



**McLaughlin Ross llp**

**David McLaughlin**  
Conservation Architect

**Kay Ross**  
Building Historian

# **Historical Building Report – Part II** **on** **Frith Farm** **Frith Lane** **Wickwar** **South Gloucestershire**

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**by**  
**Kay Ross**

McLaughlin Ross llp  
4 Springfield Cottages  
Brewery Hill  
Upton Cheyney  
BS30 6NA

Tel: 0117 932 3009  
Mob: 0789 0267 845

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## Frith Farm 2011

The house is built of limestone rubble, the earlier western half originally rendered (a section remaining, formerly on the external east wall in the attic (2). A photograph from 1975 (**Error! Reference source not found.**) shows the rear (north) western half rendered. The rendering on the west wall is recent, however. The later 19<sup>th</sup> century single storey south-eastern lean-to extension is also rendered. The roof is currently tiled with concrete tiles, which replaced earlier stone tiles (L Hall: 1983).

The building is 'L' shaped with a rear, north, square stair tower in the right-angle and a single storey-lean-to to the west of it, probably 17<sup>th</sup> century. Two small wooden mullion windows remain in the rear stair turret, which internally retains a curved wall, suggesting an earlier round stair tower. The two and a half storey symmetrical southern elevation has a central projecting bay with a half-hipped roof was added in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, replacing a central gable, probably identical to the 17<sup>th</sup> century gables either side. There are diagonal chimneys on the west stack.

The modern sash windows inserted in the c1980s retain angled hood-moulds which would have sheltered earlier 17<sup>th</sup> century stone cross transoms, one of which remains, now blocked, in the west wall at ground floor level. The front bay also retains hood-moulds on the sides, added to match in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. 1994 photographs (**Error! Reference source not found.**) show a further cross window on the stair tower.

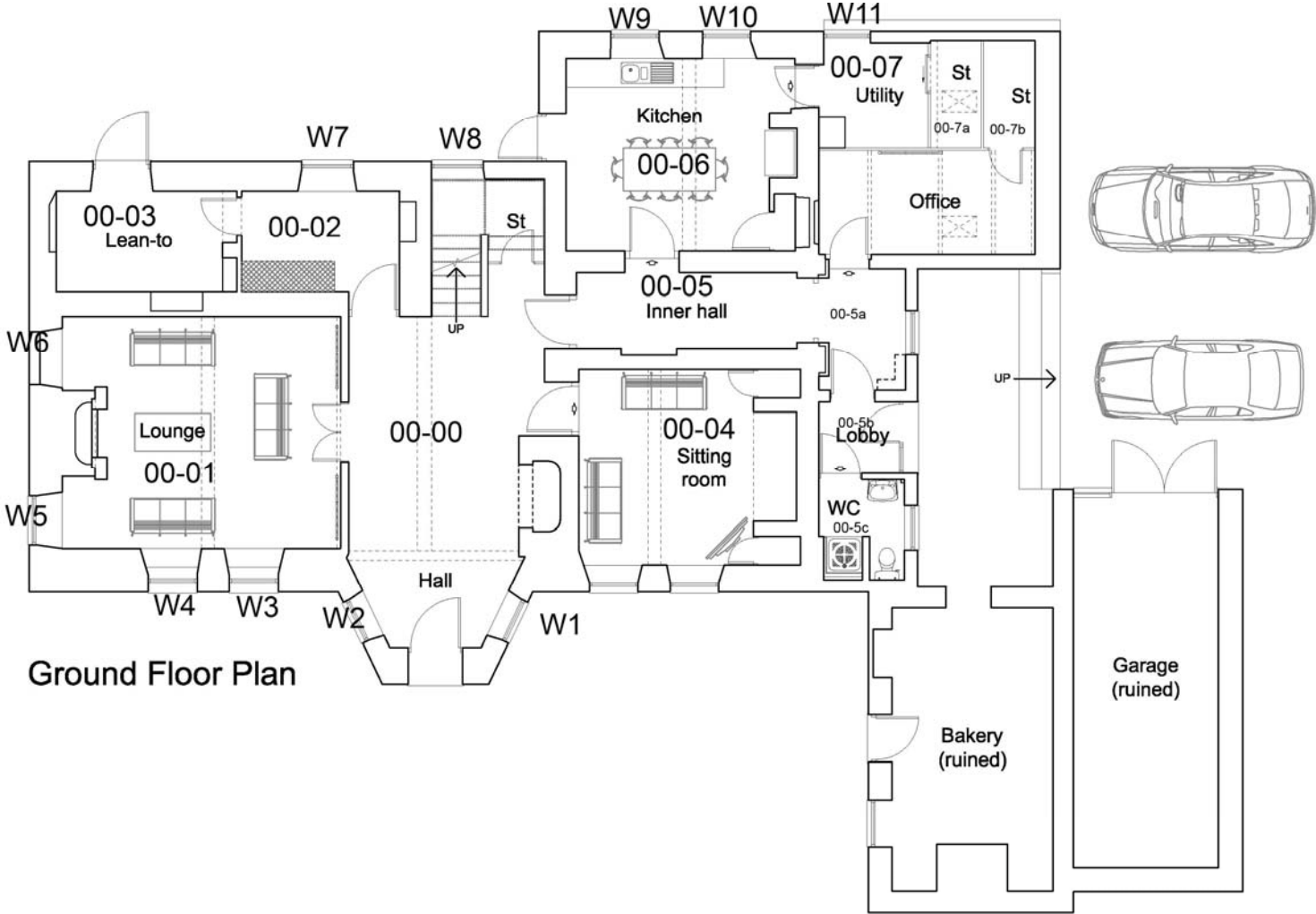
The eastern front has a lean-to at the southern end, largely rebuilt and extended at first floor level in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for a bathroom. The lean-to at the northern end on this front was added between the 1920s and 1960s. The first floor windows (2 blocked) with stone tiled voussoirs are either side of a shallow stone arch (for the valley gutter) with central keystone. This whole wall appears to have been rebuilt in the 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The bathroom extension removed what was probably a window below it. The ground floor windows and door are all modern. The roof of the east wing runs east-west with the central valley gutter running off the central archway.

