



se elevation (b-b)



sw elevation

2023. Elevations of the extant house. Anthony G James.



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se elevation



nw elevation (a-a)



nw elevation

2023. Elevations and section of the extant house (2). Anthony G James.

Listing



Date: 25 Mar 2003 Reference:IOE01/10446/12 Rights: © Mr Frank Swift.

Entry Name: Harpers **Listing Date:** 20 September 1985 **Grade:** II **Source:** Historic England
Source ID: 1112531 **English Heritage Legacy ID:** 121331 **County:** Essex **District:** Uttlesford
Civil Parish: High Easter **Traditional County:** Essex

TL 61 NW HIGH EASTER 1/13 Harpers - II

House. Late C16. Timber framed and plastered, but with framing exposed on front elevation. Half hipped peg tile roof with single storey extension bay at west end with hipped catslide roof. Of 2 storeys with large rear C20 extension. Central ridgeline stack with rectangular base and 2 rebuilt diagonal shafts. Windows are C20 leaded light casements. Jowled posts, internal cranked wall bracing on corners, 'hall' section has C16 floor with soffit tenons with diminished haunches. Roof is side purlin type with arched wind bracing. C17 rebuilt window in front wall with moulded mullions. Moated site. RCHM 9.

Listing NGR: TL6385216792

^b(9). **Harpers**, house and moat, 200 yards N.W. of (8). The *House* is of two storeys, timber-framed and plastered; the roofs are thatched. It was built in the 17th century. The original central chimney-stack has diagonal pilaster strips. Inside the building are original ceiling-beams and a wide fireplace.

The *Moat* is fragmentary. Condition—Of house, bad.

'High Easter', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex, Volume 2, Central and South west* (London, 1921), pp. 126-130. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/essex/vol2/pp126-130> [accessed 16 October 2023].



Scope of this Report

This report records and analyses the historic records of the building under study. This report adheres to Historic England Level 3 as outlined in Historic England. Understanding Historic Buildings – A guide to good recording practice. 2017. Page 25.

Description – External



The House is completely hidden from the roadside. Looking NW.



The House glimpsed from the drive in front of the Garage.

South Elevation

The original cottage faces the roadside but cannot be currently seen due to the extensive foliage.



The south elevation seen from the garden.



The exposed frame of the south elevation.

The south elevation has an exposed timber frame of widely spaced 4.5in oak studs with a 8in deep midrail, full height 8x7in corner posts and storey posts to form a central entrance lobby which also contains a double sided brick firestack.



The door to the central lobby.



Detail of the inside of the front door.

The central door and leaded light windows all date the 1964 development. The windows have oak frames which have shrunk badly. While the front door has aged quite badly it is obviously a C20th replica of a plank and batten door with vertical fillets added to reduce the draughts. The door furniture is MC20th and all screwed in place. The door jambs are also inserted and the peg holes for the original studs can be seen out of place. The wrought iron strap hinges may be authentic.



Detail of the midrail and the oak framed windows.



Failing storey post with LC18th or EC19th iron strap repair.

The oak frame has suffered from subsidence at both ends and this has led to fracturing of the storey posts where the midrails meet them. The movement is historic and has been addressed with LC18th or EC19th wrought iron straps. The infill panels all appear MC20th with hard cement render on EML. In places it has been used to cover sections where the window openings have been changed. The oak frame has been painted to resemble red ochre. There is a large number of nails to indicate the building was lath and plastered in the past.



The south elevation of the western outshot.



The western elevation of the outshot.

Western Elevation

There is an outshot on the western end of the original frame under a catslide roof which is also hipped on both sides. The walls have a pargetted finish from 1964.



The western elevation of the 1964 extension containing the hall and utility rooms.



The western elevation of the north range of the 1964 extension.

To avoid repetition: all the visible fabric in the extension dates from 1964. The walls are built from 2x4in softwood skinned with EML and hard cement render. The voids are filled with fibreglass insulation and the interiors are either boarded or panelled. The leaded light windows all date to 1964 except for a few later ones on the north elevation.



The north elevation looking W.



Detail of one of the 1964 casement leaded light windows.

The windows are leaded light casements of a type popularised in the 1930's and it may be they are reused units. Anecdotally, the extension was built on a part time basis by local builders who were employed on a much larger project nearby and worked on their downtime and at weekends. (Owner –pers comm).



The east elevation showing the original cottage and the 1964 extension.



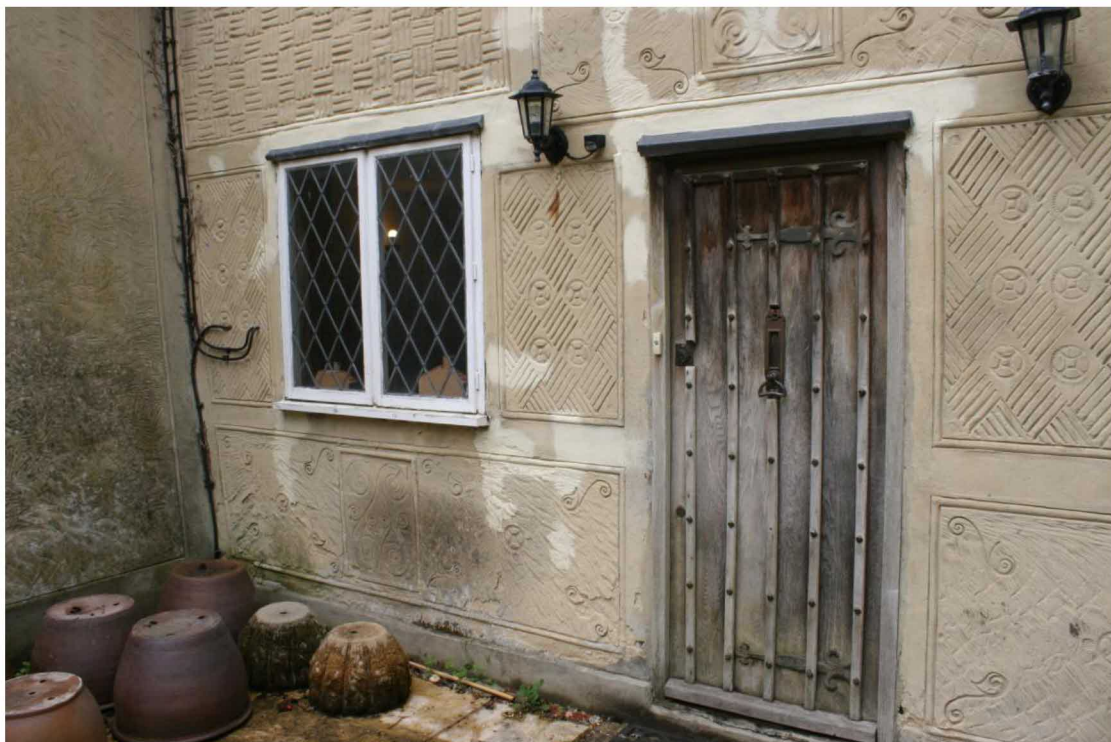
The east elevation of the original cottage.

