



Munden Parva,  
Hertfordshire  
SG12 0PD

Heritage Statement  
November 2023

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# Introduction

## Preamble

Cousins & Cousins has been instructed by the Client to prepare a Planning Application and Listed Building Consent (LBC) for the proposed works to Munden Parva:

- Proposed internal alterations on the second floor of the main house (LBC only)
- Proposed new alterations to glazing in the orangery (Planning & LBC)

The following Heritage Statement has been compiled by Cousins & Cousins Architects, and follows guidance established by Historic England and East Herts including:

History and significance of the applicant site: Completed by the Applicant.

Assessment of the proposal to identify any harm to the listed setting: Completed by Cousins & Cousins.

## Supporting documentation

### Existing and Proposed Drawings:

#### Site

10\_002 Location plan

#### A\_Main House:

A\_EX\_010 Existing: Site plan

A\_EX\_100 Existing: Ground floor plan

A\_EX\_102 Existing: Second floor plan

A\_EX\_201 Existing: Section BB

A\_EX\_303 Existing: South-West elevation

A\_20\_100 Proposed: Ground floor plan

A\_20\_102 Proposed: Second floor plan

A\_20\_201 Proposed: Section BB

A\_20\_303 Proposed: South-West elevation

#### Supporting Documents:

Heritage Statement

Design & Access Statement

Bat Survey Report

# Historic development

## History of the Mission Room at Munden Parva

### History of the Mission Room at Munden Parva

The Mission Room was likely added to Munden Parva in the 1870s, following the arrival of Frederick Adolphus La Trobe Foster as rector (see W.H.H. Van Sickle, *Munden Parva: Little Munden, Herts*, attached). It is absent from the 1842 tithe survey of Little Munden, but present on the 1880 Ordnance Survey. Local tradition has it named the "Mission Room" and that it was a place for the rector to conduct meetings on church business without having to invite his parishioners into the main part of the house.<sup>1</sup> Having a separate room for church business, with its own separate entrance, was a trend amongst genteel parsons in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1 shows the layout of the room as it was in 1926, when the house was bought from the church by Archibald Balfour. Note that the only windows face east to the rear entrance of the house, with none looking west onto the gardens, in order to preserve the privacy of the rector's family from the prying eyes of his parishioners. Balfour instituted a major renovation of the house, but the Mission Room was left untouched, as shown in figure 2 where it is labelled "Servant's Hall". This was the use to which Balfour now put the room - a place for household staff to have their meals. It was likely the only low-status room both close enough to the kitchen and large enough to accommodate this purpose. This use would be relatively short lived, as the outbreak of the Second World War saw household staff all but disappear, never to return.