The original 16<sup>th</sup> century house remains in the floor plan of the central Hall [00-00] and Parlour [00-01] on the west side with a cellar below it. The current entrance is through the projecting bay directly into the large Hall [00-00] with fireplace. To the rear is the staircase opening off it and a small contemporary cupboard door beneath it. The floor is arranged in a diamond pattern of flagstones. There is a further Sitting Room [00-04] on the east side, formerly a kitchen (L Hall: 1983), separated by a passage [00-05] off the Hall from the Kitchen [00-06], formerly the dairy (L Hall: 1983). Off the eastern end of this passage is a small lobby, cloakroom [00-05a-c] c1830s and the later post 1921 single storey lean-to [00-07].

Upstairs are 4 bedrooms and a small 20<sup>th</sup> century bathroom extension at the east end. Two bedrooms are in the earlier western half; the Hall [01-01] and Parlour [01-02] chambers, with a panelled [01-00] passage (panelling from the Hall following a fire) and a doorway up to the stair tower and attic. The other two bedrooms [01-04 & 01-06] are connected to the landing by a passage [01-03] and doorway knocked through in the 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The rear bedroom [01-06] was added in the 18<sup>th</sup> century above the new kitchen.

In the attic, the roof trusses show signs of several different building phases; a small landing opens into 3 separate rooms, while a further room above the kitchen chamber is reached from the half landing by a short flight of steps. As with the 2 rooms directly below, the room with the projecting south bay has a central ceiling timber which was once embedded at the southern end in the front wall of the house.

Ground Floor 2011



The Ground Floor consists of the large central Hall [00-00] with projecting bay, a Parlour [00-01] on the west and a Sitting Room [00-04] on the east side and a cellar lean-to [00-02 & 00-03] to the rear. The cellar, not accessible, is beneath the Parlour. Beyond the Sitting Room is a wide passage [00-05] with the Kitchen [00-06] leading off it on the north side and a collection of rooms; a Utility Room, Office and store rooms [00-07], a lobby and cloakroom [00-05a - c] within the 2 lean-to structures on the east end.