East Elevation

The east elevation has brush dabbled rough cast render over EML and has 1964 leaded lights. The upper storey has a three light casement with a top hung light. The lower floor has a four light casement. These windows have anodised aluminium stays and catches. The frames are badly rotted and can be pulled apart by hand.



The east elevation of the Hallway Entrance.

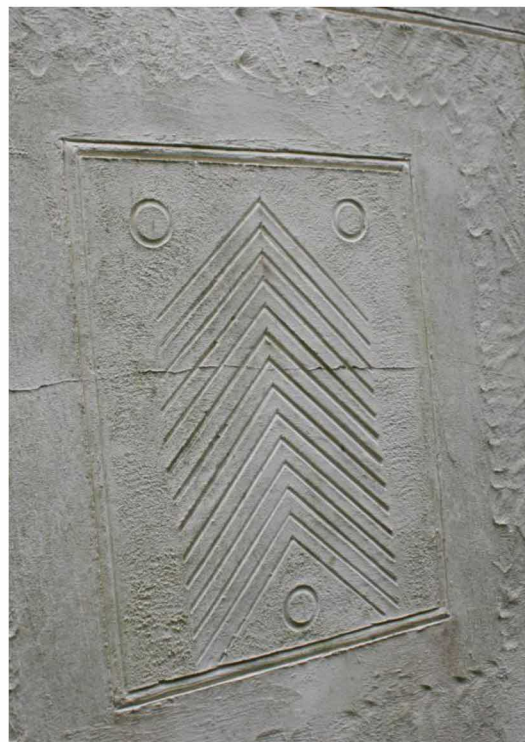


Detail of the pargetting on the east elevation of the Hallway Entrance.

Of interest in the pargetting around the Hallway Entrance as it is done to a far higher standard than the rest of the building. It is likely that a proper craftsman did the work as it is done authentically as raised field with raised decoration as well as pressed mouldings. The rest of the building is entirely incised work and as such is not really pargetting.



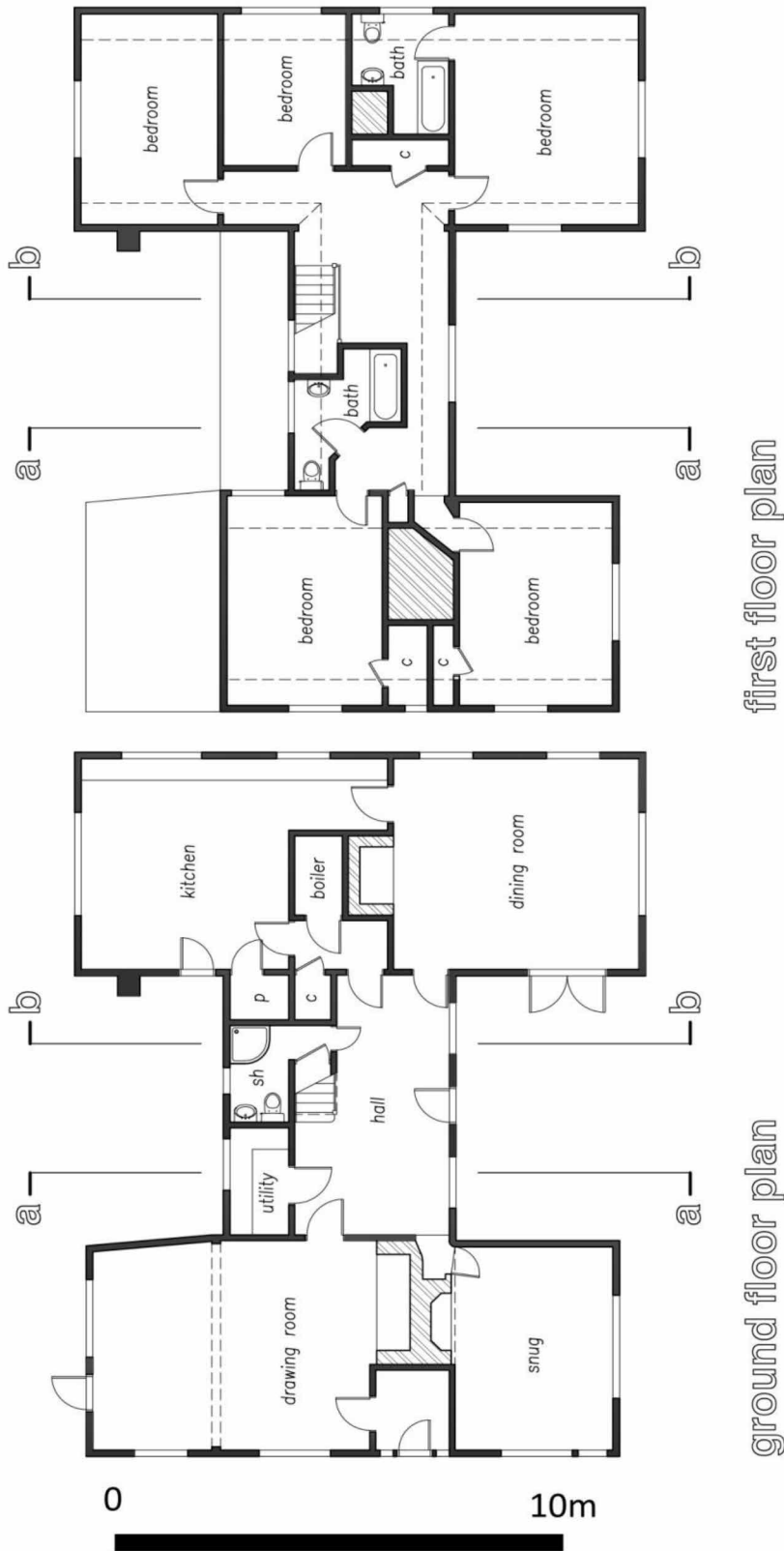
Block printed chequer-work on the east elevation.



Incised or impressed decoration on the east and north elevations of the north range.

Most of the 'pargetting' is either incised or a scroll work gate panel has been used to press in a design. Some effort has been made to replicate the other designs but with obvious lesser skill.

Description – Internal – The 1964 works.



2023. Floor plans of the extant house. Anthony G James.



Looking N in the Hallway.



Looking S in the Hallway.

Hallway

All the visible fabric, doors, windows, flooring, staircase and faked studwork dates to the 1964 works. There is no evidence for a former structure in the plan of the extension.



Utility Room looking W. 1960's Hygiene QA kitchen.



Opening in the south wall of the Utility Room showing LC20th building materials.

Utility Room

Situated in the western outshot of the 1994 extension there is an access panel that shows C21st repairs to the internal drainage, MC20th brickwork and plasterboard.



The downstairs bathroom is accessed under the 1964 staircase.



The Bathroom was modernised in the C21st,

Cloakroom Bathroom

Situated in the western outshot of the 1994 extension the Bathroom is accessed under the 1964 staircase. All the sanitary ware is C21st.



Looking NW in the Kitchen.



Looking NE in the Kitchen.

Kitchen

All the fabric dates to the 1964 works with some later intervention to install new plumbing and a water softener. The walls were clad with pressed vertical boards which suffered badly from water ingress. This hardboard product was used extensively in homes and offices in the 1960's and early 1970's.