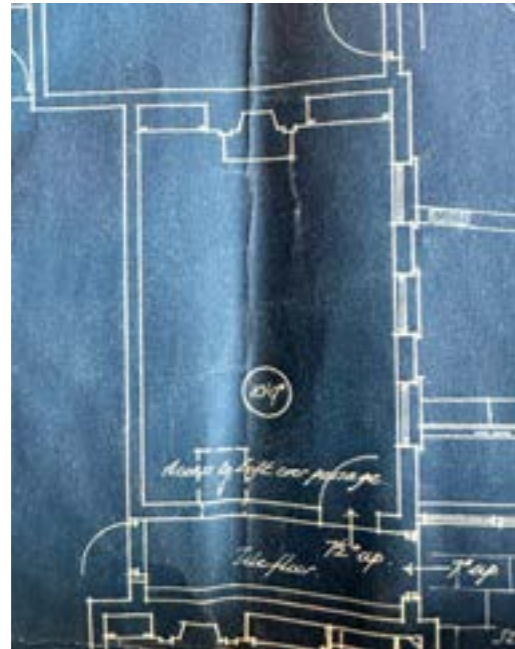


Fig 1, the mission room as found in 1926

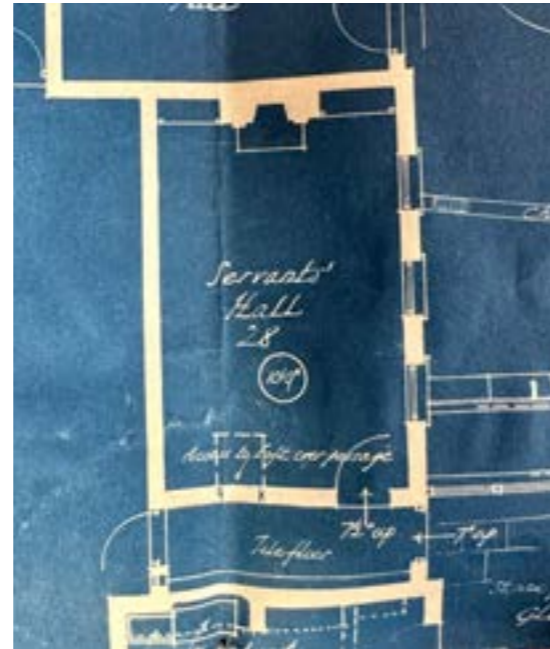


Fig 2, now labelled Servants' Hall

<sup>1</sup> Source: Dr J Butterfield, who was born and raised at Munden Parva in the 1940s and 50s, and lived there until 1995. She currently resides in the Old Stables next door.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. the vicarage at Fillongley in Warwickshire, built in 1859 and chosen by Robert Kerr to exemplify the ideal parsonage design in his book *The Gentleman's House* (1864).

Figures 3 & 4 (c.1980) show the changing use of the mission room after the war. A modern patio door has been introduced into the western garden-facing wall, while internally the room has been repurposed as a kitchen<sup>3</sup>. It is likely that at this point a new false ceiling was hung, enclosing the previously vaulted space. Figures 5 & 6 (c.1995) show the window opening onto the rear of the house had at some point been altered to a modern casement - no trace of the three windows from the 1926 plan can be seen and the wall must have been largely rebuilt. Figure 7 shows the layout of the room as found in 1995.



Fig 3 Modern patio doors onto garden c.1980



Fig 4 Used as a kitchen (patio doors and false ceiling also visible)

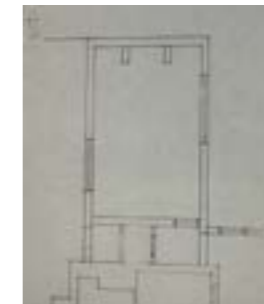


Fig 5 modern casement in east elevation



Fig 6 casement window being removed c.1995

Fig 7, layout as found in 1995



<sup>3</sup> One of a number of kitchens inserted into the house in loosely separated apartments, which accommodated various members of the Balfour family after Archibald Balfour's death in 1951.

A further renovation came with a change of ownership in 1995, and the room was repurposed once again as a TV room. The fenestration was radically altered, with large sash windows introduced on both sides of the room, see layout in figure 8, and image in figure 9 below. Figure 10 shows the work in progress, with new openings being formed in the walls, and the interior completely stripped. All traces of the previous fenestration were erased. Figure 11 shows the present view in the attic above the room - remains of original plaster work and painted beams are clearly visible above the modern timbers and plasterboard from the 1990s.



Fig 8, layout following 1990s renovation



Fig 9, current interior view, with 1990s fenestration



Fig 11, the attic above the mission room, remains of original vaulted ceiling



Fig 10 Patio doors removed, new window openings formed, interior stripped back to bare bricks, c.1995

### Proposed alterations

The 1995 renovation has resulted in a light-filled space thanks to the large new windows. But it is also a space that feels oddly cut off from the rest of the house and from the garden (deliberately so in its original purpose). No longer needed as a church meeting room or servants' hall, it lacks clear identity and purpose. When seated, the sash windows are too high in the walls to allow a view of anything but the sky and treetops, cutting one off from the garden - which is otherwise tantalizingly close. This is in contrast to the sash windows in all three reception rooms of the main house, which reach the floor, offering views across the garden and beyond. The mission room is exposed on almost all sides and with extensive glazing, it is difficult and expensive to heat (see the coats in figure 3). As a result of these factors its conversion to a TV room was largely unsuccessful. It has recently been used for storage.