### Hall [00-00]

The Hall with the projecting bay retains the massive central timber which was once embedded in the front wall prior to its removal and the bay being added. It is attached to other ceiling timbers with a 19<sup>th</sup> century iron brace, the southern end displaying the sawn off mortice. The door and windows are modern insertions, and the original panelling was damaged in a fire (L Hall:1983) and the surviving panels were relocated to the staircase landing. It seems likely that some of the doors off the hall were also damaged and replaced with inferior wood, later covered with hardboard. The current owners have had the doors into the Parlour [00-01], Lean-to [00-02 & 3] and Kitchen passage remade to the original design. It is probable that the Sitting Room door was re-located when a doorway was made into it from the Hall. Prior to that the doorway opened onto the Kitchen passage [00-05].

The Bolection moulded doorcases on both the Parlour and Lean-to have been restored and layers of paint removed. The door and surround beneath the staircase are also contemporary with these late 17<sup>th</sup> century doorcases. The staircase, its treads encased in hardboard when the current owner purchased the house, has also been restored and sections of missing lozenge decoration replaced. The walls and ceiling are plastered, the floor covered with an unusual diamond pattern of large flagstones. The fireplace had once had a bolection moulded fire surround which was also destroyed in the fire (L Hall:1983). The fireplace has a curved back with what appears to be relatively modern stonework, possibly c1900-1930s and what appears to be a blocked fireplace opening at the rear. It may have all been rebuilt after the fire, but as yet, there is no firm date for the conflagration.













Cupboard under staircase & hinge; Sitting Room door and hinges



## Parlour [00-01]

This room may have been the hall of the 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century house. Its exposed beams have similar stops to those in the cellar below, with wide chamfering comparable to that period. The windows are all modern replacements, and the one to the left of the fireplace replaced a blocked stone cross window some time prior to 1989. The other alcove, retaining an 18<sup>th</sup> century open cupboard (with modern copies of shaped shelves), retains the cross window on the rendered exterior. The current owners restored the floorboards.

The southern stops of the beams are embedded in the walls when the front wall was rebuilt in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. The curved fireplace has had similar treatment to that in the Hall, possibly also c1900-1930s. The stonework above the fireplace has certainly been rebuilt between the lintel and the ceiling, as diagonal lines either side show.



Looking south; detail of wide chamfered beam and rolled stop







Rebuilt fireplace; 18<sup>th</sup> century cupboard with modern shelves; doorcase with modern copied door, timber and sloping wall infill



### Sitting Room [00-04]

This room was being used as the kitchen in 1975 (L Hall:1983) and the current owners have returned the fireplace to its original proportions. There is an 18<sup>th</sup> century cupboard to either side, one possibly a gun cupboard. The windows are modern sashes, and the south wall, like that in the parlour, appears to have been deepened, the stops on the south side of the ceiling timbers enclosed within it, and supported by a new timber corbel bolted into the underside of the beam. The beam in the bedroom above is similar. It is probable that the original beams continued across the kitchen passage below the lowered ceiling, and the room was once the same depth as the Parlour.