Detail of the wall construction and the leaded light windows.



Detail of the original pressed boarded wall finish.

The external walls are made from lightweight 2x5in studwork clad externally with EML visible on the inside and insulated with fibreglass rolls. Internally, the wall finishes are either hardboards or tiled splash backs. The ceilings are plasterboards. Cooking was on an Aga stove and heating was provided by an oil fired boiler.



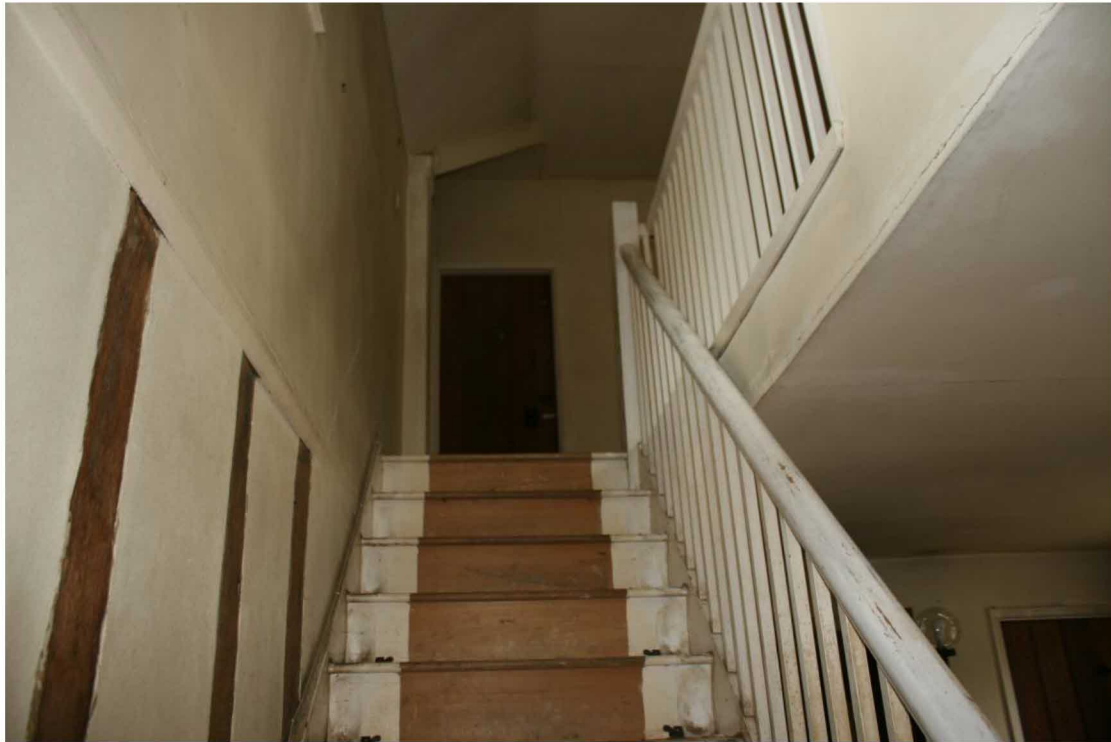
Looking N in the Living Room.



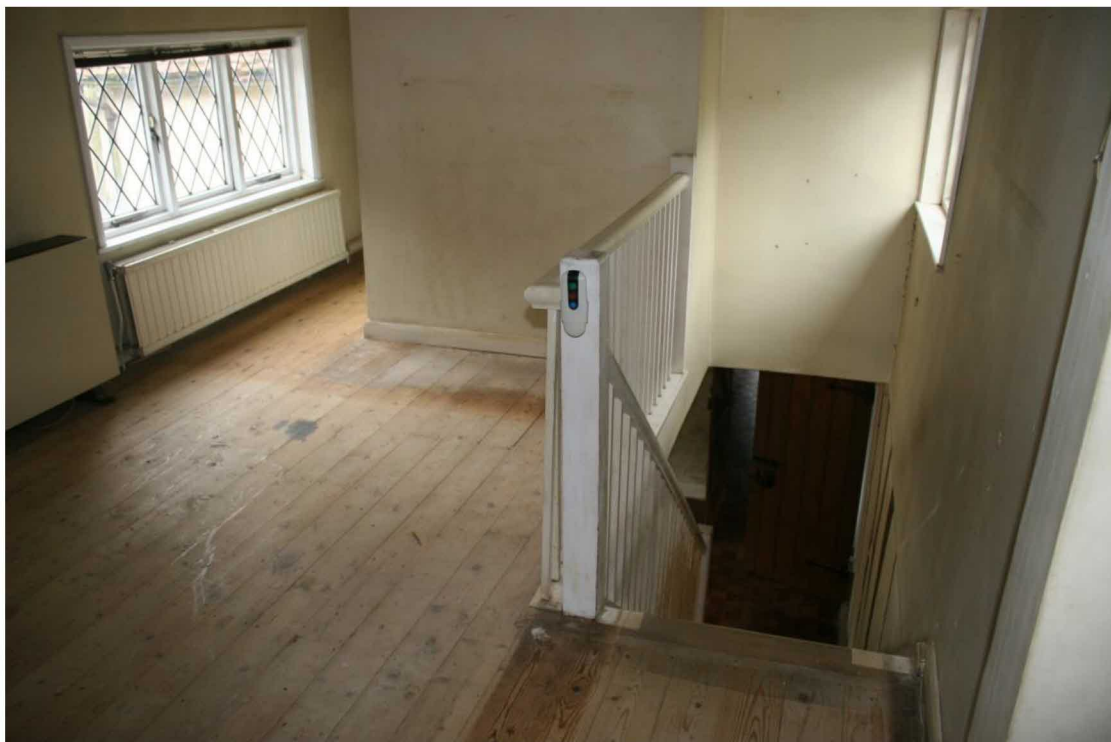
Looking W in the Living Room.

1964 Living Room

Entirely constructed in 1964, the Living room has primary braced, nailed interrupted stud fake frame made from recycled rafters. There is a large stone faced fireplace which has no place in an Essex farmhouse. The 1964 specification drawing indicates 2x5in studwork, Foil backed Gyplathe, Thistle for the walls and ceilings throughout.



Looking N up the staircase.



Looking SE on the Landing.

Staircase and Landing

All the fabric is from the 1964 works. The staircase was a new piece of joinery.



Looking NE in the NE Bedroom. Note the studwork visible in the walls.