The proposed changes would give the room a clear and, it is hoped, long-lasting new purpose and identity as an orangery. Enlarging the 1990s openings and introducing large glazed doors will link the room to the garden, providing the views that are currently lacking. The room will be a place to eat and entertain in the summer, and to overwinter potted plants from the garden in the winter. The proposed reinstatement of the vaulted ceiling will help foster this new identity.

The fenestration of the room has changed repeatedly and extensively over the years, and as a result much of the brickwork has been rebuilt. Figure 12 shows the current garden side: the wall has been subject to much alteration, starting with the postwar patio doors up to the extensive areas of rebuilding (using inappropriate cement mortar) dating from the 1990s renovation. The proposed alterations would involve the loss of only a small area of original brickwork, between the two present window openings, much less than the losses that the 1990s changes must have resulted in. We believe this small loss of original brickwork to be well worth the result of giving this room a new lease of life.



Fig 12, current view of the western mission room wall overlooking the garden.  
The areas of lighter brick and modern cement pointing indicates much rebuilding

## History of the second floor at Munden Parva

### History of the second floor at Munden Parva

It seems likely that the second floor was added onto the existing early-19th century rectory building in the 1870s, following the arrival of Frederick Adolphus La Trobe Foster as rector (see W.H.H. Van Sickle, *Munden Parva: Little Munden, Herts*, attached). Local tradition has it that the rector had the floor added in order to take in pupils as an extra revenue stream. In figure 1, an Edwardian era photograph, the newness of the top floor is still evident: the fresh brickwork clearly contrasting with the old.



Fig 1, Munden Parva (then known as the Rectory), c.1910

By 1926 Munden Parva was no longer a rectory, having been purchased from the church by Archibald Balfour, who initiated a major refurbishment of the house. The top floor was to be used to accommodate household staff. Figure 2 shows the layout as found in 1926 (presumably the original 1870s layout), and figure 3 the changes made during the subsequent renovation, principally the introduction of two bathrooms.



Fig 2, layout as found in 1926

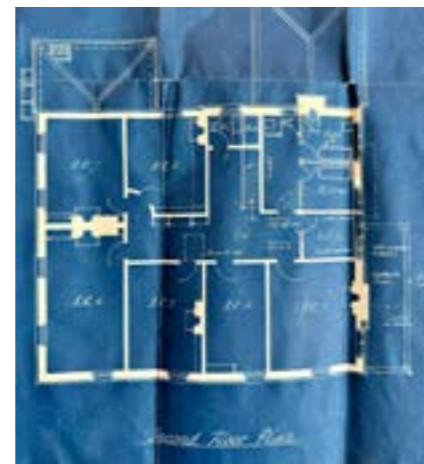


Fig 3, 1920s alterations

After the Second World War and the death of Archibald Balfour in 1951 the house was occupied by various members of the extended Balfour family, and was loosely divided into separate apartments. The second floor formed one of these - the layout was unchanged, although a kitchenette was added into an existing room. A renovation was undertaken by new owners in 1995; figure 4 shows the changes made to achieve the new layout. A large open landing, shown in figure 5, was created by removing several partition walls, dating both from the 1920s renovation and from the original 1870s construction. Two smaller rooms were joined to form a larger kitchenette. Figure 6 is a photograph taken during the 1995 works, and shows the original 1870s partition wall adjoining the staircase stripped of its lath and plaster before being removed altogether.

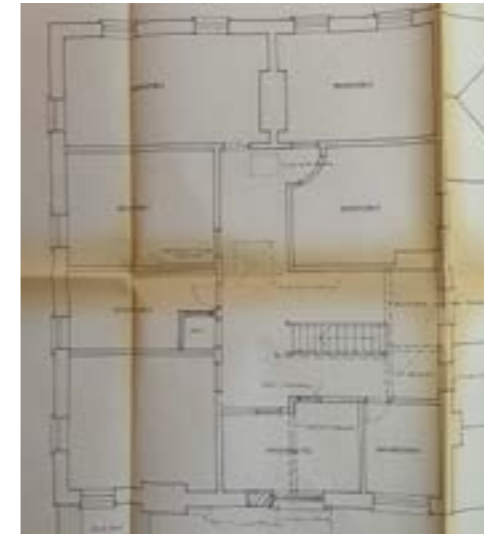


Fig 4, numerous partitions removed in the 1990s



Fig 5, large open landing



Fig 6 original wall adjacent to the staircase being removed c.1995  
The window on the right was enlarged in the 1990s to match the sash on the left