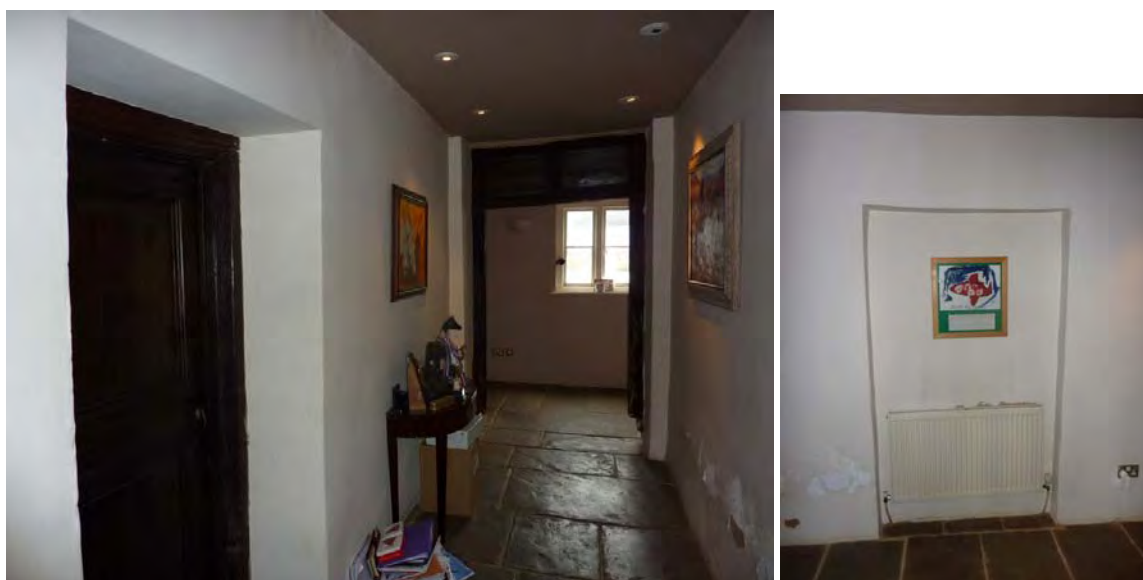


Doorcase and detail of base of jamb; Curve of front wall



### **Kitchen Passage [00-05] & Eastern Lean-to [00-05a – c & 00-07]**

The wide kitchen passage has a flagstone floor, restored by the current owners who removed layers of bitumen covering. At either end is a square headed timber doorway, the western end retaining the moulded chamfering and stops which are circa mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. The eastern end which was originally the back door, has lost its details due to weathering. The eastern front shows signs of heavy weathering consistent with it being originally on the exterior and the bottom of the jambs have been cut away, suggesting the presence of an earlier threshold. Above this end is a two panelled section, much of it covered on the eastern front. This may have been glazed once, to provide some light into the passage. The wall runs back from the doorway for a short distance before returning to either side. In the centre of the passage are two opposing doorways; the one into the Sitting Room [00-04] now blocked, the other into what is now the Kitchen [00-06]. The lowered ceiling is modern.



Passage looking east; blocked door into Sitting Room; Looking west; Eastern doorway



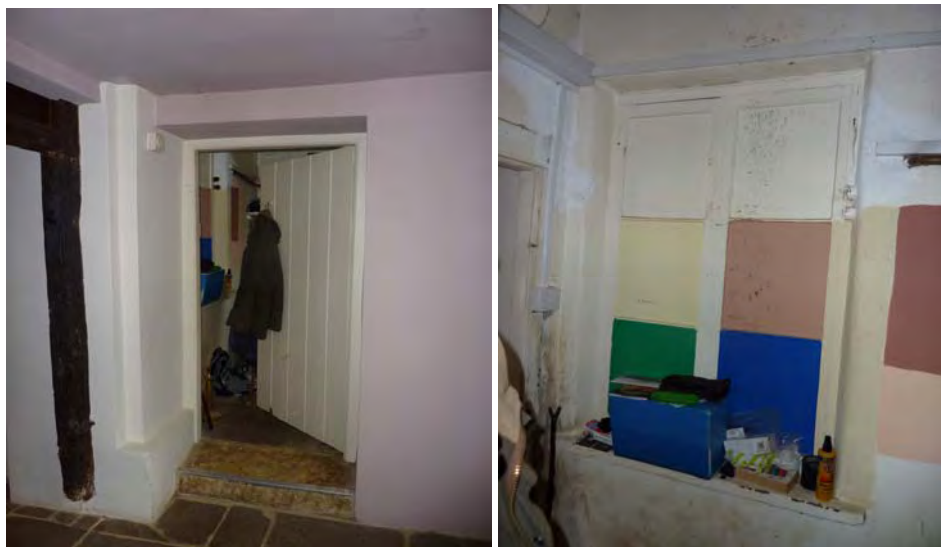




Detail of panelling above eastern doorway; weathered jamb; Hall door (modern copy) and door jamb