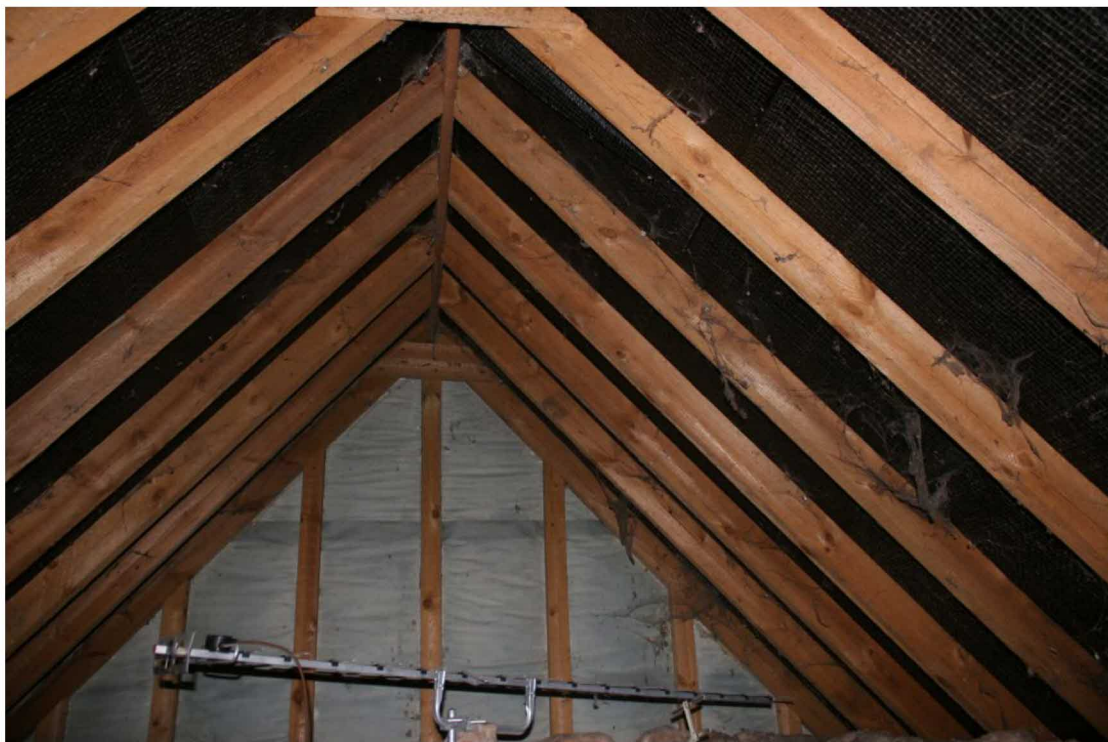
Looking NW in the NE Bedroom.

NE Bedroom

Built on a budget, the studwork frames can be seen through the thin plasterboard.



Original 1960's fibreglass bath.



The roof above the NE Bedroom.

All the fabric dates to the 1964 works or later. The eastern wall has been refinished and has a light blue permeable membranes used from the 1980's onwards. This may account for the inferior quality pargetting as the exterior has been refinished.



Looking N in the Central Bedroom.



Looking S in the Central Bedroom.

Central Bedroom

Apart from the dated LC20th paint scheme all the finishes are from 1964.



Looking N in the NW Bedroom.



Looking S in the NW Bedroom.

NW Bedroom

Like the NE Bedroom the studwork can be seen through the thin plasterboards.



Built in closet beside the firestack on the Landing. Looking S.



1960's fibre glass bath.

Closet and Bathroom

The family Bathroom has a period yellow fibreglass bath and matching suite. A closet has been built into the side of the original firestack which has been cement rendered.

Description - Internal – Original Cottage – Ground Floor



Looking SE in the Snug (SE Room).



Looking N in the Snug (SE Room).

Snug (SE Room)

The oak frame is visible in the SE Room which is the eastern bay of the original cottage. All the wall panels have been replaced in the 1964 works. The north wall has a row of fixture holes for applying furniture.



Looking W at the central firestack.

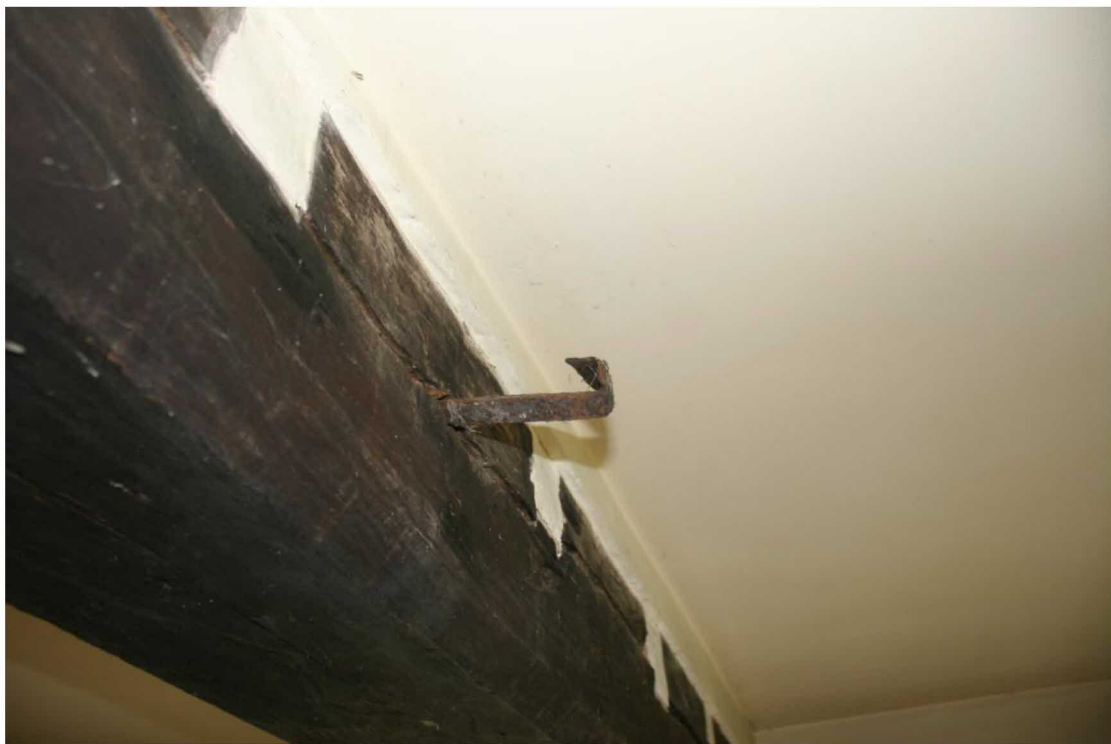


The main joist has sunk and the floor above remade to be level.

The fireplace appears to have been reduced in width and the back canted to take a cast iron insert. The bricks are 50x110x230mm red/orange typical of the C16th and C17th set in thick beds of white lime mortar. Originally, the brickwork was render over but it has been removed (most likely as part of the 1964 works) and reshaped. Two concrete moulded rosettes have been added and painted. The shortened bressummer has no apotropaic marks or taper burns. The main axial joist has lost all of the common rafters which had soffit tenons with refined entry and the floor above has been levelled and raised well above the midrails.



Detail of the main joist with chamfer and notched cyma stops.



Georgian batten clamp used as a lantern hanger.

the 10x12in main joist has deep chamfers and notched cyma stops. A Georgian style batten clamp has been used as a lantern hanger. Other small wrought iron nails indicate the joist was boxed in or battened for lath and plaster.



Looking W in the Drawing Room. SW Room.



Looking W at the original frame. The end wall has been removed.