In its interior details the lower status of the top floor is evident - the rooms are plainer, with no cornice (except for one section of the landing, where a cornice was introduced in the 1995 renovation) and plain fire surrounds. Even the door knobs are smaller. Of note are a large Victorian built-in housekeeper's cupboard, four marble fireplaces, and an interesting curved door - see figures 7 & 8. These features will be left untouched by the proposed alterations.

Fig 7, 1870s curved door and wall. Diminutive door knob also visible.



Fig 8, housekeeper's cupboard

### Proposed Alterations

The second floor at Munden Parva has been subject to several changes of use over the years and two changes of layout in the eastern range of rooms. The era of multiple live-in staff in such houses has long since passed, and the floor has been underused since the 1990s, both the previous and current owners having struggled to find a use for so many rooms.

The proposed alterations will create a modern and, it is hoped, long-lasting new use for the top floor by forming a large entertainment space consisting of a games room and linked cinema room, while at the same time returning the landing closer to its original proportions by reintroducing a partition wall adjacent to the staircase. The proposed changes are largely confined to the area already altered both in the 1990s and 1920s.

The curved door from figure 7 provides inspiration for the proposed curved ending to the landing, where two new curved doors will lead into the games and cinema rooms (the 1926 plans show that a further such curved door once existed on the first floor, see figure 9).

Fig 9, curved door on first floor shown on 1926 plan, no longer present





## Significance of the heritage asset

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets likely to be affected by the development proposals. The level of detail should be proportionate to an asset's importance, and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals.

Munden Parva was listed in 1984. The list entry states: *Rectory, now a private house. C18, heightened and extended at rear in C19. Grey brick with stone doorcase. Hipped slate roof with projecting boxed eaves. Originally a 2 storeys house with parapet, raised to 3 storeys. Irregular 4 windows S front with Tuscan pilastered doorcase under 2nd window from left of upper floors, but with 2 windows on ground floor to left and 3 windows to right of door. Recessed sash windows with flat gauged arches, 6/6 panes and plastered reveals. Shorter similar sash windows to top floor with former moulded parapet coping at sill level. Entrance now into shallow 2 storeys painted brick 3 windows wide extension on E end with deep segmented arched upper windows and panelled double oak doors in moulded surround between 2-light casement windows. Lower 2-storeys wing to rear.*

### Generally:

Munden Parva is a large, detached house set within a designed landscape, which by 1880 included a stables, barn, walled kitchen garden and glasshouses, gardeners cottage and farmyard. Munden Parva is of historic interest as an C18 parsonage, and the c.1870's Mission Room extension as documented by the Applicant was typical of the period in order to create a large room separate from the household to accommodate parishioners. The c.1870's roof extension illustrates the growth of the household during this period. It is of less historic interest and is identified as non-original in the listed entry.

### Externally:

The front elevation is located to the south-east and faces the garden. The front entrance was originally in the centre of this south-east elevation, although the porch was enlarged and then restored in 2012; it is now used as an entrance to the garden, with the rear entrance used as the main entrance from the parking area to the north. Despite the non-original second floor extension which is proportionally and rhythmically at odds with the remaining building, the front elevation remains of the most significance of the heritage asset. Much research has been undertaken to establish the original roof form, and whilst an idea has been formed based on similar buildings of the area and period this remains unknown.