20<sup>th</sup> century lobby looking north; blocked kitchen window in office





Office looking west; adjacent Store

The two sections of lean-to against the eastern end of the house are late 19<sup>TH</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> century. The northern end, comprising the Utility Room, Office and store rooms [00-07 a-b] was built between the 1920s and 1960s, whilst the southern end, comprising a lobby and cloakroom, dating to c1880s, has been rebuilt in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The former retains a blocked window to the south of the kitchen chimney breast. The stores are stone built, the office walls clad with plaster board. The roof is off timber cladding.

### **Kitchen [00-06]**

The doorway into the kitchen suggests there may have been an earlier single storey building before the present kitchen was added in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, probably built as a dairy and certainly being used as such in 1975 (L Hall). The stone voussoirs over the Aga range fit the space exactly suggesting they may have been inserted more recently. The roughly hewn ceiling timber also suggests this was a dairy/kitchen rather than a family room, the narrow chamfer and stop 18<sup>th</sup> century. There was a window to the south side of the fireplace in what is now an airing cupboard. The external kitchen door is modern and replaces modern French windows. The door onto the passage is a modern copy.







Kitchen looking onto passage; chamfered stop 18<sup>th</sup> century



Kitchen door (modern copy) and detail of doorcase; carved stop on door jamb

### **Rear lean-to [00-02 & 00-03]**

The lean-to retains some intriguing features, and appears to have been built before the addition of the square stair tower, confirmed by the large blocked window on the east wall, which forms the west wall of the tower. Now a store room and adjoining log store with exterior doorway, it had another doorway where the c1900 timber leaded casement has been relocated. There is an adjoining door between the two, with further blocked windows and a doorway in the west wall. High above on the north wall of Bedroom [01-01] is a blocked timber ovolo mullion. In the eastern store is a blocked doorway plastered over which appears to have a blocked archway above it, in the north wall of the Parlour [00-01].



Lean-to looking north through bolection moulded doorway; flagged floor at an angle





Doorway looking onto Hall with shelving above; c1900 leaded window; door into log store