Drawing Room (SW Room)

The Drawing Room has the original first floor frame but the end wall has been removed to open the space into the western outshot. The transverse joist is a replacement beam of much deeper section than the others and is a reused item from elsewhere. The empty mortices are filled with daub so this was an early intervention of the C18th or C19th. The axial main joist is morticed for a central post that has been removed.



Looking S in the outshot.



C.19800 wrought iron L-tie in the SW corner of the outshot.

The outshot has c.1800 scantling studwork and all the plates are reused with many mortices filled with lime mortar. These were originally lath and plastered over. The corner joints are fixed with c.1800 wrought iron L-ties which are cramped (bent over at the tip) and fixed with square headed nails. Similar iron ties on the transverse main joist are stapled and nailed to secure the outshot to the older frame. The outshot walls have a deep scratch coat and may still be lath and plaster but with a Thistle finish. Thistle is a brand name for pink skim plaster.



Looking E in the Drawing Room.



The fireplace in the Drawing Room.

The fireplace has the same 50x110x230mm red bricks as that in the Snug but has less alteration. The bressummer is likely original and in the LHS corner is a blocked off aperture for a bread oven. The lower part of the fireback has recent repairs but the extensive sooting indicates there was a cast iron fireplace that has been removed. The wood burner is MC20th.



Detail of the framing above the fireplace.



Wrought iron reinforcement on the main joist above the fireplace.

The transverse joist is morticed for a lower stud wall so it is likely the frame has been reused. The terminals are fixed with c.1800 wrought iron ties. The common joists are plan, unchamfered and extensively blackened with signs of being lath and plastered so it likely this was always the cooking side of the cottage.

Description - Internal – Original Cottage – First Floor



Looking SE in the SE Bedroom.



Looking NE in the SE Bedroom.

SE Bedroom

The timber frame is exposed in the SE Bedroom and the cambered tie-beam is visible in the end wall. There are internally trenched braces of curved and serpentine form that are not matched up. The corner brace in the north wall descends from the jowled post while the serpentine brace in the south wall rises from the post to the top plate. The studs are badly eroded from being covered and an environment created that supported wood boring beetles. The infill panels are from the 1964 works or later.



Framing in the NE corner. Note the empty trench for a missing brace.



Framing in the SE corner. The corner post has been shaved back.

The frame has definitely been reordered in the eastern wall as the braces do not coincide with the original mortices. The SE corner post has been shaved back due to beetle damage.



Looking W in the SE Bedroom.



1960's closet. Note the Thistle pink plaster on the wall.

The upstairs rooms did not have fireplaces but instead relied on the heated brickwork to warm them. The rooms were redecorated as part of the 1964 works and a closet added. The walls were finished with Thistle pink skim. The central tie-beam was cut through to insert a full height doorway.



Apotropaic strike marks on the tie-beam in the east wall.



Apotropaic strike marks on the top-plate in the west wall.

There are three sets of apotropaic strike marks - two on the tie-beam in the east wall and one on the top-plate in the west wall. These are a series of frenetic strike mark made with a thin blade and are most likely C17th from the Civil War era. Blessings were made on the cottage and the timbers struck to keep the witches away.



Looking S in the SW Bedroom.



Looking NW in the SW Bedroom.

SW Bedroom

The frame is a reflection of that in the SE Bedroom but retains its original serpentine braces. A further brace has been nailed across the studwork in the west wall to arrest racking.



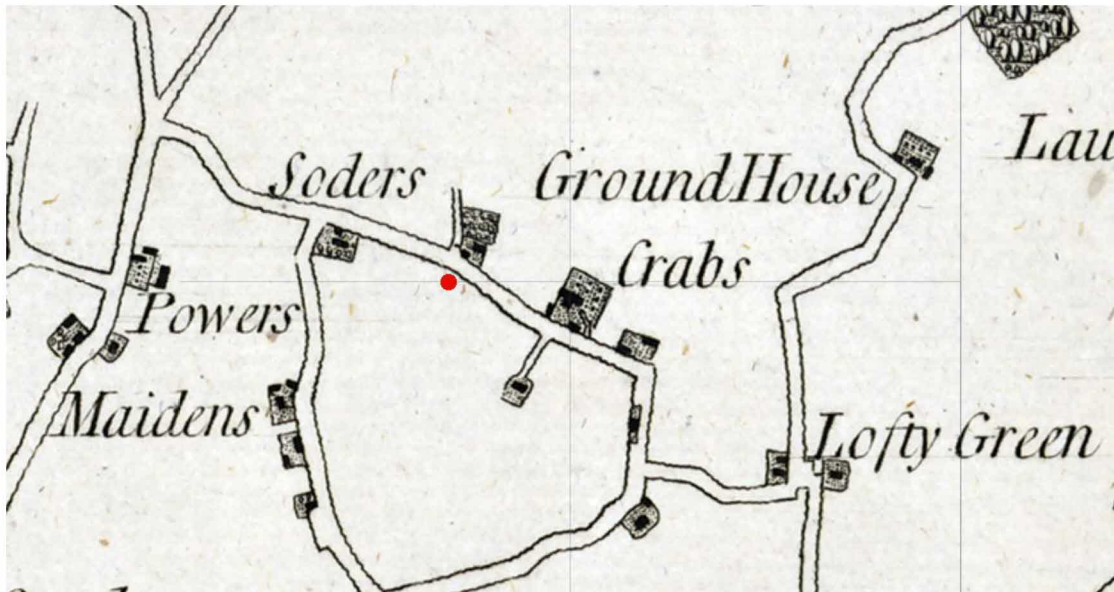
The racked frame in the SW corner.



Taper burn marks on the north wall top-plate over the window.

The frame has also been blessed by applying a burning taper and making a blacked mark repeatedly over the position of an original opening for a window. There may have been a high level window in the west wall which has been blanked off.