Front south-east elevation

**Internally:**

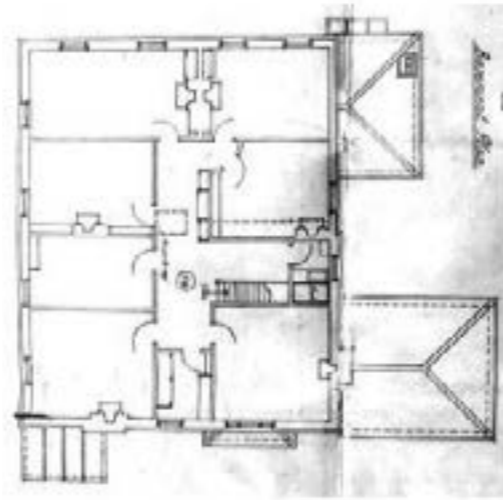
Internally the building has been considerably altered, although this is not readily apparent because of the sensitive restoration of 2012. The original plan form remains legible, with some alterations. The original main staircase is of architectural interest. Whilst altered, the plan form to the ground and first floor levels retains resemblance to the original plan form and is of significance. Likewise, high-quality detailing and craftsmanship to the ground and first floor levels makes a significant contribution to the overall heritage interest of the building.

**Former Mission Room:**

Whilst heavily altered, the history of the former Mission Room is of significance to the heritage interest of the building. Alterations opening the room onto the garden including large, glazed openings alter the plan form including recognisable use. Likewise, the non-original ceiling spatially alter the room altering the historic proportions and detracting from the space.

**Second floor plan:**

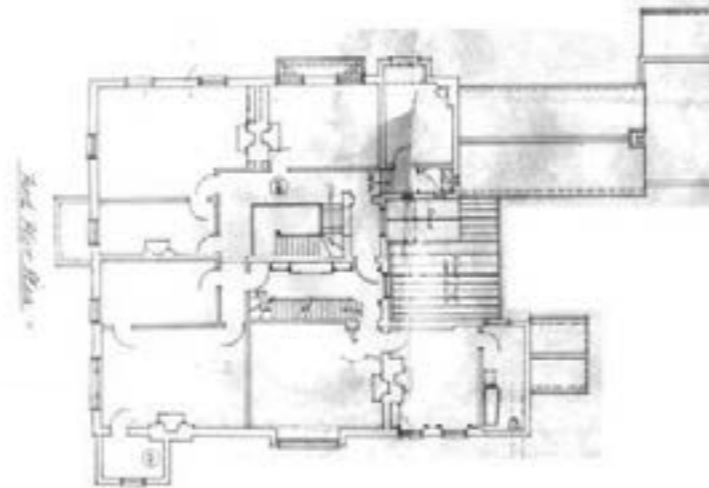
Beyond the individual owner family history of Munden Parva, the second floor plan is of little significance to the overall heritage asset, with plan form, proportions and architectural detailing at odds with the remaining and original building. Architecturally, a curved internal door offers charm and example of craftsmanship from its time of construction.