Blocked east window in stair tower wall

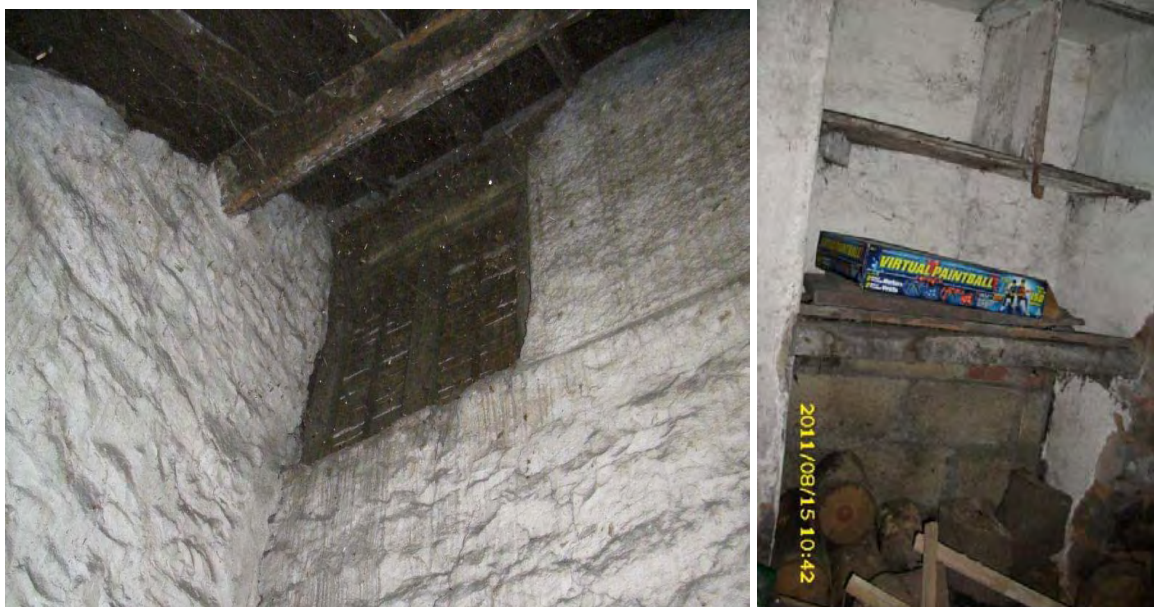


Roof above log store; blocked doorway on south wall with shelving



Log store looking north-west; blocked mullion at first floor level; blocked doorway on south wall





Blocked window in west wall



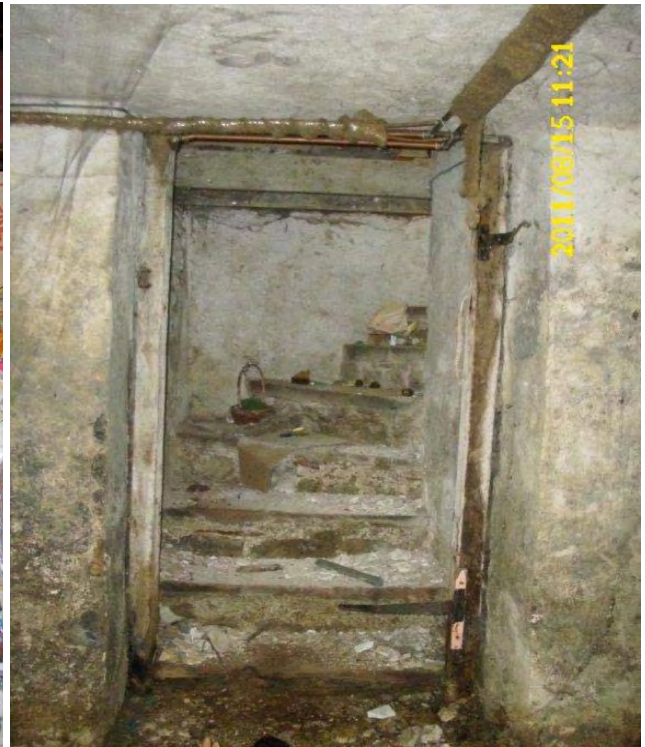
## Cellar

The cellar has a flight of steps, made from rubblestone and capped with concrete, which runs down from the lean-to floor. It is probable that the cellar was once accessed from what is now the cupboard underneath the staircase, which is 2 steps lower than the Hall floor. The cellar is below the Parlour, with a wide chamfered late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century stopped central beam. It has been cut away to heighten the cellar doorway, another indication that the doorway and steps are later. There are two windows in the south wall, raised above the ceiling level and shown blocked on the exterior wall.