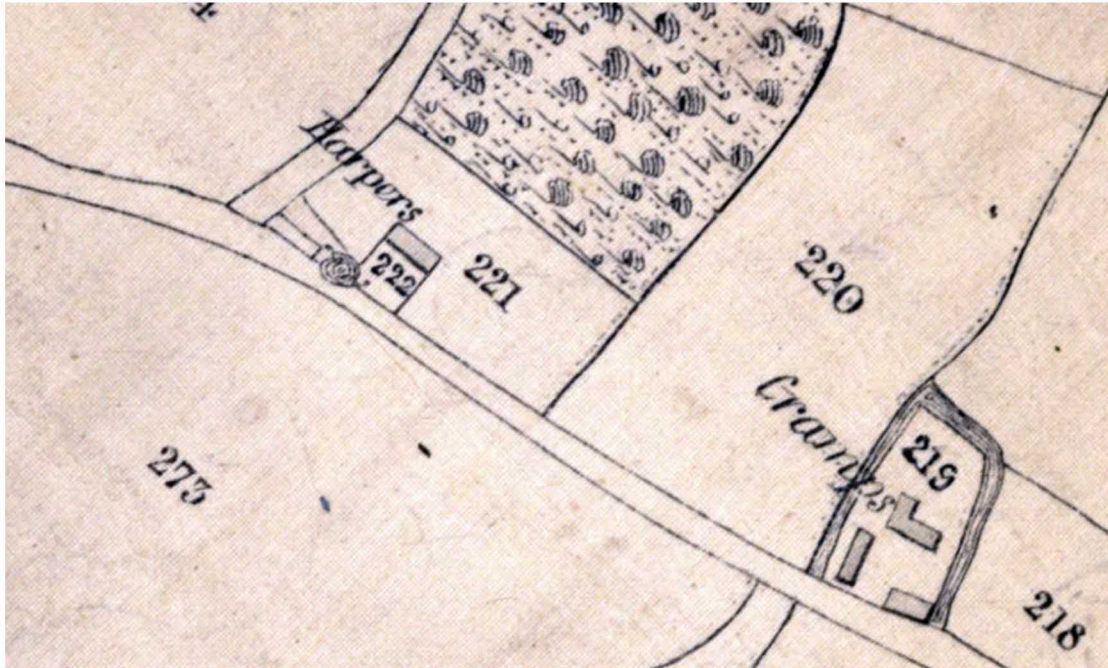
Topographical Survey from Maps



1777 Chapman and Andre's Map of Essex.

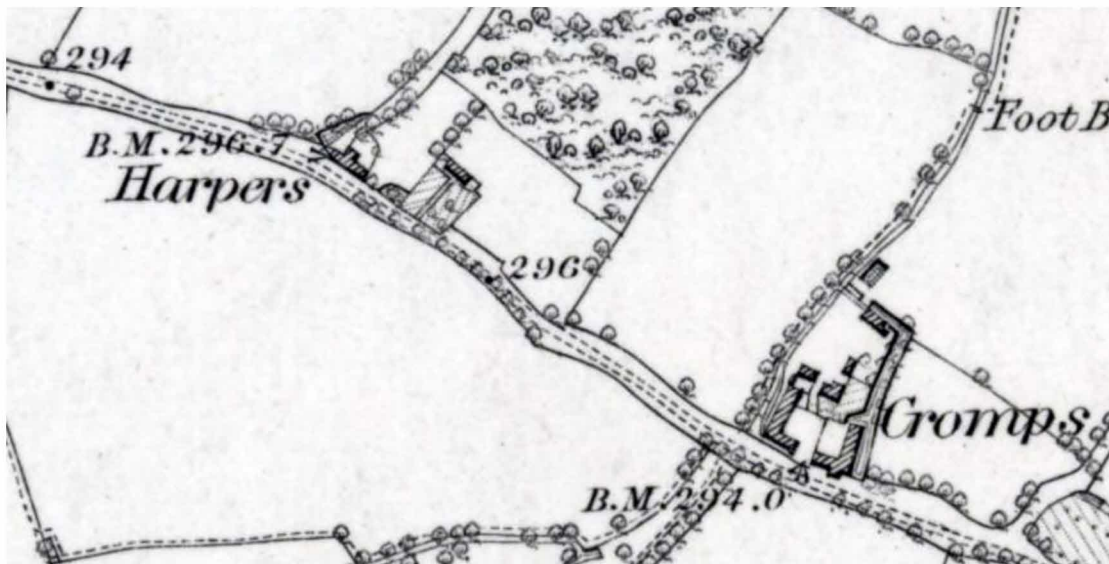


1805 Ordnance Survey.



The 1848 Tithe Map for High Easter. IR29/12/118.

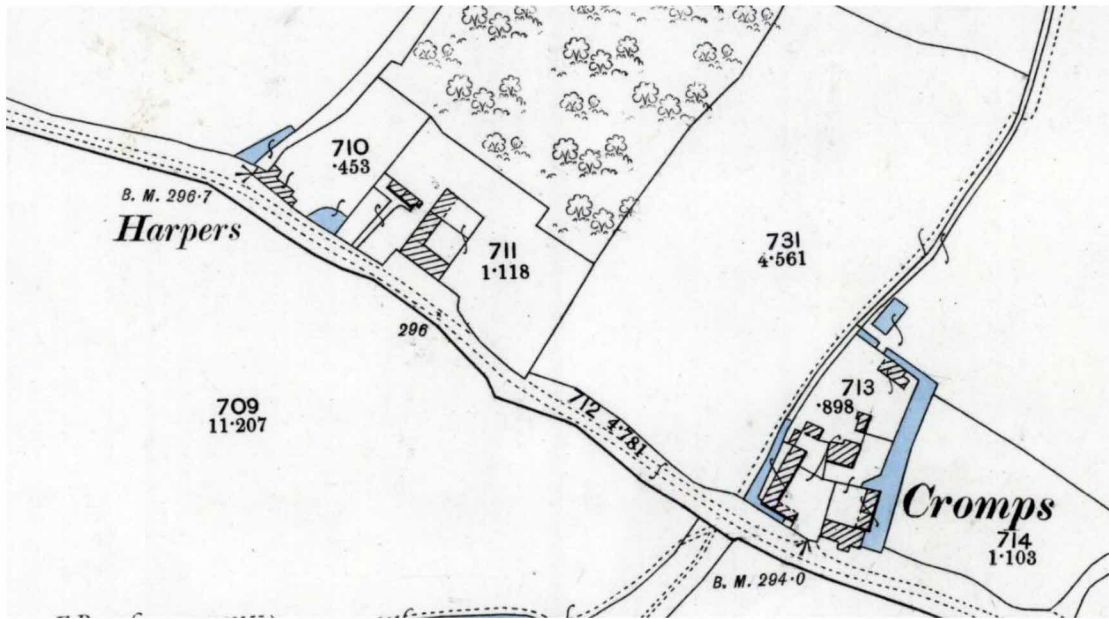
Harpers is clearly shown on the 1848 Tithe Map as a single rectangular unit. Plot 222 Cottage & Barn owned by the Late Reverend Sir Augustus Brydges Henniker Baronet and occupied by Thomas Smith. The site was part of Harpers Farm which also had Plot 221 Hoppet, 224 Barn Field, 224a Three Corner Field, 225 Seven Acres, 270 Four Acre Field and 273 Nine Acres. All were arable.