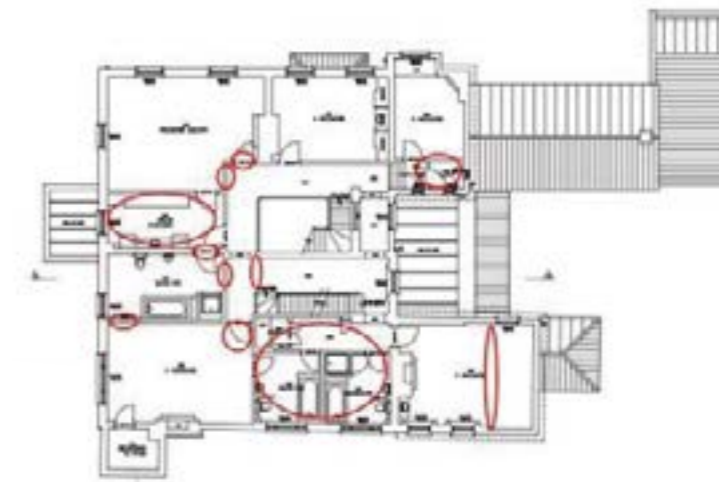
Second floor plan, 1926



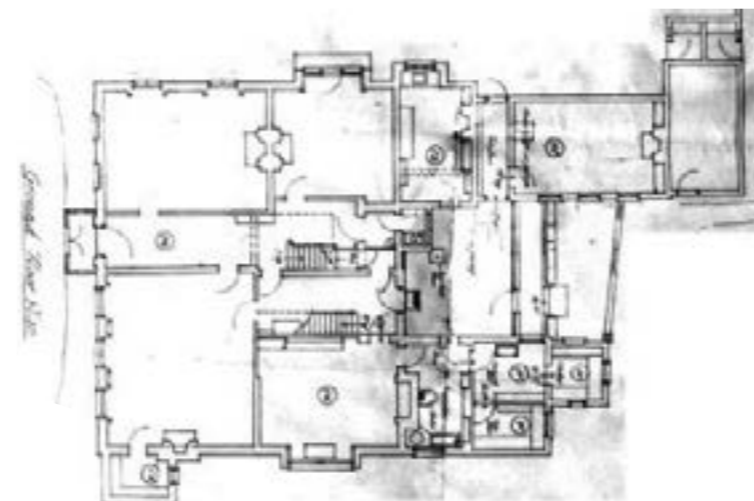
Second floor plan, 2011



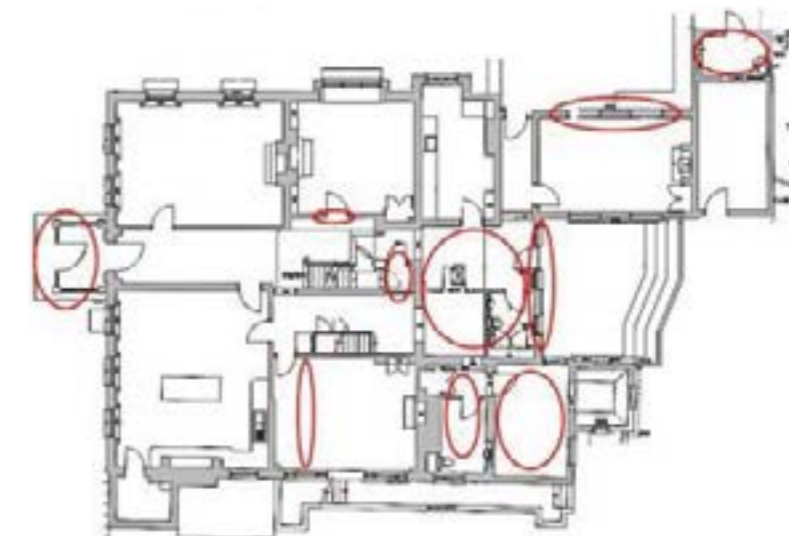
First floor plan, 1926



First floor plan, 2011



Ground floor plan, 1926



Ground floor plan, 2011

# Assessment of the proposed works to the heritage asset

## Former Mission Room

The Proposed development seeks to make changes to the former mission room and servant hall to allow the space to be used as a garden room for the family. The proposals consist of the removal of the non-original windows and a portion of non-original wall ascertained from historic photography to allow for the installation of a timber frame double glazed French doors with fixed side panels. The doors are designed with window bars spaced and proportions to best match existing fenestration. Following pre-application advice, the proposal has reduced the width of the opening to suit the existing total glazed openings width. The non-original dropped ceiling line will be removed, and the original ceiling and structure will be exposed to reestablish the original room proportions.

The former mission room has been heavily altered over the year as identified in the historical development section of this document. Whilst attractive, both the western and eastern elevations have been heavily altered and are not original. The replacement of non-function sash window doors to the western elevation will allow a better use of space and functionality of the room. In addition, the removal of the non-original ceiling line will reinstate the original room proportions, allowing the original structure and features to be appreciated.

## Second floor plan

The proposed development seeks to remodel the northern side of the second floor plan to provide space for the Applicant's family through different stages of their family needs. The second floor plan is non-original by virtue, but the proposal looks to remove latter space planning to provide a games and TV room space.

The second floor space largely remains unused and under utilised in the current ownership serving as storage space with redundant second bathroom and kitchen space. The proposal looks to reestablish a plan form including stair hall and room configuration with resemblance to the 1926 plan form, whilst providing a flexible space for growing children. The proposal makes reference to the original extension and craftsmanship with curved walls and door. It is recognised that the second floor plan is non-original, and the internal proposed works do not look to alter the heritage asset.