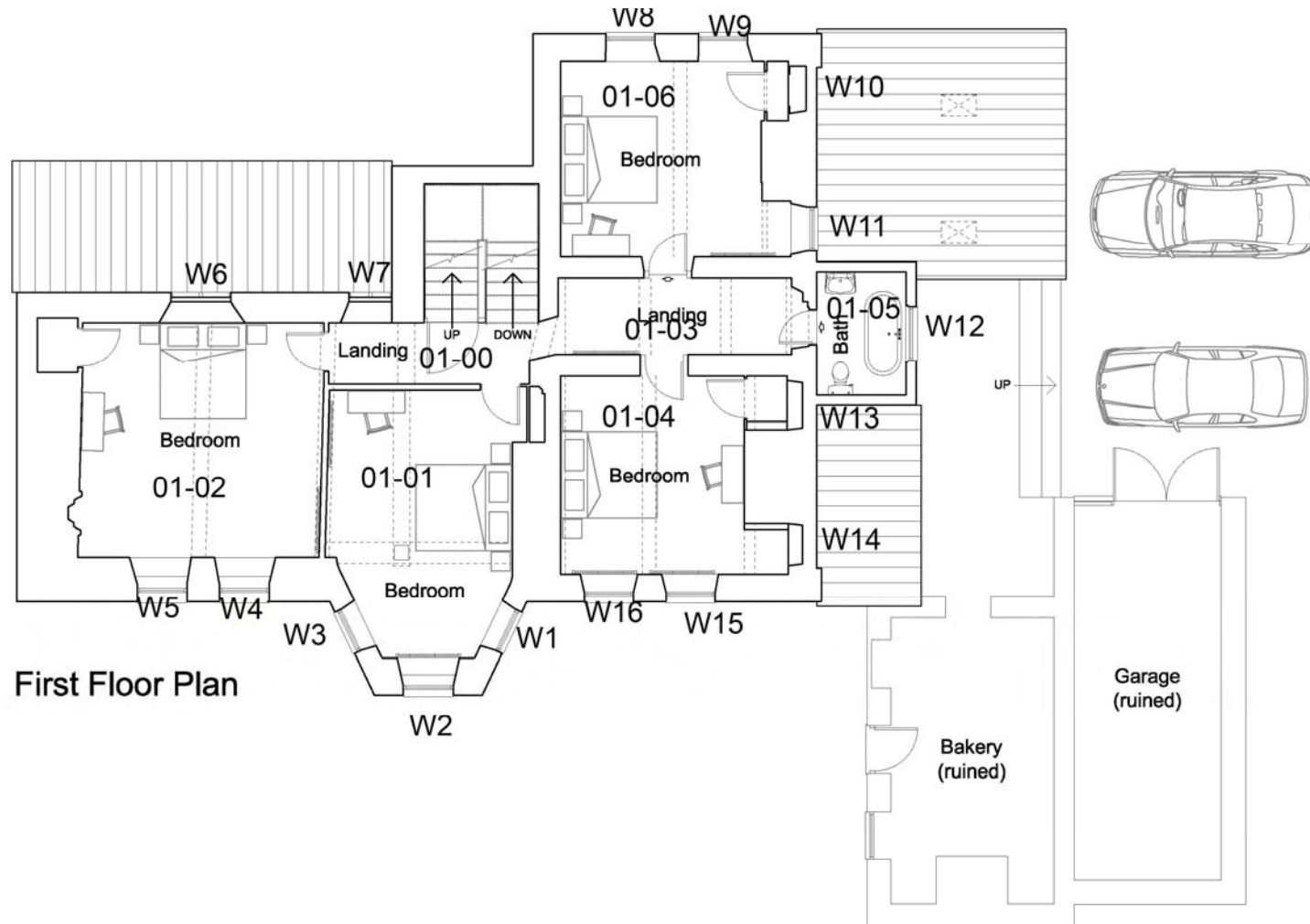


Chamfered beam and stop, similar to that in parlour above; cellar stairs (B Jones)



Blocked windows in south wall; meat hook (B Jones)