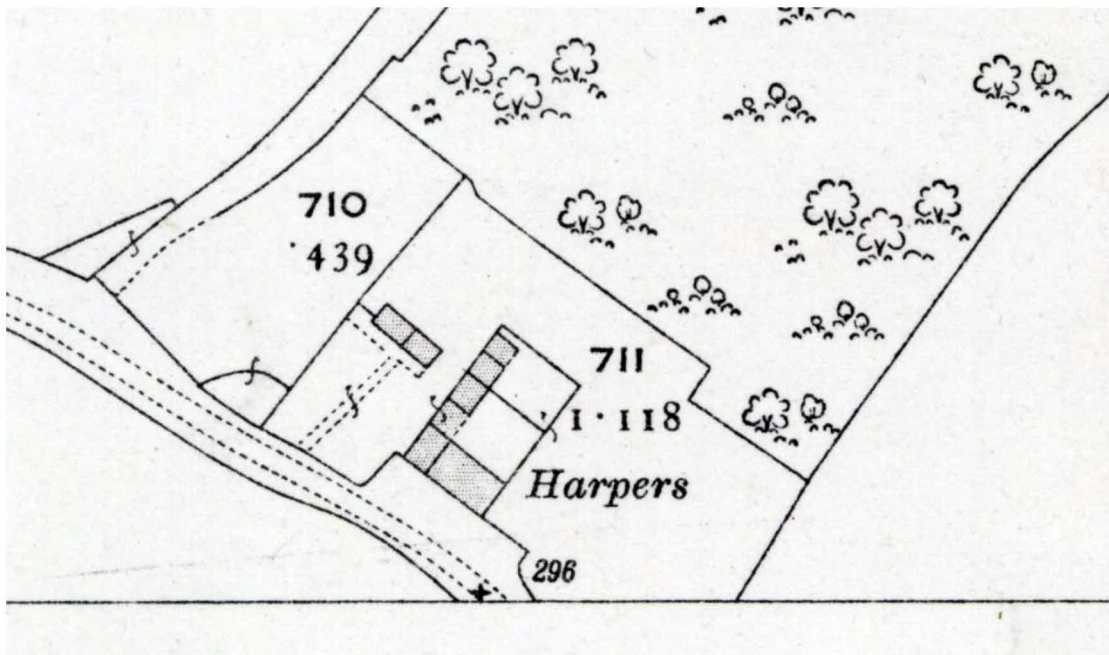
1876 Ordnance Survey Map.



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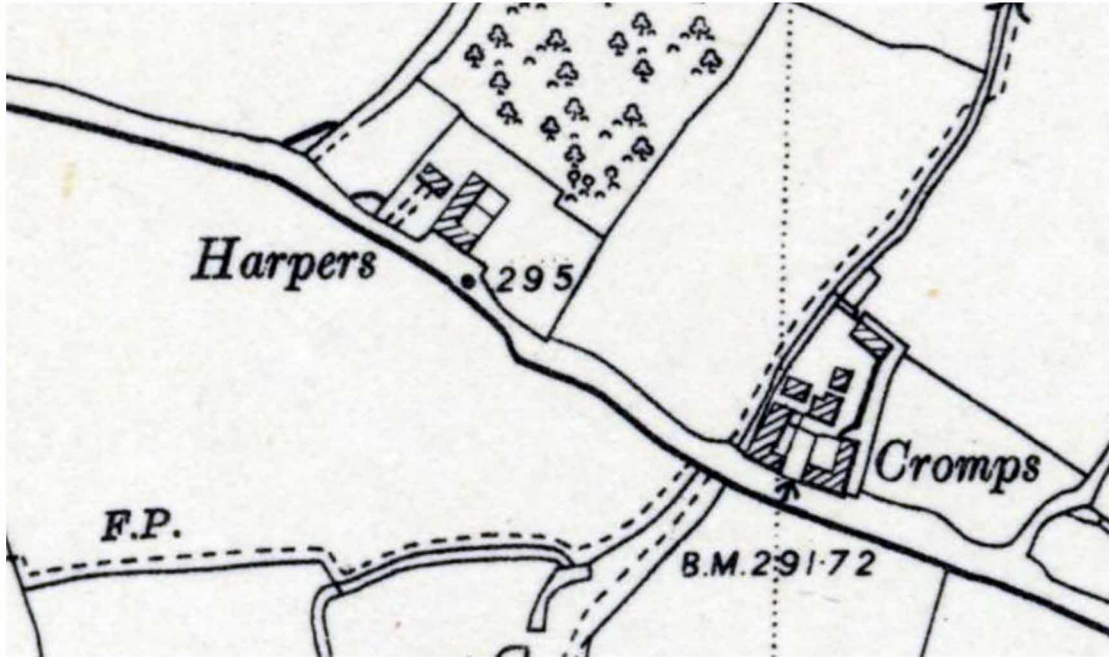
1895 Ordnance Survey Map.



1919 Ordnance Survey Map. Shown as two dwellings.

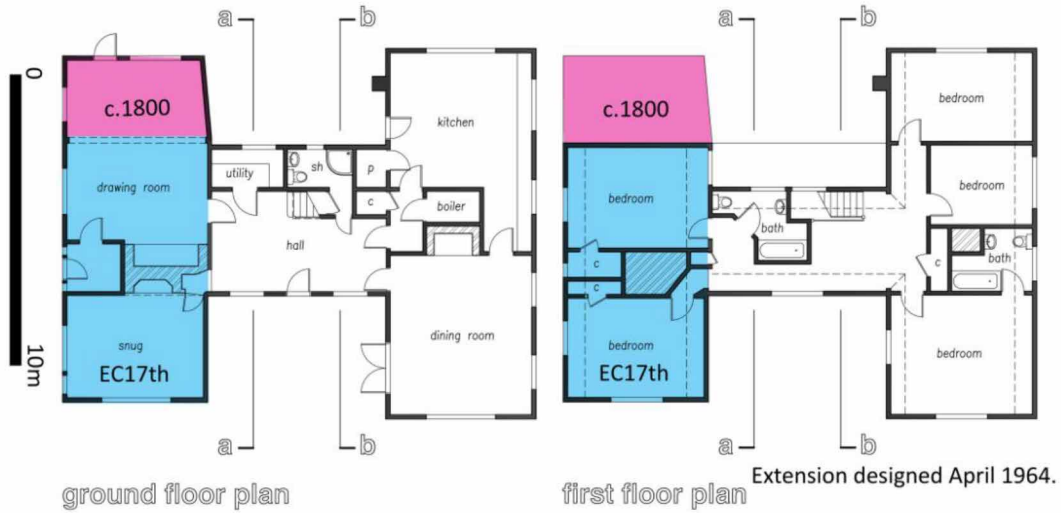


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1946 Ordnance Survey Map.

Phasing and Discussion



General phase plan.

Phase 1. EC17th frame with brick firestack.

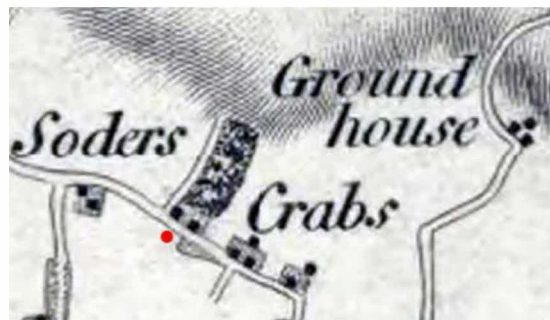
The original building was a modest three bay lobby entry house with an oak timber frame and a red brick double sided firestack. There would have been a small winder stair to access the upper rooms just inside the south front door. The timbers have axe marks on the serpentine braces but most of the timber appears converted with saws which would place the construction in the EC17th.

The frame is fairly standard with widely spaced studs and the principal posts reinforced with serpentine braces trenched across the inside of the studs, rather than fixed as display bracing on the outside. The apotropaic marks are C17th with many frenetic knife strokes.

The Listing description ascribes a LC16th date but also describes the west bay as a 'hall' and the braces as cranked. The cranked braces are later additions as part of a remodelling of the eastern wall probably c.1800.



1777 Chapman and Andre Map of Essex.

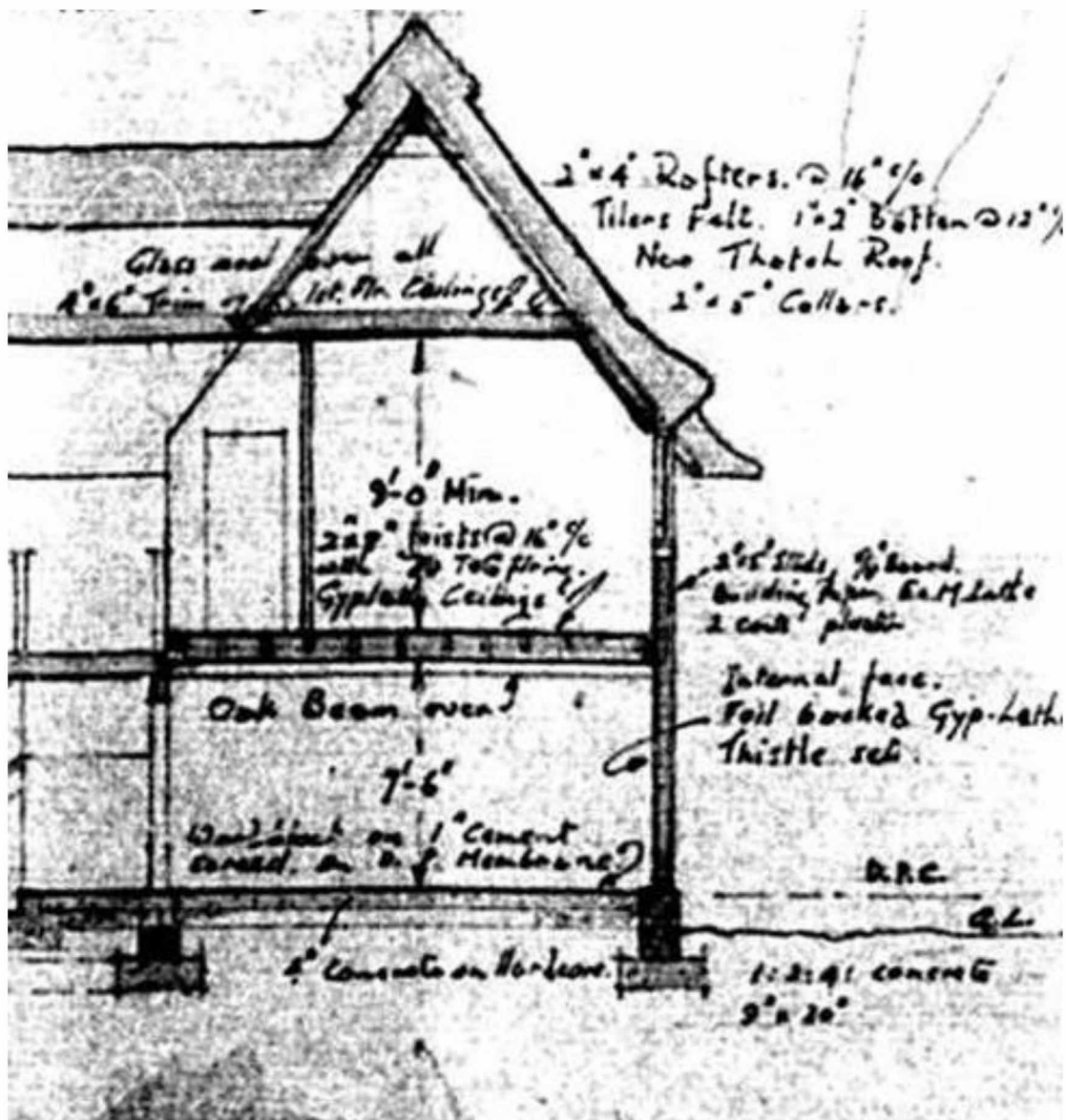


1805 OS Map.

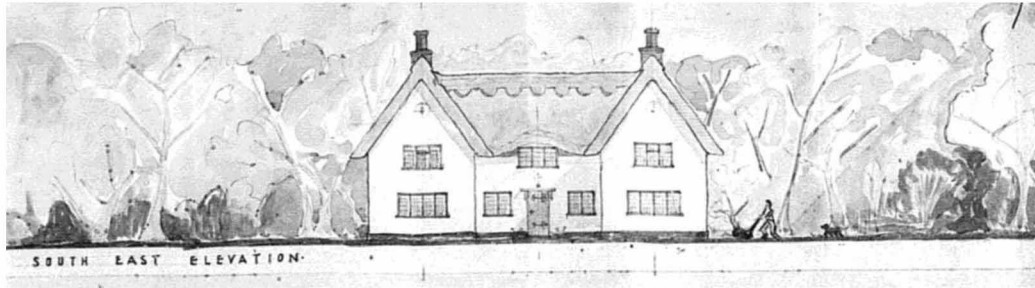
Phase 2. C.1800 outshot on the west end of the cottage.

The outshot forms a new bay on the ground floor on the western end of the original frame. It is made from scantling studwork and reused timbers pinned with wrought ironwork typical of c.1800. There is also evidence that a bread oven was added to the north side of the western fireplace which has since been removed and bricked up. The eastern side of the fireplace was rebuilt to house a cast iron insert, also now removed.

The site is shown but un-named on the 1777 Map of Essex and the 1805 OS Map. The Tithe Map of 1848 identifies the site as Harpers, Plot 222 Cottage & Barn owned by the Late Reverend Sir Augustus Brydges Henniker Baronet and occupied by Thomas Smith. The site was part of Harpers Farm.



Section through the new building as proposed by LO Webb of Finchingfield.



Phase 3. 1964 extension designed by LO Webb of Finchfield.

Prior to the extension there is no evidence for a previous structure and no historic fabric has been incorporated in the new extension. The submitted drawings by LO Webb have extensive notes to indicate what materials were to be used along with ceiling heights and indications that reclaimed materials were to be incorporated. Also it is noted that all the windows were to be replaced but the openings to be retained as existing. The original chimney was to be repaired and the new chimney made as a copy of it. The thatched roof was either not installed or completely removed later, although that seems less likely.

Phase 4. LC20th recladding.

The original building was reclad with hard cement render on EML with an asphalt membrane as part of the 1964 works. However, the east gable of the north range now has a blue plastic membrane and the quality of the pargetting on the east, north and west walls does not match that of the original cottage or the pargetting on the Hallway Entrance.

Significance

The historic significance of the Listed building lies with its near complete EC17th frame and brick firestack. Built as a stand alone smallholding it is un-named on the early maps but marked as Harpers on the 1848 Tithe Map as part of Harpers Farm of seven plots, most arable. On the 1895 OS Map it is shown divided into two dwellings, which must have been for farm workers for the nearby larger farms.

As an example of sympathetic C20th improvements it is very satisfactory and the extension does not look out of place or dominant as it cannot be seen from the road.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the owner for engaging me to record the building and for sourcing the 1964 plans. The architects plans were kindly provided by Anthony G James.



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Page | 51

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