## First Floor 2011

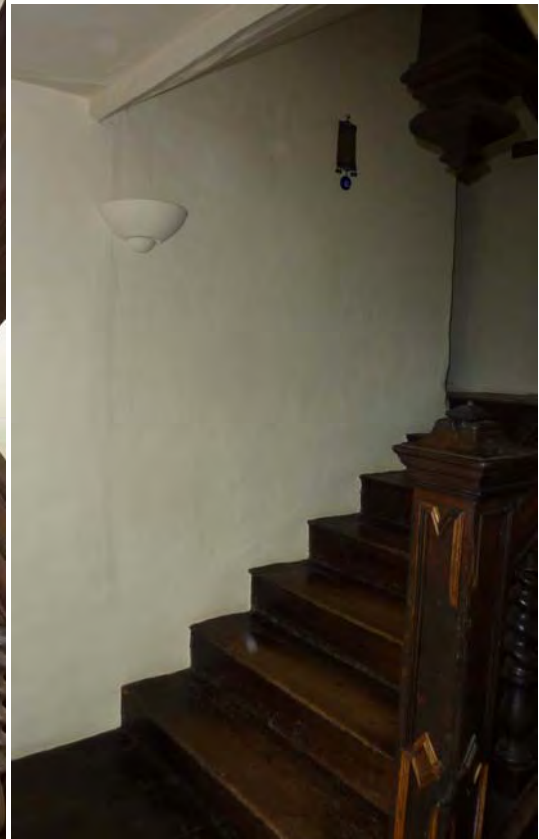


First Floor Plan

The First Floor consists of the staircase landing [01-00] and two bedrooms; [01-01] in the projecting front bay and [01-02] comprising the earliest part of the house. A further landing [01-03] has two further bedrooms; [01-04] and [01-06] with a relatively modern bathroom extension on the eastern end [01-05].

### **Staircase Landing [01-00]**

The staircase landing originally only accessed the western half of the first floor; the eastern passage was made much later. The floorboards are wide and the landing panelled with panels rescued from the fire damaged hall (L Hall). The two oldest bedrooms [01-01 & 01-02] lead off it as well as the doorway up to the attic staircase (also in the stair tower). Here the carved chamfers and stops on the beams and door jambs remain, the ceiling lowered more recently. The continuous beams with distinctively carved stops show the passage was created later, and the doorway into room [01-02] was relocated from elsewhere, the joinery made to fit, although leaving gaps. This was possibly done in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the eastern wall was breached.



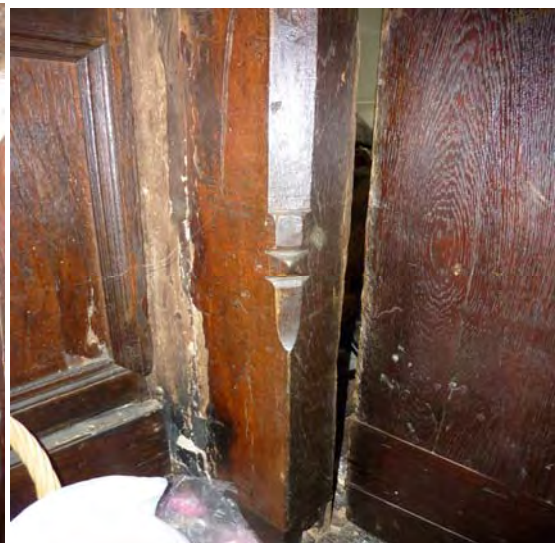




Landing looking west; widened attic stairs door



Detail of carved stops on beams; detail of bedroom door [01-01] and jamb





Detail of butterfly hinge on attic stairs door; cut off beam and later doorway made to fit

### Bedroom [01-01]

This bedroom originally had timber ovolo mullion windows front and back, with smaller window(s) to either side of the fireplace, the right hand one blocked. One of a pair of blocked windows has been retained as an alcove on the north wall. The other is shown on the 1994 plan (**Error! Reference source not found.**) The ovolo chamfered beams with distinctive carved stops run the length of the western first floor, originally just 2 rooms. They are all in very good condition. The wide floorboards are visible beneath later narrower boards running in the opposite direction. Like the Parlour below, the southern wall has been deepened, removing a considerable part of the stops at this end. The 17<sup>th</sup> century fireplace is blocked and a c1900 fireplace has been inserted in the alcove to the left of it, presumably linked to the flue. The board door has original hinges dating to the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Hall:2005).













### Bedroom [01-02]

This bedroom originally incorporated the passage, possibly with a small lobby or door from the staircase. The southern front wall was removed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to create the bay, and the central beam left unpropped until the current owner inserted the current prop. The remains of a stop in the same style as those in the rest of this section is still extant. Before the landing wall was breached to create the eastern end of the passage, there was just a doorway between this room and Bedroom [01-06], forming the deep alcove to the left of the fireplace. The current owner discovered the door, now reblocked, and removed the board door for future use. The deep 6 panelled door could well be contemporary with the later 17<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding. The ceiling of the bay is much higher than that of the rest of the room, which has slumped considerably since the front wall was removed.







6 panelled 17<sup>th</sup> century door